

**Orthodox Church in America  
20<sup>th</sup> All-American Council**

**Plenary Session V**

**Friday, July 22, 2022**

The session was convened at 10:33 a.m. with the singing of “The Grace of the Holy Spirit.”

It was announced that the Minutes of Plenary Session IV have been approved by the Holy Synod.

***SPECIAL ELECTION***

Priest Timothy Yates outlined the election procedures for the run-off election between Dr. Paula Holoviak and Mr. Ivan Rudolph-Shabinsky for the Lay Alternate Position on the Pension Board.

Voting was conducted by secret ballot.

***CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT***

Hierarchs: 10

Clergy Delegates: 149

Lay Delegates: 130

Clergy Observers: 6

Lay Observers: 33

***FINAL RESOLUTIONS***

Archpriest Timothy Sawchak, Chair of the Resolutions Committee, presented a final resolution for the consideration of the 20<sup>th</sup> AAC. A resolution regarding the Pension Board and Pension Plan governance was proposed as follows:

WHEREAS the delegates to the 20th All-American Council (AAC) desire to see the Metropolitan Council and the Pension Board work in Christian harmony;

WHEREAS the Pension Board describes their desire to "provide meaningful retirement information for seminary educators, clergy, and eligible lay staff" (Pension Office Report to the 20th AAC);

WHEREAS the Metropolitan Council, in the interest of full accountability and transparency, and pursuant to Article V Section 7 of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, requires complete, accurate, and up-to-date information on a regular and periodic basis;

THEREFORE, pursuant to Article III Section 4 (e) of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, be it resolved by the 20th All-American Council that:

1. A member of the Pension Board should appear at each regular Metropolitan Council session to report on the condition, activities and status of the Pension Plan and answer questions regarding it;
2. The Pension Board should provide to the Metropolitan Council at least semi-annually, and in advance of the regularly scheduled session of the Metropolitan Council, all relevant current financial details, including, but not limited to, assets, liabilities, market value funding ratio, actuarial value funding ratio, surplus/deficit, plan participation, plan performance in comparison with the assumed plan projections, trend graphs for terminal and operational funding, and such other relevant information as requested by the Metropolitan Council;
3. The Metropolitan Council should designate a liaison and provide that name to the Pension Board. The liaison should be invited to attend each meeting of the Pension Board to receive information about the Pension Plan and to convey concerns from the Metropolitan Council.
4. The Metropolitan Council and the Pension Board are expected to work together, having regular collaborative sessions to ensure Pension Plan participants and employers can have confidence that their best interests are being served;
5. Once the Pension Board reports have been accepted by the Metropolitan Council, they should be included in the Metropolitan Council minutes and be posted accordingly. The Pension Board should post the accepted report on the Pension Board website as well.
6. The Pension Board should provide clearly formulated and transparent reports to all plan participants no less than once every six months.

Presented by Archbishop Mark, Archbishop Alexander and the Metropolitan Council subcommittee on the Pension Plan.

Point of order: Archpriest Alexander Rentel, OCA Chancellor noted slight corrections to the text:

The third "Whereas" text should refer to 'Article V Section 7 (e)' and the "Therefore" text should read 'Article III, Section 4.'

Before further consideration of the resolution, the Youth Program presentation took place.

#### ***YOUTH PROGRAM PRESENTATION***

Archpriest Benjamin Tucci, Director of the AAC Youth Program, expressed gratitude to all who have supported youth programs throughout the Orthodox Church in America as well as the Holy Synod for being attentive to the youth during this Council, and the youth staff for being "Vessels of Grace" this week. There were 137 youth participants and 41 youth staff at the Council. They had an amazing week and we thank you for your support.

Daniel Rentel (St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Yonkers, NY) and Elizabeth Vallen (St. Tikhon Mission, Parker, CO), youth participants, read a statement on behalf of the youth.

*Your Beatitude, Your Eminences, Your Graces, Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,*

***GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!***

*I'm Daniel Rentel from St. Vlad's Seminary in New York.*

*I'm Elizabeth Vallen from St. Tikhon's Mission in Colorado. This week at the All-American Council Youth Program, we explored the theme of Vessels of Grace. We have 5 points we would like to bring to the council based on our journey together.*

*Our Orthodox Faith is beautiful and becomes more and more necessary and relevant for our world. Our Faith though mystical is also rational. Yesterday I was talking to Bishop Andrei before Liturgy, and he jokingly said that he wanted to drink a Coke. I said, "Bishop Andrei, you can't do that!" He replied, "why not?" I didn't know. He said, "our Faith is rational; you should be able to explain it."*

*There's an unfortunate disconnect between secular society and the Church. Today's society faces many complex challenges; and their answers can be found in the Church. The Church's answers are profound, and we need to do our best to communicate them effectively.*

*We do not fit the world's stereotype of churchgoers. We want to challenge those stereotypes by being more open with our faith, unashamed, not hiding it. We were inspired by the procession to the Liturgy, it was a powerful demonstration of our Faith.*

*So, what does it mean to be Orthodox?*

*We invite others to come and see for themselves. Our spiritual experiences are very deep and connect us to God and each other. We wish to demonstrate that connection by our actions, embodying the scriptures and preaching by example.*

*We recognize our shared community. We have created powerful bonds with each other. We'd like to expand this experience of community by strengthening relationships on our local level.*

*On behalf of all the participants of the Youth Program, we would like to thank the Council body, the Church administration, The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America for their support, and a special thanks to our teachers, chaperones, and our program directors, Fr. Ben Tucci and Matushka Elizabeth Wyslutsky.*

Fr. Tucci then introduced a nine-minute video presentation on the activities of the Youth Program at the 20<sup>th</sup> AAC.

Fr. Rentel thanked Fr. Tucci and the staff of the youth program, and gratitude was also expressed to Archpriest Michael Anderson for organizing the first AAC Youth Program in 1999. Fr. Rentel challenged the participants of this AAC's youth program to step up to be the next generation of church leaders, adding, "go to seminary for goodness' sake!" The youth participants then left the plenary hall.

#### **ELECTION RESULTS**

It was announced that Mr. Ivan Rudolph-Shabinsky has been elected Pension Board Lay Alternate.

#### **RESOLUTIONS (continued)**

Consideration of the pension resolution resumed. Priest John Kotalik, St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA, seconded the resolution.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Proponent: Priest John Cox, Holy Ascension Church, Mt. Pleasant, SC: Like His Beatitude, he was disappointed in the result of the failed Statute amendment regarding the Pension Plan, but is relieved to see that we all agree that the Pension Plan is in trouble and needs attention. Younger peers

currently don't feel optimistic that the plan will be there when they retire. This resolution will go a long way toward restoring confidence in the Plan.

Question: Fr. Kotalik. If passed, would this resolution be binding or simply advisory? The Lay Vice-Chair replied that the adopted resolution would be a statement from the AAC regarding preferred procedures.

#### AMENDMENT

Amendment motion: Archpriest David Garretson, SS. Peter & Paul Church, South River, NJ: Proposed an amendment to add a #7: That mandatory professional third party benefit plan administration training shall be provided to the MC, Pension Board, and officers of the Church.

Amendment seconded by Archpriest Joseph Lickwar, SS. Peter & Paul Cathedral, Jersey City, NJ.

#### DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Proponent: Fr. Garretson noted that people are talking past each other. Everyone wants the best. People, in their zeal, are not fully understanding the issues. In his job as an officer of an international union, everyone receives such training as denoted in the amendment. If passed, Fr Garretson pledged to pay for the training from now until the next AAC.

Bishop Daniel: The amendment is good, but the word "mandatory" needs to be removed because enforcement is not in the competence of this body.

Fr. Garretson: Agreed to strike the word "mandatory." The proposed amendment reads "7. That professional third party benefit plan administration training shall be provided to the MC, Pension Board, and officers of the Church."

Question: Priest Joel Brady, Holy Apostles Mission, Lansing, NY, asked who is included in the officers of the Church? Answer: Chancellor, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Proponent: Archpriest Alexander Vallens, St. Tikhon Mission, Parker, CO would like to change "shall" to "should" to keep language in the rest of amendment consistent.

Fr Garretson agreed to the change, updating the proposed amendment to read: "7. That professional third party benefit plan administration training should be provided to the Metropolitan Council, Pension Board, and officers of the Church."

Question: Mka. Mary Buletza-Breton, Church of the Annunciation, Brick, NJ and Pension Board member: What is the definition of “resolution” and how is that compared and contrasted to the definition of “mandate”? Answer: Resolution is advisory; Statute is mandatory.

Proponent: Priest Jonathan Lincoln, Christ the Savior Church, Chicago, IL: There is a sense that many of us did not understand the core of what was at stake, because we are not financial people, so any kind of financial training at the highest level would be much appreciated; perhaps even clergy could be better educated on these things.

The Lay Vice-Chair called the question. The amendment was carried unanimously.

#### DISCUSSION (continued)

Discussion on the proposed resolution resumed.

Question: Mr. Eldred Brown, St. Nicholas Church, Portland, OR: Regarding point # 4 – “having regular collaborative sessions” – how frequent is regular? Fr. Rentel - This is statutory; it refers to the regular spring and fall sessions of the Metropolitan Council.

Comment: Dn. Matthew Prentice, Metropolitan Council, clarified that he drafted point 4. The intention was not just when the Metropolitan Council meets, but also when the Pension Board meets.

Proponent: Priest Peter Robichau, St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral, Dallas, TX: Yesterday’s election demonstrated the flaws of the process: people with name recognition, but perhaps not the best expertise, were elected to the Pension Board. The most qualified candidate was not elected. This resolution does not provide a clear path to restoring the health of the plan, but it should pass. The Pension Board should cut administrative costs before asking for more money.

Proponent: Fr. Garretson: I believe what happened before between the Metropolitan Council and the Pension Board can be resolved, and I speak strongly in favor of the resolution as amended.

Voting then took place. The Resolution was carried unanimously as follows:

WHEREAS the delegates to the 20<sup>th</sup> All-American Council (AAC) desire to see the Metropolitan Council and the Pension Board work in Christian harmony;

WHEREAS the Pension Board describes their desire to “provide meaningful retirement information for seminary educators, clergy, and eligible lay staff” (Pension Office Report to the 20th AAC);

WHEREAS the Metropolitan Council, in the interest of full accountability and transparency, and pursuant to Article V Section 7 (e) of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, requires complete, accurate, and up-to-date information on a regular and periodic basis;

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5. Once the Pension Board reports have been accepted by the Metropolitan Council, they should be included in the Metropolitan Council minutes and be posted accordingly. The Pension Board should post the accepted report on the Pension Board website as well.
6. The Pension Board should provide clearly formulated and transparent reports to all plan participants no less than once every six months.
7. That professional third party benefit plan administration training should be provided to the Metropolitan Council, Pension Board, and officers of the Church.

### *UPDATED CREDENTIALS REPORT*

Hierarchs:	11
Clergy Delegates:	169
Lay Delegates:	153
Total Voters:	333
Clergy Observers:	7
Lay Observers:	42
Youth Participants:	103
Total Participants throughout the 20 <sup>th</sup> AAC:	669

### *MILITARY CHAPLAINS REPORT*

Archpriest Theodore Boback, Dean and Executive Director of Orthodox Military & Veterans Administration Chaplains, presented a report (*see reports book*) and introduced chaplains Priest James Parnell and Archpriest Peter Dubinin.

Fr. Parnell shared a slide presentation on his 2021 deployment to the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti) with 1,000 soldiers from the Connecticut National Guard. He baptized/chrismated four soldiers and airmen while in Djibouti, and conducted memorial services and events, including a Hierarchical Liturgy with the Metropolitan of Axum. Fr Parnell is also a VA hospital chaplain. He made an appeal to others to serve, either in the US military or in a VA medical center.

Fr. Dubinin spoke of the psychological and spiritual effects of killing, and how most of those who serve in the military are left to handle this alone; what do we do about this? There is a great deal of experience and expertise within our Church, and he asks for prayers that God will raise up those who will care for these service people.

### *INSTITUTIONAL CHAPLAINCIES REPORT*

Archpriest Steven Voytovich, Director of the Office of Institutional Chaplaincies, began by asking prayers for the physicians, nurses, and other health care workers who were on the front lines caring for others during the pandemic, and shared a slide presentation with highlights from his attached written report.

The Office of Institutional Chaplains will celebrate twenty years of formal endorsement in 2023. The Office reviews and recommends endorsements for Orthodox clergy and laypersons.

The OCA is a member of the Commission on Ministry in Specialized Settings (COMISS). Fr. Steven will become the chair in 2023.

Fr. Steven shared statements from four OCA institutional chaplains currently serving in the field. (*see slides*)

Fr. Steven attended an international conference on chaplaincy held in Russia in October of 2021, and was the only Orthodox Chaplain presenter from among international presentations.

#### *UPDATE*

Fr. Rentel provided an update on Dr. Constantine Kallaur. Last night following the Council banquet, Dr. Kallaur (the last living member of the OCA delegation that received the Tomos of Autocephaly) had a fall on the escalator in the hotel. He is still in the hospital, but will not require surgery. Prayers of the entire council for his healing would be appreciated.

#### *VIDEO PRESENTATIONS*

Fr. Rentel introduced videos from ELEOS, the humanitarian agency of the Polish Orthodox Church, the recipient of the OCA campaign to support Ukrainian refugees. The videos consisted of expressions of gratitude from Metropolitan Sawa of Poland and recipients of aid, and demonstrated how the funds were used. At \$725,000, this was the single largest charitable appeal that the OCA has ever undertaken. Fr. Rentel noted that the largest single gift was \$10,000, showing that the bulk of contributed funds was made up of many small and individual donations.

The Clergy Vice-Chair noted that today is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the repose of Protopresbyter John Meyendorff; may his memory be eternal!

The video from St. Tikhon's Seminary, *The Father Fred Challenge*, was shown, having been postponed from the previous session due to time constraints.

#### *OTHER BUSINESS*

Questions/Comments from the floor were entertained.

Question: Archpriest Nicholas Wyslutsky, St. Nicholas Church, Mogadore, OH, National Spiritual Advisor for the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians of America (FOCA): Throughout the pandemic, FOCA had the opportunity to redefine itself and to contemplate how it could better serve the Church. He expressed thanks to FOCA and individuals for their efforts in raising over \$10,000 in a month's time to support this week's youth program. At its own convention, which immediately preceded the AAC, FOCA submitted a resolution to the Holy Synod to define more specifically the relationship between the OCA and FOCA. Current members wish to do much for the Church. Fr Wyslutsky asked what, if anything, came from the discussion in response to the resolution.

Metropolitan Tikhon answered that the resolution was presented to the Synod and there is agreement that it would be very useful to take up the offer of FOCA to assist the OCA. Bishops Andrei and Gerasim will be asked to form a commission on youth. They will begin immediately to compile contacts of youth leaders throughout dioceses and conduct an initial Zoom meeting in order to take the next step of what was begun in St. Louis and interrupted by the pandemic. It is time to formulate something much more robust to help our youth. His Beatitude extended his thanks to FOCA.

Comment: Fr. Kotalik expressed thanks to all members of the Metropolitan Council and the Pension Board for all that they do for the Church. He knows the men and women in both bodies, and knows they have good intentions, and he hopes they can work together going forward.

Comment: Archpriest John Parker, Dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary: Expressed thanks for being able to show the Fr. Fred video today.

Comment: Archpriest Yousuf Rassam, St. Innocent Church, Tarzana, CA: Expressed thanks to the Metropolitan, Synod, and Officers for the difficult work of maintaining relationships with other Orthodox churches. Fr. Rassam thanked His Beatitude for his carefully balanced statements and efforts to protect Orthodox unity in America.

Comment: Archpriest Raymond Browne, St. Mark Church, Wrightstown, PA, Chancellor of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania: Requested for future AACs that the youth and chaplaincies presentations we saw on the last day be moved to the forefront before the discussion of resolutions as they are most inspiring.

#### *METROPOLITAN'S CONCLUDING REMARKS*

His Beatitude formally offered his gratitude to council vice-chairs Fr. Jarmus and Mrs. Benton. He thanked Mr. Donald Garrett, Parliamentarian, and Mr. David Lane for navigating the proceedings.

Though the week is coming to an end, our work is just beginning. We must carry this work forward to our parishes, dioceses, and the Church at large.

The Divine Liturgy is the center of life. It is both a beginning and an end, a renewal and the summit of experience – it is that for which we live, and it is that which exists so that we can live. The All-American Council is the highest expression of ecclesiastical conciliar existence for us. This council takes place so that we can draw upon each other's experience and talent for the service of the Church at large. Today on this feast of St. Mary Magdalene, we recall that she did not keep the news of the Lord's Resurrection to herself; she went and told the apostles. May the Lord bless us, also, as we go out to carry forth the Good News.

#### *ADJOURNMENT*

It was announced that the installation of the newly elected Metropolitan Council and Pension Board members would take place immediately following adjournment.

Archpriest Kirill Sokolov, Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA, Chancellor of the Diocese of the West, moved to adjourn the Council.

The 20th All-American Council adjourned at 12:45 p.m. with the singing of "It is Truly Meet."

Council manager, Dn. Peter Ilchuk announced that a straw poll for the location of the next AAC did not take place because prospective locations have not yet been identified.