



21st ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL

July 14-18, 2025

Official Minutes and Reports

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The following are the approved minutes, reports, and documents of the 21st All-American Council, convened July 14-18, 2025 at the Arizona Grand Resort in Phoenix, Arizona.

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Orthodox Church in America
21st All-American Council
Plenary Session I
Monday, July 14, 2025
Arizona Grand Resort
Phoenix, AZ

Opening Prayer Service and Call to Order

The 21st All-American Council (AAC), Plenary Session I, began at 6:15 PM with an opening prayer service. His Beatitude Tikhon, Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada, declared the 21st All-American Council open at 6:48 PM.

Approval of Clergy and Lay Chairs and Committees

His Beatitude asked Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America, to present the following Committees previously established by the Preconciliar Commission:

Council Credentials

Archpriest John Cox, Diocese of the South CHAIR
Priest Gabriel Bilas, Bulgarian Diocese
Priest Joshua Trant, Diocese of the South
Priest Phillip Beiner, Diocese of the New England
Priest Peter Runyon, Diocese of the West
Jane Cessna, Archdiocese of Washington
Sara Cattell, Diocese of the South
Barry Migyanko, Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania CONSULTANT

Nominations Committee

Priest David Bozeman, Diocese of the South CHAIR
Priest Andrew Nelko, Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania
Ray Steeb, Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania
Lori Kochan, Diocese of the Midwest
David Lane, Diocese of the West
Kevin Fritts, Archdiocese of Washington

Council Tellers

Archpriest Sean Levine, Military Chaplains CHAIR
Priest Seth Earl, Diocese of the South
Priest Simeon Johnson, Diocese of Alaska
Priest Innocent Neal, Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania
Deacon Matthew Prentice, Archdiocese of Washington
Subdeacon Jeremy Pletnikoff, Diocese of Alaska
Katia Vansuch, Diocese of New York & New Jersey
Danielle Ilchuk, Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania

David Zavednak, Diocese of New England
Gregory Honshul, Archdiocese of Washington

Council Resolutions

Archpriest Timothy Sawchak, Diocese of the Midwest CHAIR
Archpriest John Hopko, Diocese of New England
Archpriest Victor Gorodenchuk, Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania
Anna Miller, Archdiocese of Canada
Sophia Sokolov, Diocese of the West
James Class, Archdiocese of Washington
Gust Mecera, Diocese of the South

Council Press and Information

Priest Kyle Parrott, Archdiocese of Canada CHAIR
Archpriest John Parsells, Archdiocese of Washington
Archpriest Joseph Lucas, Diocese of the South
Archpriest Justin Patterson, Diocese of the South

Fr. Margheritino also presented: Mr. Joe Neglia as Parliamentarian, and Mr. Mark Hamilton, General Counsel of the Orthodox Church in America

Fr. Margheritino also presented to the assembly the names for appointment of Archpriest Andrew Jarmus as Clergy Vice-Chair; and Ms. Hollie Benton as Lay Vice-Chair, as well as the Secretariat:

Secretariat

Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, CHAIR
Archpriest David Cowan, Diocese of New York and New Jersey
Priest Andrew Smith, Diocese of the West
Priest John Thetford, Diocese of the Midwest
Elizabeth (Lisa) Mikhalevsky, Archdiocese of Washington
Alexis Liberovsky, Stavropegial Institutions

Fr. Margheritino asked for and received the assembly's approval of the Council Secretariat by consensus.

Approval of the Agenda

Fr. Jarmus asked for the adoption of the agenda by verbal acclamation.

Welcome

Archbishop Benjamin welcomed delegates to the Diocese of the West.

Fr. Jarmus introduced Dn. John Weiss and Ms. Lydia Osolinsky, clergy and lay chairs, respectively, of the Local Organizing Committee. Dn. John delivered welcoming remarks.

Fr. Jarmus introduced Michael Pissos, representative of Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego. Mr. Pissos read a welcome letter from Mayor Gallego.

Credentials Committee Report

Fr. Cox, Committee Chair, delivered the following report for this session:

Hierarchs: 14

Clergy Delegates: 258

Lay Delegates: 184

Clergy Observers: 33

Lay Observers: 90

Total: 579

Address of the Metropolitan

His Beatitude addressed the Council. The full text is attached.

Housekeeping and Adjournment

Protodeacon Peter Ilchuk, Council Manager, made a number of housekeeping announcements.

Ms. Hollie Benton declared Plenary Session I closed at 7:39 PM. Plenary Session I closed with the singing of "It Is Truly Meet."

Orthodox Church in America
21st All-American Council
Plenary Session II
Tuesday, July 15, 2025
Arizona Grand Resort
Phoenix, AZ

Opening Prayer

The session was convened at 10:48 AM with the singing of “Many Years” for His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon on the occasion of his birthday.

Nominations Procedures

Lay Vice-Chair Ms. Hollie Benton invited Priest David Bozeman, Chair of the Nominations Committee, to go over the nominations procedures.

Fr. Bozeman reported that the slate of candidates for the Metropolitan Council and the Pension Board was posted with biographies on the website of the Orthodox Church in America. The committee is still receiving nominations until 5:00 PM today. A nomination may be submitted to any committee member or to the email provided on the nomination form.

OCA Chancellor Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino made further remarks on the election of members of the Metropolitan Council. He emphasized the importance of these elections, as the work of the All-American Council does not end with the conclusion of the Council. Rather, the elected members of the Metropolitan Council continue working on behalf of the Church for the next three years between All-American Councils. He also reminded the Council that the Church relies on the professional expertise of those serving on the Metropolitan Council and Pension Board.

Resolutions Procedures

Ms. Benton recognized Resolutions Committee Chair Archpriest Timothy Sawchak.

Fr. Sawchak asked the other members of the Committee to stand and be recognized. He stated it is vital that resolutions be submitted in writing. They may be submitted at any time during the Council. He also urged those submitting resolutions to keep in mind the question: “Is this resolution in the purview of the All-American Council?” when submitting resolutions.

Metropolitan’s Report

His Beatitude delivered his attached report covering the following aspects of his primatial ministry:

- Conciliarity
- His approach to primatial ministry
- Strides the OCA has made in the past triennium
 - Canonization of St. Olga

- External Affairs of the OCA, particularly noting that the Holy Synod has officially recognized the canonicity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric, and is planning a concelebration with His Beatitude Archbishop Stefan to take place in Washington, DC, which will mark the recognition of autocephaly
- Internal matters, specifically regarding Stavropegial Institutions and Central Administration

His Beatitude entertained questions from the floor at the conclusion of his report.

Theophan Neisler, Holy Spirit Church, Wantage, NJ asked if the Canonization Commission has under consideration any other possible canonizations.

His Beatitude replied that various names have been put forward, most notably Metropolitan Leonty. He asked Archbishop Daniel, Chair of the Canonization Commission, to comment. His Eminence clarified that the Commission listens to the voice of the faithful in this regard.

Priest Andrew Nelko, St. Nicholas Church, Weirton, WV asked regarding the Serbian Orthodox Church's recognition of the OCA's autocephaly.

His Beatitude replied that it is unclear. While the Serbian Orthodox Church did not formally recognize the OCA's autocephaly when it happened, we have maintained good relations. Fr. Alessandro traveled to Serbia this year for just that reason, to reestablish good relations.

Archpriest Peter Baktis, Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow Church, Princeton, NJ asked if the liturgical Commission is working to standardize translations.

His Beatitude replied that the Department of Liturgical Music and Translations is working on this, but it is difficult to discern a better mechanism for making decisions regarding translations than His Beatitude simply indicating his personally preferred translation.

James Class, All Saints of America Church, Alexandria, VA asked about potential engagement with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders now that the chancery has moved to the DC area.

His Beatitude stated that from the beginning of the process of relocation, that effort to engage with that area of life was never the primary purpose of relocation, nevertheless, it does offer the opportunity for our church to have more visibility, to speak in a manner that none of the other jurisdictions can speak - on our own - to the concerns of the hopes and desires of the local Orthodox Church on this continent. Mainly, this means personal interactions with people in government.

Priest Alexis Baldwin, SS. George and Alexandra Mission, Fort Smith, AR asked about the possibility of recognizing mothers and clergy wives in some way. Particularly, this would include recognizing those raising large families in our churches, in a manner exemplified by the Patriarchate of Georgia.

His Beatitude agreed that recognition is good. He was particularly impressed by the level of activity in our parishes, as seen in the Call to Reflection responses that he received. In an active parish with families that show great effort and exemplary service, there is no reason not to recognize them. Recognition in the Church ultimately is in the manner we recognized Matushka Olga as a saint. And we do recognize our clergy wives particularly. But it can be harmful to recognize people too much - rewards and awards can become an end in and of themselves. Ultimately, we recognize the transformation of the person.

Ms Hollie Benton requested that further questions be deferred until the end of the session, time allowing.

Chancellor's Report

Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino noted that his attached report was made available in its entirety in the Reports of the Officers booklet. Instead of reading each section of his written report, he gave the attached reflection on the 21st All-American Council theme – “Gathered Together by Christ”.

Credentials Committee Report

Archpriest John Cox, Committee Chair, delivered the following report:

AT PRESENT SESSION:

Hierarchs: 15
Clergy Delegates: 296
Lay Delegates: 235
Total of 546 registered delegates

Clergy Observers: 30
Lay Observers: 72
Total of 648 attendees

TOTAL COUNCIL REGISTRATION:

Hierarchs: 15
Clergy Delegates: 324
Lay Delegates: 259
Total of 598 registered delegates

Clergy Observers: 49
Lay Observers: 118
Total of 765 attendees

Metropolitan Council Statute Amendment

Ms. Lynnell McFarland and Ms. Elizabeth Mikhalevsky presented the proposed amendment of Statute Article V, Section 3.b – Metropolitan Council, regarding terms of office for Metropolitan Council diocesan representative

Clergy Vice-Chair Archpriest Andrew Jarmus moderated discussion of the proposed amendment.

Opponent: His Eminence Archbishop Mark mentioned that the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania has their diocesan assembly in late January. This would create a scheduling conflict in the governing and election procedures within the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania that would leave the Diocese's seats vacant.

Fr. Margheritino reported that the current Metropolitan Council members from Eastern Pennsylvania discussed the matter earlier and that the Diocese's election in January of a given year would be honored as taking effect that year, with a delay of two weeks or so.

Archbishop Mark responded that the Statute should not have an exception.

Proponent: Archpriest Peter Baktis, Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow Church, Princeton, NJ offered a proposed solution for the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania, to have the terms of elected representatives delayed a year.

Question: Archpriest Theodore Boback, St. Andrew Church, Baltimore, MD asked: if someone is elected at a diocesan assembly in the fall, would they then not be on the Metropolitan Council until January?

Fr. Margheritino reminded the council that, procedurally, there is no question and answer time allowed. That is why amendments are published sixty days in advance. There are only arguments for and against.

Opponent: Deacon Matthew Prentice, St. John the Theologian Mission, Fairfax Station, VA: we often see members come and go from the Metropolitan Council. If this amendment is just to ensure that we always have a full roster and newly elected representatives are not delayed for months before taking office, then let's rewrite the amendment to accommodate those dioceses whose elections would create that delay.

Archpriest Geoffrey Korz, All Saints of North America Church, Hamilton, ON, proposed an amendment to the amendment.

Fr. Jarmus reminded the body that further amendments to proposed Statute amendments are out of order, as the Statute requires amendments to be presented at least 60 days in advance.

Opponent: Archpriest David Garretson, SS. Peter & Paul Church, South River, NJ. There has never been an issue of seating delegates from Dioceses. This is a solution looking for a problem.

The discussion concluded, Fr. Jarmus invited Archpriest Sean Levine to explain voting procedures.

After a vote, Fr. Jarmus determined the amendment to be defeated by an overwhelming show of votes against.

Additional Questions

Metropolitan Tikhon entertained further questions pertaining to his report.

Archpriest John Hopko, SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Terryville, CT remarked that while His Beatitude mentioned the East Slavic roots of our church last night, the most pressing issue in the Orthodox world today, that of the fratricidal war of Russia against Ukraine, was not addressed. He asked His Beatitude to share his thoughts.

His Beatitude agreed that this is one of the central issues affecting our Orthodox world. He reminded the body that the Holy Synod was the first to condemn Russian aggression in Ukraine, that our church provided significant material aid to Ukrainian refugees, and that he visited Metropolitan Onufriy since the war began - something no other primate has done. He noted the complexity of the situation, and suggested that the best option in terms of advocacy is to pray for peace. We focus on prayer for a peaceful resolution.

Archpriest Michael Korolev, Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church, Menlo Park, CA thanked His Beatitude for his visit to Ukraine. He asked if there is anything specific our church can do regarding the recent revocation of Metropolitan Onufriy's citizenship.

His Beatitude replied that there is constant, high level of communication of our support with Metropolitan Onufriy, to which he replies. He stated that Metropolitan Onufriy had told him that at times, it can be unhelpful when outsiders, who do not understand the situation, say too much.

James Edwards, St. Innocent Church, Olmstead Falls, OH stated that there are some in our church who are interested in restoring the ancient order of women deacons. Where is our Church on this issue?

His Beatitude prefaced his reply by stating that the role and dignity of women is notable in our church. We have roles for women in abundance, with women serving at high levels in chancery staff, Metropolitan Council, Diocesan Councils, parish councils, parish ministries, seminary roles, and as monastics. Regarding the specific question, simply, the female diaconate has not been handed down to us. Any conversation on the female diaconate can only take place with the blessing of the Holy Synod, and the Holy Synod has not opened this question for official discussion. But we are aware of the issue.

Housekeeping

Protodeacon Peter Ilchuk made a number of housekeeping announcements.

Fr. Jarmus declared Plenary Session II closed at 12:42 PM. Plenary Session II closed with the singing of "It Is Truly Meet."

Orthodox Church in America
21st All American Council
Plenary Session III
Tuesday July 15, 2025
Arizona Grand Resort
Phoenix, AZ

Opening Prayer

The session was convened at 3:05 PM with the singing of “O Heavenly King.”

Treasurer’s Report

Mr. Andrew Smith gave his report to the council (see attached). He specifically referenced Exhibit A and gave some key highlights from his report.

Financial Report

Mr. Smith indicated there is a comprehensive financial report of Stavropegial Institutions included in the Financial Reports booklet.

Auditing Committee Report

Matushka Sharon Hubiak, Auditing Committee Chair, invited the other members of the Auditing Committee to introduce themselves. She referenced the full audit report (attached).

Credentials Report

Archpriest John Cox, Committee Chair, delivered the following report regarding this session:

Hierarchs: 12
Clergy Delegates: 275
Lay Delegates: 236
Total Voters: 531

Clergy Observers: 19
Lay Observers: 63
Total Present: 605

Funding Resolution

Mr. Andrew Smith presented the resolution. Before reading the resolution, he spoke to the process over the past two All-American Councils of moving from a head tax funding model to a proportional giving model for the territorial Dioceses.

Mr. Smith read the full text of the resolution to the Council:

“For the budget years 2026 and following, until the next All-American Council, each territorial diocese with the exception of Canada, Mexico and Alaska shall remit its annual financial obligation for the work of the Synodal Chancery at the rate of 34% of their current year ‘budgeted net operating revenue’.

“For the budget years 2026 and following, until the next All-American Council, the Archdiocese of Canada and the Diocese of Alaska shall remit their annual diocesan financial obligation at the rate of 10% of their current year ‘budgeted net operating revenue’.

“The financial arrangements of the non-territorial dioceses (Romanian Episcopate, Albanian Archdiocese, and Bulgarian Diocese) are based upon agreements made when they entered the OCA and are within the competency of the Holy Synod, subject to periodic review.

“‘Budgeted net operating revenue’ is defined as all revenue budgeted for the current year by the diocese, with the exception of pass-through activity that benefits a third party or funds a special initiative (e.g., scholarship funds, capital campaigns, revenue or expenses associated with donor restricted funds unless the restriction is for operations).”

Ms. Hollie Benton, Lay Vice-Chair, reported that the Metropolitan Council recommends the resolution. The floor was opened for discussion.

Proponent: Bob Graban, Holy Transfiguration Church, Livonia, MI, said that looking back at past councils there has been much debate as to the various levels of funding. Now we see greater equality and financial health. Glory to God.

Proponent: Deacon Matthew Prentice, St. John the Theologian Mission, Fairfax Station, VA, asked for a point of clarification: The Diocese of Mexico is not mentioned – is this intentional?

Mr. Smith: Yes, the Church is intentionally silent on that, as there is no expectation of contribution.

Opponent: Mr. Daniel Ralich, St. Elia the Prophet Church, Akron, OH, questioned the fairness of asking for a 10% contribution from the Diocese of Alaska, given the economic struggles facing many Alaskans. Mr Ralich proposed that their commitment of 10% should be covered by the Romanian Episcopate, Albanian Archdiocese, and Bulgarian Diocese specifically.

Ms. Benton called the matter to a vote: the resolution passed by verbal acclamation.

Pension Board Report

Pension Board Chair Matushka Mary Buletza Breton delivered the Pension Board Report (attached).

She clarified two points:

- 1.) Pension benefits vest after five years.
- 2.) The Pension Board does not recommend the adoption of the proposed Statute amendment regarding pension matters.

Stavropegial Monasteries Report

Archimandrite Sergius (Bowyer), Igumen Christopher (Savage), and Mother Cecelia (Harvey) gave their respective reports from the Stavropegial Monasteries (attached).

In addition to the content of their written reports, Igumen Christopher gave a small snapshot of the life of the monastics at the Monastery of New Skete; Mother Cecelia (Nuns of New Skete – Our Lady of the Sign) spoke from the perspective of the female community at New Skete; and Archimandrite Sergius noted that St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery was founded precisely on July 15, 1905. He also affirmed that St. Tikhon Monastery is a force for good in the world and thanked those who support the monastery.

Questions/Discussions

Ms. Benton opened the floor to questions on the Pension Board Report and the Stavropegial Monasteries Report – there were none.

Resolutions

There were no resolutions presented at this time.

Housekeeping

Protodeacon Peter Ilchuk made a number of housekeeping announcements.

Ms. Benton declared Plenary Session III closed at 4:13 PM. Plenary Session III closed with the singing of “It Is Truly Meet.”

Orthodox Church in America
21st All American Council
Plenary Session IV
Wednesday July 16, 2025
Arizona Grand Resort
Phoenix, AZ

Opening Prayer

The session was convened at 10:42 AM with the singing of “O Heavenly King.”

Clergy Vice-Chair Archpriest Andrew Jarmus announced that the minutes of the first three plenary sessions have been approved by the Holy Synod and posted on the OCA website.

Metropolitan’s Opening Remarks

His Beatitude asked Deacon Alexander Woodill to intone “Many Years” for His Grace Bishop Gerasim of Fort Worth and Archpriest John Parker, Dean of St. Tikhon’s Seminary, on the occasion of their birthdays.

His Beatitude also referenced yesterday’s luncheon in honor of Archbishop Benjamin on the occasion of his retirement after twenty years of Archpastoral ministry. His Beatitude formally expressed the gratitude of the entire Orthodox Church in America for His Eminence’s years of patient and wise leadership. The Church will miss His Eminence’s talents offered to the Church and in service on the Synod, but we know that we will still benefit from his prayers. The Council gave His Eminence a standing ovation, and sang him “Many Years.”

His Beatitude announced that following the formal acceptance of Archbishop Benjamin’s petition to retire, the Holy Synod has declared the See of San Francisco vacant. His Beatitude informed the Diocese that he has appointed himself its *locum tenens*. He will preside at a special nominating assembly this afternoon. He asked for the Council’s prayers for this event.

Credentials Report

Archpriest John Cox, Committee Chair, delivered the following report regarding this session:

Hierarchs: 14

Clergy Delegates: 286

Lay Delegates: 237

Total Voters Present: 537

Two Thirds Majority: 358

Clergy Observers: 28

Lay Observers: 54

Total Present: 619

Pension Statute Amendment

Archpriest Peter Robichau, Secretary of the Diocese of the South, following hortatory remarks, gave an overview of the proposed statute amendment on behalf of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the South.

Fr. Robichau addressed known critiques of the amendment.

Metropolitan's Remarks

His Beatitude stated that he was not commenting on the merits of the amendment proposal, but he did remind the Assembly that his office is in charge of good and proper process regarding the Statute. In that light, he is asking two things:

- 1.) That we speak with precision and facts when it comes to discussing issues such as this amendment.
- 2.) That we have a respectful discussion which reflects the love of the Church and care for the building up of the Church.

Speaking on the facts, His Beatitude asked OCA General Counsel Mr. Mark C. Hamilton to comment on legal matters pertaining to the amendment.

Remarks of the OCA General Counsel

Mr. Hamilton remarked that the proposed amendment has garnered many questions regarding legal matters. He also clarified that neither he nor the Chancery Office has taken a position for or against the amendment.

He spoke on the following topics:

- The manner in which the amendment was brought to the Council
- New Pension Board member selection process
- Pension Plan Advisory Committee and potential fiduciary duties
- Pension Board members serving as Trustees
- Alternative retirement instruments
- Additional costs and potential legal liability concerns

Discussion

Lay Vice-Chair Ms. Hollie Benton outlined the parameters for arguments for (up to 10 participants) and against (up to 10 participants) the amendment.

Opponent: Mr. David Lane, Elevation of the Holy Cross Church, Sacramento, CA recalled that he was once quite concerned with the Plan. He related the efforts that had been made over the years to strengthen the Plan. It was determined that the vulnerability of the plan lay in the lack of full

participation, as is mandatory. Since Baltimore, near full participation has been accomplished; and the Plan is viable and is projected to be fully funded within 12 years. He urged a 'no' vote.

Proponent: Mr. Michael Strelka, Holy Resurrection Church, Palatine, IL spoke on concerns over removing the authority of the All-American Council to elect Pension Board Members and encouraged drawing upon the entire OCA for nominees.

Opponent: Mr. Ray Steeb, St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA, stated that there is a risk, with this new amendment, of blurring the separation between the Pension Plan and the OCA, which would blur together Pension assets and the OCA assets. He noted that Pension Board nominees do not have to be present to be elected.

Opponent: Ms. Janet Van Duyn, St. Athanasius Chapel, Bronxville, NY, stated that to remove the autonomous status of the Pension Board is a bad idea. She added that to narrow the pool of candidates to only those vetted by the Metropolitan Council would not guarantee that better qualified candidates would be chosen. She also noted that our plan, as a defined benefit plan, is far superior to other types.

Opponent: Archpriest Nikolai Breckenridge, St. Nicholas Church, Bethlehem, PA, stated that while this amendment primarily intends to facilitate the selection of better qualified candidates, it contains additional elements that could result in unforeseen consequences.

Opponent: Matushka Tamara Patterson, St. Athanasius Church, Nicholasville, KY, noted multiple issues with the amendment, particularly regarding the Pension Board's fiduciary responsibility to protect the Pension Plan. The proposed amendment would create a situation in which creditors of the OCA could claim pension assets in case of a lawsuit. She added that to use the Pension Plan's finances to design alternative plans would be against the Pension Board's duty to plan members. In addition, the language regarding the advisory committee would in fact be giving the advisory committee an administrative role.

Opponent: Mr. Dismas Ingram, St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA, expressed that the best way to get a dignified retirement is through a defined benefit pension plan, so we should not allow for any potential departure from the Pension Plan.

Opponent: Mr. Basil Kochan, St. Nicholas Church, Akron, OH, noted that the current percentage of contribution is typical for employers providing this type of pension plan. Approval of this amendment would be against all the progress that the Holy Synod and Pension Board have achieved toward fully funding the Pension Plan.

Opponent: Archpriest David Garretson, SS. Peter and Paul Church, South River, NJ, reiterated that the longstanding issues with the plan were due to non-compliance. He has concerns that the tax exempt status of the Pension Plan could be lost were this amendment to be approved. He noted that the Metropolitan Council and Pension Board have improved the stability of the Pension Plan.

After a vote, Ms. Benton determined the amendment to be defeated by an overwhelming show of votes against.

Housekeeping

Protodeacon Peter Ilchuk made a number of housekeeping announcements.

Ms. Benton declared Plenary Session IV closed at 11:55 AM. Plenary Session IV closed with the singing of “It Is Truly Meet.”

Orthodox Church in America
21st All American Council
Plenary Session V
Thursday, July 17, 2025
Arizona Grand Resort
Phoenix, AZ

Opening Prayer

The session was convened at 1:15 PM with the singing of “The Grace of the Holy Spirit.”

Lay Vice-Chair Ms. Hollie Benton reported that the minutes of Plenary Session IV have been approved by the Holy Synod and posted to the OCA website.

Elections Procedure

Archpriest Sean Levine, Chair of the Council Tellers, and Priest David Bozeman, Chair of the Nominations Committee, went over the elections procedures. Fr. Bozeman announced that Priest Jeremy McKemy has withdrawn his nomination to the Pension Board.

Credentials Report

Archpriest John Cox, Committee Chair, delivered the following report regarding this session:

Hierarchs: 13
Clergy Delegates: 261
Lay Delegates: 225
Clergy Observers: 25
Lay Observers: 56

Total Voters: 499
Total Present: 580

Question: Janet Van Duyn, St. Athanasius Chapel, Bronxville, NY pointed out that the instructions in superscript on the screen say to vote for 4 Clergy and 4 Lay Members of the Metropolitan Council and 3 Clergy and 3 Lay Members of the Pension Board, not 3 Clergy and 3 Lay Members of the Metropolitan Council and 2 Clergy and 2 Lay Members of the Pension Board as is stated on the ballot. Ms. Benton clarified that delegates should vote for 3 Clergy and 3 Lay Members of the Metropolitan Council and 2 Clergy and 2 Lay Members of the Pension Board.

Elections

Ms. Benton noted that Fr. Levine recused himself from the counting of the ballots, as he is one of the candidates for the Metropolitan Council. Matushka Danielle Ilchuk will serve as Council Tellers Chair and oversee the counting of ballots.

Office of Pastoral Life

Archpriest Nicholas Solak, Chair of the Office of Pastoral Life, delivered his report to the Council and showed a short video on the Office's work, highlighting the Financial Health Initiative, Thriving in Ministry, Synaxis, and Clergy Wives Ministry. His full report may be read in the Council Reports booklet.

OCA Departments Report

Archpriest Thomas Soroka, Project Manager for the Departments of the Orthodox Church in America, delivered his report to the Council. He presented the work of the Departments of Liturgical Music and Translations, Christian Education, Evangelization and Missions, and Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry, in providing essential resources to the parishes, missions, and institutions of the OCA. His full report may be read in the Council Reports booklet.

Resolutions

Archpriest Timothy Sawchak, Chair of the Resolutions Committee, introduced a resolution from the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania. Its full text is:

"Be it resolved that the All-American Council direct the Metropolitan Council to establish standards and requirements for the vetting of candidates for the OCA Pension Board. The standards for vetting of lay candidates for the Pension Board shall include (but are not limited to) assessment of academic and/or professional background in areas of financial planning, portfolio management, and accounting. The vetting shall also consider candidates to the Pension Board with expertise in non-profit governance and fiduciary duties. Recognizing that the requirements for lay candidates to the Pension Board, if applied to clergy, would severely limit the pool of those candidates, these criteria are strongly encouraged, but not required, for clergy candidates being considered for the Pension Board.

Giving sufficient time for the implementation of this process before the convening of the next All-American Council, be it further resolved that the vetting standards developed by the Metropolitan Council be presented to the Holy Synod before their Fall 2027 session for consideration.

Be it further resolved that upon approval of vetting standards by the Holy Synod, a subcommittee of the Metropolitan Council shall undertake the vetting process of Pension Board candidates for consideration by the 22nd All-American Council.

Be it finally resolved that this process be applied in the same manner to the nominating of candidates to the Pension Board for all future All-American Councils."

Clergy Vice-Chair Archpriest Andrew Jarmus opened the floor for discussion on the resolution, instructing that there may be up to five speakers for, and up to five speakers against, it.

Proponent: Priest John Kotalik, St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA, thought this resolution a wonderful way to forge ahead and make systematic the ground gained over the past few years. It does not require debate about the Statute. It is a way to ensure that our candidates to the Pension Board are always qualified, as is the case at this Council.

Opponent: Archpriest Geoffrey Korz, All Saints of North America, Ontario, Canada, posed a question to the mover: is the intention of the resolution to add criteria to these positions but still have members of the Pension Board be elected by the All-American Council?

Answer: Priest Paul Witek, All Saints Church, Olyphant, PA answered that yes, those who are vetted under the resolution could be elected by the All-American Council.

Point of clarification: Archpriest John Hopko, SS. Cyril and Methodius Church, Terryville, CT stated that there seems to be a misapprehension – nominees for the Pension Board need not be present at an All-American Council to be elected to the Pension Board.

Proponent: Archpriest Nikolai Breckenridge, St. Nicholas Church, Bethlehem, PA echoed that Pension Board nominees do not need to be present at the All-American Council. He supported the resolution for many reasons. It is helpful to have codified language on what we expect of Pension Board members. Secondly, it provides a runway, built into this resolution, to give the Synod sufficient time to find qualified, vetted candidates. Lastly, this year all the people on the slate are very qualified, but we can't count on the fact that it will 'just happen' like that every time.

Friendly Amendment: Matushka Tamara Patterson, St. Athanasius Church, Nicholasville, KY moved to postpone the implementation of this proposed resolution until after it has been vetted by OCA General Counsel and Pension Board Counsel.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bob Graban, Holy Transfiguration Church, Livonia, MI.

Fr. Jarmus stated that the Council would now entertain up to five arguments for and up to five arguments against the friendly amendment.

Proponent: Archpriest David Garretson, SS. Peter and Paul Church, South River, NJ, believed the amendment is crucial. My concern about the original resolution is that it pierces the veil between the fiduciary responsibilities of the Metropolitan Council and the unique and separate fiduciary responsibility of the Pension Board. The role of the Pension Plan Trustees and the Pension Board members is not to be subject matter experts. They are chosen and entrusted to act in good common sense. He wholeheartedly endorsed the amendment, and resolution, if the amendment passes.

Proponent: Priest Joel Brady, Holy Apostles Church, Lansing, NY, questioned the wording of the amendment, suggesting that instead of saying "to postpone," it would be better to say "implementation of this resolution will be contingent upon review of the OCA General Counsel and Pension Board Counsel."

Matushka Tamara Patterson accepted the change in wording.

Question: Archpriest Michael Meerson, Christ the Savior Church, New York City, NY, asked how the resolution would be implemented given the word "postponed"?

Answer: Matushka Tamara Patterson responded that the reason for this friendly amendment is to ensure that the original resolution does not jeopardize the Pension Plan under tax law. We want to make sure this does not breach any fiduciary duty. If it is found not to comply with tax law by both legal opinions, then it would not be implemented. If it does comply, it would be implemented.

Opponent/Question: Priest Athanasios Kombos, St. Paisios the Athonite Mission, Nacogdoches, TX, agreed with the wisdom behind the amendment, as it is very common to have legal counsel review an amendment before it is adopted. If the purpose is to have a legal review, why have the Pension Board Counsel review it as well? Would not the General Counsel's opinion be more than sufficient?

Answer: Matushka Tamara Patterson replied that the Pension Board has an attorney on retainer. This attorney has specific expertise in pension law and tax code that would apply to this resolution.

The Secretariat read the resolution with the addition of the proposed friendly amendment ("The implementation of this resolution will be contingent upon review of the OCA General Counsel and Pension Board Counsel") added.

Fr. Jarmus called the question on the friendly amendment. The amendment passed by unanimous verbal acclamation.

Discussion on the resolution resumed.

Opponent: Mr. Graban pointed out that there is an understanding that these resolutions are phrased as "should." He did not think that this resolution has statutory force. These actions are under the competence of the Metropolitan Council, to do on their own when there is more time, to take legal issues into consideration in a mature way. This action is premature and too short notice to try and force in the form of a resolution.

Proponent: Mr. John Malinchok, Holy Ascension Church, Frackville, PA, stated that this resolution helps to ensure that the quality of candidates we see today will be as high at future All-American Councils.

Opponent: Deacon Harrison Russin, Three Hierarchs Chapel, Crestwood, NY voiced his reservation that the resolution does not carry the same force as an amendment to the Statute. It would need to be an amendment, since if we vote for this as a resolution, it would not have any force in a statutory way.

Proponent: Reader Chad Harris, Archangel Gabriel Mission, Weatherford, TX, said it sounds like the Pension Board has been making great strides. Let us continue to professionalize and enhance this.

Proponent: Fr. Witek pointed out that the Pension Plan and the Pension Board have been discussed for the past two councils. This is indeed important, but the Church needs to move on to issues of evangelization, the marginalized, clergy health, the Gospel. He urged approval of this motion.

Clarification: Alexis Liberovsky, Metropolitan Council, OCA Archivist responded to Dn. Russin's reservation, stating that he is correct in that the resolution would not have the force of a Statute Amendment, but there have been times in the past where because an amendment could not be adopted, there have been resolutions that provisionally made mandates on issues that are not in the Statute. For instance, there was a resolution on property held in trust many years ago that eventually made its way into the new Statute adopted 10 years ago.

Opponent: Ms. Maureen Jury, St. Seraphim Cathedral, Dallas, TX, questioned how many of the delegates had read the CVs of the current Pension Board candidates. The effect of this resolution could be that we will either exclude potential nominees or discourage qualified personnel from seeking or accepting nomination.

Fr. Jarmus called the question. The resolution as follows was passed by an overwhelming show of votes.

"Be it resolved that the All-American Council direct the Metropolitan Council to establish standards and requirements for the vetting of candidates for the OCA Pension Board. The standards for vetting of lay candidates for the Pension Board shall include (but are not limited to) assessment of academic and/or professional background in areas of financial planning, portfolio management, and accounting. The vetting shall also consider candidates to the Pension Board with expertise in non-profit governance and fiduciary duties. Recognizing that the requirements for lay candidates to the Pension Board, if applied to clergy, would severely limit the pool of those candidates, these criteria are strongly encouraged, but not required, for clergy candidates being considered for the Pension Board. Giving sufficient time for the implementation of this process before the convening of the next All-American Council, be it further resolved that the vetting standards developed by the Metropolitan Council be presented to the Holy Synod before their Fall 2027 session for consideration.

Be it further resolved that upon approval of vetting standards by the Holy Synod, a subcommittee of the Metropolitan Council shall undertake the vetting process of Pension Board candidates for consideration by the 22nd All-American Council. Be it finally resolved that this process be applied in the same manner to the nominating of candidates to the Pension Board for all future All-American Councils.

Implementation of this resolution will be contingent upon review of the OCA General Counsel and Pension Board Counsel."

St. Tikhon's Seminary Report

Archpriest John Parker, Seminary Dean and Chief Operating Officer, addressed the Council. The full Seminary report may be found in the Council Reports booklet.

St. Vladimir's Seminary Report

St. Vladimir's Seminary Dean Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie addressed the Council. The full Seminary report may be found in the Council Reports booklet.

Housekeeping

Protodeacon Peter Ilchuk made a number of housekeeping announcements.

Questions / Discussions:

Fr. Jarmus opened the floor to questions on any reports given at Plenary Session V.

Question: Priest Benjamin Garcia, St. Herman Church, Oxnard, CA asked if there has been an analysis of effects of cuts to Medicaid and SNAP on seminarians.

Answer: Fr. Parker replied that such analysis has not been done by the seminary.

Question: Priest Ryan Bishop, St. Olga of Alaska Mission, Edmonton, Alberta: What is the nature of the online courses to be offered through St. Tikhon's Seminary this coming year? Are there any prerequisite qualifications for participants? Will there be any degree or certificate to mark completion of these courses?

Answer: Fr. Parker said that many courses in the Seminary curriculum truly should be completed prior to matriculation. Classes for the first four of these eight introductory courses have been audio-recorded. We anticipate two tracks: one is to audit (i.e., listen to) the course; the other is to receive a certificate upon completion. The goal for the next four to five years is just to advance general knowledge of the Orthodox Faith for all who are interested. The eventual goal is to have seminary students complete these courses before they enter the residential program.

Question: Priest John Black, St. Herman of Alaska Church, Shillington, PA, stated, regarding the Departments report, that sometimes the Church recognizes the need to rehabilitate an existing parish, as existing parishes can have the same challenges as new missions. He asked if there has been the thought to create programs or grants for such situations.

Fr. Soroka was not available to answer the question.

Election Results:

Parliamentarian Mr. Joe Neglia reported a problem with the ballots. There are 499 voters reported in the credentials, but 503 ballots were counted. He recommended looking at the vote totals. If the differences in votes between candidates are greater than four, then there should not be an issue. It appears the differences are greater than four for those elected.

Fr. Jarmus stated that the parliamentarian's recommendation could be accepted by consensus.

Fr. Cox moved to accept the Parliamentarian's recommendation. Archpriest Marcus Burch, St. John of the Ladder Church, Greenville, SC, seconded.

The recommendation was approved by verbal consensus.

Matushka Danielle Ilchuk delivered the election results.

Metropolitan Council Clergy:

- Archpriest Sean Levine 325 (elected)
- Archpriest Christopher Foley 323 (elected)
- Archpriest Timothy Sawchak 300 (elected)
- Archpriest Justin Mathews 232 (elected alternate)
- Priest John Kotalik 226

Metropolitan Council Laity:

- Matushka Miho Ochiai Ealy 309 (elected)
- Mr. David Lane 257 (elected)
- Dr. Peter Bouteneff 255 (elected)
- Mr. Alexis Liberovsky 250 (elected alternate)
- Ms. Elizabeth Mikhalevsky 174
- Mr. Bob Graban 122
- Mr. Ray Steeb 96

Pension Board Clergy:

- Archpriest David Garretson 362 (elected)
- Archpriest Eric Tosi 303 (elected)
- Priest Athanasios Kombos 254 (elected alternate)

Pension Board Lay Members:

- Matushka Tamara Patterson 377 (elected)
- Mr. Ivan Rudolph-Shabinsky 219 (elected)
- Ms. Carol Skinner 197 (elected alternate)
- Mr. Theodore Peterson 144

Fr. Jarmus declared Plenary Session V closed at 3:39 PM. Plenary Session V closed with the singing of “It Is Truly Meet.”

Orthodox Church in America
21st All American Council
Plenary Session VI
Friday, July 18, 2025
Arizona Grand Resort
Phoenix, AZ

Opening Prayer

The session was convened at 9:12 AM with the singing of “The Grace of the Holy Spirit.”

Lay Vice-Chair Ms. Hollie Benton announced that \$3,646.00 was collected for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) at yesterday’s primatial Liturgy.

The Holy Synod has approved the Plenary Session V minutes. They have been posted to the OCA website.

Pan-Orthodox Agencies (Assembly of Bishops)

Priest Nicholas Anton, Director of Operations of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, addressed the Council.

He introduced the vision and approach of the Assembly, outlining its various ministries. He indicated that a new digital app of the Assembly, “Koinonia,” is forthcoming.

Military Chaplains Report

Archpriest Theodore Boback, Dean of the Office of Military Chaplains, delivered his report to the Council. The full report may be read in the Council Reports booklet.

Archpriest Sean Levine and Priest Thaddeus Werner gave personal accounts of their chaplaincy ministries.

Institutional Chaplains Report

Archpriest Steven Voytovich, Director of the Office of Institutional Chaplains, delivered his report to the Council. The full report may be read in the Council Reports booklet.

Final Resolutions

Archpriest Andrew Jarmus, Clergy Vice-Chair, stated that there were no resolutions submitted from the floor.

Housekeeping

Protodeacon Peter Ilchuk made two housekeeping announcements.

Installation of Metropolitan Council

His Beatitude installed the newly elected members of the Metropolitan Council. “O Lord, save Thy people...” was sung.

Concluding Remarks from Metropolitan Tikhon

His Beatitude offered a few words of reflection on the past week.

He remarked that this morning at the Akathist of All-American Saints, the Gospel reading (Mt. 28:16-20) mentioned that the apostles gathered in a moment on a mountain. We are, as has been said, at an Orthodox moment. At the Rite of the Elevation of the Precious Cross, the bishop lowers the cross before bringing it up again. It would seem that today we have come to the “moment” where the bishop is about to raise the cross again. Our movements in the Church follow the path of the Cross – through the weight of struggles and the glory of victories. This is an image of our existence as Orthodox Christians, a reminder that the Cross is at the center of our struggles and our blessings. By remaining faithful to Christ and the Cross we can weather the waves and storms of life.

He then reflected that having glorified a new saint, Righteous Matushka Olga of Kwethluk, we have now added her to the company of saints that Christ has gathered for our benefit. Many can remember the days when there was one saint, Saint Herman of Alaska, and now there are nineteen. But we do not depend on the quantitative aspect of this. The newly commissioned icon of North American Saints reflects this – even without centuries of martyric witness, it seems that we are poised to fulfill the Gospel reading from this morning: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.”

Credentials Report

Archpriest John Cox, Committee Chair, delivered the following report for this session:

Hierarchs: 11

Clergy Delegates: 196

Lay Delegates: 158

Clergy Observers: 18

Lay Observers: 54

Total Present: 437

Closing Prayer and Adjournment

With no objections from the floor, Fr. Jarmus declared Plenary Session VI concluded and the 21st All-American Council adjourned at 10:15 AM. The Council closed with the singing of “It Is Truly Meet.”

Report of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon Presented to the 21st All-American Council

July 15, 2025

Your Eminences and Your Graces, my beloved concelebrants and brothers,
Honored Abbots, Abbesses, and Monastics,
Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers and Clergy Wives,
Distinguished Delegates, Retired Clergy, and Observers,
Beloved Youth, Young Adults, and Esteemed Guests,

Introduction

Today, as we meet in council, we come together as those “gathered together by Christ.” We do not come together as free agents, as it were: there is one who called us here. He has purchased us at the price of his own Blood, and we are gathered together, not to pursue our own agendas and our own ends, but to do his will. Our Church is not ours: it is his. The building up of the Church is not our project to carry out in our own ways: it is his project from before the beginning of worlds. I paraphrase one beautiful way in which the story has been told:

A father said to his son, “Son, I want you to marry. Your wife will be unfaithful; she will go after other men; she will abuse your trust; she will take your love for granted. But no matter how outrageous her misdeeds, I want you to be faithful to her and love her to the end.” The son said: “Father, thy will be done.” And the father said: “Let there be light.”

In this world, we often perceive the Church as described here: a wavering and unfaithful bride, a harlot-bride like Gomer. But, in the age to come, when the defeat of sin, death, and the devil – a defeat already enacted by Christ on the Cross – has been perfectly revealed and realized, then the Church will appear as she truly is, who she always has been since before the ages: the immaculate Bride of the supremely innocent Son of God. As St. John the Theologian writes, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

This eschatological vision is not a pretty extra, icing on top of the cake of our “real” business. This is who we are, who we really desire to be: the very people of God, the true Israel, the Spouse of the Lamb. This is a reality

more real than all the fleeting appearances and processes we experience in this world of becoming.

Therefore, when we gather in council, our practice of conciliarity should not just be a question of procedure. Rather, conciliarity is a manifestation of the eternal character of the Church as the Bride of Christ. Conciliarity, therefore, is always Christ-focused, Christocentric: we are gathered together to do his will. We are gathered together in obedience to him. We are clay, and he is the potter. Thus, as St. Sophrony says, “Without the culture of obedience, we cannot comprehend the mystery of conciliarity.” Conciliar harmony is not the clamoring and jockeying of democracy: it is the mystery we experience when we authentically seek the will of God together.

In this respect, we would do well to remember that God’s will is not something abstract and covert: it is revealed in the Scriptures, in the holy Tradition, in the canons, in the Fathers, in the lives of the saints. As our Lord says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” And as Saint Paul says, “Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” And again: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The will of God is not the product of our fallen imagination and opinion: it is what we discover when our mind is renewed through obedience, struggle, humility, and sanctifying grace.

In connection with this, before proceeding to the main areas of my report, I would like to comment on my overall approach to my primatial ministry. I am known for taking my time in making decisions. However, what may appear from the outside to be delay or indecision is, in fact, the fruit of careful reflection.

The same uncle I mentioned in my address last night has likened the bishop to a mountain guide: the bishop, he said, leads people up and down the mountain. I view my duty as Primate in this way: I strive to lead the people up toward the light of Tabor, as I discussed last night. But it is also part of my work to lead the Church down, down to reach out to the suffering world, just as Christ, coming down from the mountain with his disciples, encountered the epileptic boy and his father. We must practice stewardship, but not without prayer: just as Christ descended in the Nativity and ascended the Cross and descended to hell and ascended to

heaven, so our life in him is fulfilled in a pattern of ascent and descent, going up and down the mountain.

Ultimately, I strive, in conciliar fashion, to lead the Orthodox Church in America to fulfilling the will of God, in unity—not uniformity, but deep unity—with all the faithful, both living and departed. Primacy, like conciliarity, requires a spirit of obedience. This is what I aim for, through reflection and prayer, and with the support of the prayers of the whole Body of the Church.

Over the course of the past three years, the Orthodox Church in America has made a number of major strides as part of fulfilling our core mission of preaching the Gospel and sharing the fullness of the Orthodox Faith with the people of North America. In this report, I will focus on three areas of my primatial ministry during the past triennium. First, I will discuss the canonization of Saint Olga. Second, I will discuss the external affairs of our Church, especially as they relate to our own autocephaly. Third, I will discuss internal matters, specifically, the stavropegial institutions and Chancery, responsibility for which are entrusted to me as the Primate.

Canonization of Saint Olga

Our righteous mother Olga of Kwethluk, wonderworker, Matushka of All Alaska, is the first saint canonized by the Orthodox Church in America in over two decades; our last canonization was Saint Raphael of Brooklyn in 2000. The excitement surrounding her glorification was undoubtedly due, first and foremost, to the deep and wide veneration for Matushka Olga on the part of the faithful throughout Alaska, the entire Orthodox Church in America, and the whole world. However, it is unquestionable that the novelty of the event also generated a special excitement: after two decades, the Orthodox Church in America asserted the privileges of her autocephaly and recognized the manifest will of the Holy Spirit in glorifying Matushka Olga, whom God had already long glorified with miracles and widespread reverence among believers.

The glorification was a lengthy and at times challenging process. The Holy Synod issued the act of glorification on November 8, 2023, but due to logistical concerns, the rite of glorification could not take place until this June. The events in Kwethluk and Anchorage were the product of careful planning on the part of many in Alaska, in the central administration of the Orthodox Church in America, and beyond. This planning included

everything from the preparation of liturgical texts to coordinating boat rides. In the end, the events were reverent, joyful, and inspiring. This Wednesday and Thursday, we will provide a capstone to these celebrations with the service of All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy in honor of the newly-canonized saint.

The canonization of Saint Olga is itself a landmark event; the first female North American saint and a rare canonized clergy wife. But this canonization also possesses a broader significance: it is a reminder of the very mission of the Church in the world, of the end for which our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ died. He came in the flesh and suffered his Passion and rose on the third day so that there could be saints: he desired to fashion a people holy unto God. When we canonize a saint, we recognize the core identity of the Church as God's holy and elect people. We are reminded that the goal of our own existence is sanctity.

Therefore, it is my hope that St. Olga's canonization serves as a new beginning. Canonizations should not be rarities that occur every quarter-century: the making of saints, in every sense of the phrase, is at the center of the Church's activity in this world. Therefore, as the Orthodox Church in America continues to grow and mature as an autocephalous Church, with all the privileges, duties, and priorities common to the Orthodox Churches throughout the world, we cannot but pray and strive so that the glorification of saints becomes a cornerstone of our life as the local Church in the lands of North America.

External Affairs

Our local Church exists, of course, in communion with and in relation to the other holy Orthodox Churches, and, as such, external affairs is a major part of my primatial duties. As our statute states, the Metropolitan's competence includes the duty to "represent the Church in its relations with other Orthodox Churches." Assisting the Metropolitan in this capacity are his Chancellor, his brother bishops, and others as he may see fit.

Throughout the past triennium, the travel of myself and the Church's officers has been extensive. Early last summer, accompanied by a delegation including my former Chancellor, Archpriest Alexander Rentel, I traveled to Ukraine, Romania, and Istanbul, concelebrating with His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufriy of Kyiv and meeting with His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, among others.

This February, our new Chancellor—then Acting Chancellor—Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino represented me in an important -visit to the Balkans. In Bulgaria he met with His Holiness Patriarch Daniil, and in Serbia with His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije. Notably, the latter meetings resulted in our receipt of a letter from the Serbian Orthodox Church asking that we, the Orthodox Church in America, recognize the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric as granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Accordingly, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America decided, effective immediately, to recognize the canonicity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and to affirm our full communion with its hierarchs, clergy, and faithful. Currently, my Office is coordinating and planning a fraternal concelebration between myself and His Beatitude Archbishop Stefan of Ohrid and Macedonia, which will take place at my cathedral of St. Nicholas in Washington, D.C. God willing, we will crown this concelebration with a formal recognition of the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which takes its place alongside the Orthodox Church in America as a fully autocephalous local Orthodox Church.

Overall, my priority remains, in this era of ecclesiastical polarization and political division, to maintain communion with all the local autocephalous Churches, seeking greater unity in Christ while preserving our sacred autocephaly.

Though the work of external relations has been in the past overshadowed by urgent internal needs, it is my aim that the coming triennium will see more extensive work building our relationship with the autocephalous Churches throughout the world.

Internal Matters

Internally, the work of the Chancery and the stavropegial institutions under my primatial omophorion continues unabated despite considerable changes in the central administration. At the end of 2024, my former Chancellor, Archpriest Alexander Rentel, left his position at the Chancery to return to St. Vladimir's Seminary as its Chief Operating Officer and as Rector of Three Hierarchs Chapel. I offer my sincere gratitude to Father Alexander

for the sacrificial service he offered to me personally, to my office, and to the Orthodox Church in America.

With his departure, after a half-year period of transition and discernment, I nominated Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, then the Acting Chancellor and Secretary, for the permanent position of Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America, a nomination then confirmed by Holy Synod with the endorsement of the Metropolitan Council. Currently, Fr. Alessandro still carries out the duties of the Secretary as Chancellor and Acting Secretary; effective September 1st, at my nomination, with the Metropolitan Council's endorsement and the Holy Synod's confirmation, Priest David Bozeman will assume the duties of Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America.

I am grateful to Fr. Alessandro and Fr. David for answering the call to serve, and especially to Fr. Alessandro who has helped me to lead the Chancery through this time of transition while carrying out the duty of two Church Officers. I also would like to recognize the Church's third Officer, Andrew Smith, our Treasurer, who has continued his steady, unimpeachable service throughout this period. I look forward to continuing my primatial work of church governance with the assistance and counsel of Fr. Alessandro, Fr. David, and Andrew.

This past triennium has also seen the departure of Judge Ray Lanier from his long tenure as General Counsel to the Orthodox Church in America. After a thorough search process, I made the decision to hire Mark C. Hamilton as the General Counsel of the Orthodox Church in America, a position Mark has served in admirably since 2023. I am grateful for Judge Lanier's service and also pleased that we have an extraordinary new General Counsel in Mark Hamilton.

Though I leave it to my Chancellor to address most details related to the Chancery staff and its operations, I would like to highlight the imminent retirement of Alexis Liberovsky from his position as the Archivist of the Orthodox Church in America. Alex has served as Archivist since 1988, working to document, safeguard, and share the history of the Orthodox Church in America for nearly four decades. During this time, he has also served in many other capacities, including as Secretary for the Canonization Commission. He has been tireless in carrying out research into the history of the Church, sharing his findings with the hierarchy, the central administration, and the public. He has always been eager to assist other researchers, both professional and amateur. In recognition of his service, he

was granted the Medal of the Order of St. Innocent (Bronze) in 2002. Alex's love for our Church and its history, his zeal for our saints, our institutions, and our traditions—all of this is palpable in his work, and I hope that these qualities of Alex continue to inspire us and future generations as those to whom the care of our history and heritage is now entrusted.

In terms of stavropegia: though we will hear separate reports from the stavropegial monasteries and from both stavropegial seminaries, there are a few notes I would like to make here.

First, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary has undergone a significant leadership transition with the retirement of Archpriest Chad Hatfield at the end of May 2024. The past year has seen the restoration of the seminary's traditional administrative structure, according to which it is headed by a dean under my primatial presidency. During the interim of this past year, Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie carried out the responsibilities of seminary president and then dean, and, after a thorough search, he was named permanent dean of the Seminary by the seminary's Board early this year. He officially assumed this position at the beginning of this month.

I note that the seminary's once-planned relocation has been put on indefinite hold. As we all work to ensure that St. Vladimir's will continue to carry out its unique function and mission as part of the Orthodox Church in America for times and seasons to come, I have asked Dr. Alex and the seminary administration, with my primatial oversight and guidance, to focus on operational concerns and the core educational mission of the seminary. To this end, the seminary has initiated a focused strategic planning process.

Second, St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary was recently granted a full ten years of accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools, or ATS. The seminary continues to flourish under the deanship of Archpriest John Parker. Among other exciting recent developments, the seminary will soon have new and extensive housing for its married students.

Third, I note that both seminaries marked their 85th anniversaries in 2023: both institutions were founded in 1938, and I am confident that they will both continue their good and holy work as institutions of the Orthodox Church in America for many years to come. I remind the delegates gathered here of the resolution adopted by the 16th All-American Council in Seattle

calling for parishes to allocate 1% of their budget toward the support of our seminaries.

Finally, at the intersection of stavropegia and external affairs, I would like to note with gratitude the continued work of Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk as Rector of the Church of St. Catherine of the Fields, the representation church of the Orthodox Church in America to our Mother and Sister, the Russian Orthodox Church. Despite present difficulties, Fr. Daniel continues to facilitate communication between our Churches and admirably to represent the Orthodox Church in America both in Russia and beyond.

Conclusion

In sum, I am grateful to God for the successes of this past triennium. The glorification of St. Olga has galvanized our local Church with a renewed zeal for our saints and our entire common life as the local Orthodox Church in North America. As such, I expect that this event will provide momentum for other blessed works and projects in the life of the Orthodox Church in America during the next triennium. Additionally, we are blessed, as one of the local autocephalous Orthodox Churches, to participate in recognizing the Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric and welcoming them into the sisterhood of local Orthodox Churches as the youngest autocephalous Church. By manifesting the unity of the Orthodox Churches in this way, we build up our Church as well; indeed, we strengthen the whole Body of Christ. Though our central administration is still in a period of transition and we have yet to find a permanent Chancery location to succeed the Westwood property, I am confident that the leadership team of Church Officers that I have assembled is well-placed to assist me in my work as Primate in the coming months and years.

Though I speak of my work, I conclude by returning to that fundamental truth of the Church: it is not my project, and it is not our project. The Church is the project of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. With courage and tenacity, discernment and vigor, humility and prayer, we seek to live out the mystery of conciliarity through obedience to the will of God, striving to remain faithful to the apostolic tradition and to preach the Gospel with joy in the lands of North America. May he who gathered us together, Christ our true God, also help us to remain faithful and to teach us in all things the way that we should go, unto the everlasting glory of his holy Name.

Report of the Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America
21st All-American Council
Phoenix, AZ
July 14-18, 2025

Introduction.

I submit this report to the 21st All-American Council in my dual capacity as Chancellor and Acting Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America. The Council gathers this year under the theme “*Gathered Together by Christ*”—a theme that affirms not only our shared faith but also the fundamental nature of the Church as a body in which each member participates in and contributes to the life of the whole. Today, the Lord gathers us in a unique way, through the All-American Council, to come, pray, discuss, deliberate, work, and rejoice together.

At the time of the last All-American Council in Baltimore in 2022, the Church had just entered a new period of transition. Most notably, the relocation of the Chancery from Syosset, New York, to the geographical territory of the Archdiocese of Washington marked a major change after nearly seventy years. This move has brought about several administrative adjustments, including shifts in personnel, operational procedures, and organizational focus.

As is often the case with transitions of this magnitude, the past three years have presented both challenges and new opportunities. Despite the various changes and the limited staff, under the prayerful and wise leadership of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, the Chancery has continued to work faithfully and uninterrupted.

This report provides an overview of key developments since the previous Council. It highlights significant areas of work in Church administration and represents a high-level summary of developments over the past triennium. For more detailed information, I encourage delegates and the faithful to consult the reports submitted to the Metropolitan Council, which are available on the website of the Orthodox Church in America.

The report reflects the responsibilities of both the Chancellor and Secretary, particularly in light of my appointment as Chancellor following the resignation of Archpriest Alexander Rentel at the end of 2024. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Fr. Alexander for his six years of service as Chancellor. His commitment, professionalism, and willingness to provide counsel during this transition have been invaluable.

Gathered together by Christ.

The theme reminds us that our unity extends beyond individuals, parishes, and dioceses—it encompasses our identity as an autocephalous Church, called by Christ to serve in a specific context. As the only fully self-governing Orthodox Church in North America, we have been brought together with a particular mission: to bear witness to the Gospel and to minister to all who live on this continent. This position gives us a unique kind of freedom—one that allows us to respond to the realities of our time and place with creativity, integrity, and faithfulness. But it is also a serious responsibility. We are not here by accident; we have been entrusted with a task. Our autocephaly is not just a structural fact—it is a living expression of our vocation. It calls us to serve, to adapt, and to build up the Church in ways that are rooted in tradition, yet attentive to the needs of the people and communities around us. This

vision is not abstract—it is meant to shape how we live and how we lead, both now and in the years to come.

This vision is anchored in the very identity of the Orthodox Church in America. From the arrival of Orthodox missionaries in Alaska in 1794 to the establishment of Church structures across the continent, our growth has been characterized not by replication of external models, but by adaptation within the Orthodox tradition. A key figure in this development was, of course, St. Tikhon of Moscow, who, as Archbishop in America and later as Patriarch of Russia, recognized the need to cultivate a distinctly local Orthodox life. His convocation of the first All-American Sobor in 1907—with both clergy and lay participation—set the foundation for our conciliar model of governance, which continues today. As we mark 100 years since his repose, his vision remains vital.

This conciliar model finds visible expression in the work of the All-American Council—the very gathering that brings us together in Phoenix this July, as it does every three years. But the work we undertake here does not end when we return home. It continues through the Metropolitan Council, which, with the blessing and oversight of the Holy Synod of Bishops, helps carry forward the vision and decisions of this Council until we reconvene in Dallas in 2028.

Neither the All-American Council nor the Metropolitan Council exists solely for administrative purposes. They are expressions of *sobornost*—a term that speaks to the unity we build through shared responsibility, open collaboration, and mutual accountability. This principle is especially vital for us in the Orthodox Church in America, for whom conciliarity fosters trust, transparency, and cooperation at every level of Church life. It challenges us to lead with discernment, to act with integrity, and to remain attentive to the shared calling we have received.

Church administration, at its heart, is about more than just completing tasks or implementing decisions. Many of the matters that reach the level of the central administration are complex, rarely offering clear-cut or binary solutions. What may appear from the outside as delay or indecision is, more often than not, the result of careful reflection—an effort to safeguard the Church's integrity, maintain stability, and respond wisely to a constantly changing landscape.

In today's climate—where suspicion, polarization, and quick reactions often shape public discourse—it is especially important that the Church preserve a spirit of thoughtful and constructive engagement. We must resist the pressure to adopt reactive habits. Transparency and accountability remain essential values, but the work must always be aimed at the building up of Christ's Holy Church. Most decisions made by the central administration are not driven by ideology or personal agenda; they reflect sincere attempts to serve the Church—pastorally, spiritually, and institutionally—with prudence and care.

At the same time, discernment must be balanced with courage. There are moments when the Church must act decisively, not only to address present needs but also to avoid the kind of inaction that can lead to stagnation or decline. Finding that balance between thoughtfulness and resolve is one of the central challenges.

The ministry of the Apostle Paul offers a meaningful example for us to reflect on. Throughout his letters, Paul urged the early Christian communities toward unity—not a rigid uniformity, but a unity grounded in shared commitment to the Gospel. He called believers to lives of sacrifice, mutual care, and fidelity to Christ, encouraging them to bear one another's burdens and to focus on building up the Church in love and truth. His vision was one of a Church shaped by faithfulness, where unity arises not from sameness, but from a common life rooted in Christ and oriented toward service.

The Orthodox Church in America is not a theoretical concept—it is a living reality, rooted in the everyday life of our parishes, missions, monasteries, and institutions. These are the places where the Church breathes and serves. The work we do—administrative, pastoral, liturgical, and educational—must always aim to support and strengthen these communities, ensuring that the Gospel is proclaimed with both clarity and joy.

Our calling is not abstract, nor is it tied solely to the past. While we honor our history, we are gathered together by Christ today, entrusted with the task of serving His Church faithfully in the present moment. The identity we carry as the Orthodox Church in America brings with it a distinctive responsibility—to minister in this land with attentiveness to its people and its needs, and to do so with faith, humility, and purpose.

Chancellor and Secretary.

In early December 2024, the Orthodox Church in America entered a new period of transition with the announcement that Archpriest Alexander Rentel would step down as Chancellor after six years of faithful and dedicated service. He returned to St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, resuming his teaching responsibilities while also assuming a new administrative role as Chief Operating Officer. At that time, His Beatitude appointed me Acting Chancellor, effective January 1, 2025, while continuing in my role as Secretary. I assumed the position of Chancellor on a permanent basis on June 1, 2025. I am profoundly grateful for the trust placed in me by His Beatitude, the Holy Synod, and the Metropolitan Council.

I wish to also express my deep gratitude, once again, to Fr. Alexander for his leadership and his unwavering commitment to the Church during his tenure. I am especially thankful for his collegiality and willingness to involve me in many aspects of Chancery operations throughout his time in office, which greatly facilitated a smoother and more informed transition when I was asked to take on these additional responsibilities.

This transition comes at a time of heightened activity for the central administration, with several major events unfolding in close succession: the glorification of St. Olga of Alaska, the convening of this 21st All-American Council, and the ongoing work toward identifying a permanent home for the Chancery. These efforts, while deeply important, have also placed considerable strain on our already minimal staff. Currently, the Chancery operates with just three full-time employees: Priest John Mikitish, Deacon Alexander Woodill, and I. Given the expanded responsibilities I have assumed, since January, I have asked Fr. John and Dn. Alexander to assist with some of the projects typically falling under the Office of the Secretary, and I am grateful for their capable support. Their commitment and flexibility have been indispensable in keeping operations moving forward during this demanding period. We look forward to the appointment of a new Secretary, which will allow us to return to a more regular workload for everyone at the Chancery.

The Role of the Chancellor

The Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America serves as the senior presbyter of the Church and functions as chief of staff to the Metropolitan. In this capacity, the Chancellor is a trusted assistant to the Primate and the Holy Synod, directly accountable to them for the execution of decisions and oversight of the daily life and operations of the Chancery.

This includes coordination of national and international clergy-related matters such as seminarian development, ordination processes, interjurisdictional clergy transfers, clergy continuing education, and external affairs. In a broad sense, the Chancellor works closely with hierarchs, seminaries, diocesan

chanceries, and other Church institutions to implement policies and initiatives that serve the good of the Church, its clergy, and its faithful.

Regular reports are presented to the Holy Synod, the All-American Council, the Metropolitan Council, and the wider Church, providing updates on progress, highlighting concerns, and recommending action as necessary. The Chancellor also oversees and coordinates the work of the other officers of the Church. When needed, the Chancellor may represent His Beatitude or the Holy Synod at official events, both within the Orthodox Church and in ecumenical settings.

The Role of the Secretary

The Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America is a senior officer of the Church responsible for ensuring legal compliance, maintaining institutional records, supporting Church governance, and overseeing administrative and communications functions. The Secretary supports the Office of the Metropolitan, the Holy Synod of Bishops, and the Metropolitan Council, contributing to the effective and transparent administration of the Church.

Among the Secretary's core responsibilities are:

- Maintaining legal and nonprofit compliance across parishes and institutions;
- Overseeing safeguarding policies and procedures, including background checks and misconduct prevention;
- Coordinating the official meetings of the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Council, and All-American Council;
- Maintaining proper records and managing the archives;
- Overseeing Church communications to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of news, public statements, and official announcements;
- Collaborating with our technology team to improve the Church's digital infrastructure, enhance security, and reduce operational costs;
- Managing the day-to-day operations of the Chancery property, which serves not only as an administrative center but also as an archival repository and place of welcome for guests and dignitaries.

None of this work is possible without the dedication of a small but capable team of colleagues. Their service—often behind the scenes—reflects a spirit of humility, faith, and love for the Church. I am continually grateful for their quiet diligence and shared commitment to the mission entrusted to us.

Relocation.

Since the summer of 2022, the Orthodox Church in America has been engaged in a significant transition: the relocation of its central administrative offices from Syosset, NY, to a temporary facility in Springfield, VA. While this process has unfolded gradually over the past three years, it represents a decisive shift in the life of the Chancery and in the vision for the Church's national presence.

Right around the time of the Council in Baltimore, we began leasing a temporary office space in Springfield, VA. That temporary space, though modest in scale, has proven to be a practical and efficient working environment. The location offers clear logistical advantages: it is affordable, conveniently situated near major transportation corridors, and largely functional for office work. From this space, His Beatitude has received guests and dignitaries, and it has served as a meeting site for key gatherings, including the Spring 2023 session of the Holy Synod. A welcoming reception room has been created, with portraits of past primates, sacred relics, and a small chapel.

A major effort has also been made to transport and reorganize essential materials from the Westwood property on Long Island, including clergy records—active and archival—liturgical items, sacred objects such as relics and chrism, and furnishings. This has been carried out with deliberate attention to order, ensuring that unnecessary or obsolete items are not simply relocated but responsibly discarded. This disciplined approach has allowed the Chancery in Virginia to operate with greater simplicity and efficiency, especially important in light of our limited space.

While the Springfield facility remains a temporary home, it has provided a stable foundation for the uninterrupted work of the Church's central administration. With the signing of a contract for the sale of the Westwood property at the beginning of 2024, the transition has entered a more decisive phase. Our hope is to secure a permanent Chancery office in the greater DC area before the closing, in order to relocate the remaining items, including the St. Sergius Chapel. If this does not prove possible, we have considered alternative plans for temporary storage.

At this stage, the only regular activity at the Westwood property involves the work of the Archivist, Mr. Alexis Liberovsky, which is addressed in a separate section of this report. Routine maintenance at the NY property has been minimized to preserve resources, with only essential services retained to ensure the safety and functionality of the premises until the anticipated closing, projected for early 2026.

The relocation is far more than a logistical adjustment. From its inception, the move was intended not merely to reduce costs or find more convenient office space, but to bring the Chancery into closer proximity with the life of the Church—specifically through deeper integration with the Archdiocese of Washington, its parishes, clergy, and faithful. In many ways, the relocation fulfills the vision first expressed by the Holy Synod in the early 1980s, when the Archdiocese of Washington was established. While the process has taken time—as meaningful change often does in the life of the Church—the benefits are becoming increasingly evident. The relocation allows the work of the Chancery to be more closely aligned with the daily pastoral and liturgical rhythm of parish life. It also offers the Church a more prominent and accessible presence in the national context.

Of course, significant work remains. The sale of the Westwood property will be a major milestone, but the search for a permanent Chancery location is now of critical importance. In late 2024, with the blessing of His Beatitude, I convened the Chancery Feasibility Study Group—an ad hoc working group tasked with evaluating the needs, opportunities, and challenges associated with acquiring a permanent facility. This group has begun its work in earnest, and several properties have already been considered. I anticipate this process will become a central focus of my responsibilities following the conclusion of this Council.

Chancery Operations.

Over the past three years, the Chancery has continued to carry out the day-to-day responsibilities of Church governance while also responding to a number of unique challenges and needs. This includes planning and supporting meetings of the Holy Synod, the Metropolitan Council, and the Preconciliar Commission, as well as coordinating special sessions when urgent matters required timely attention. Alongside these responsibilities, we have also focused on improving how we function internally. We have made meaningful updates to our digital tools, put more consistent systems in place for managing documents, and worked to foster better collaboration across departments. These efforts, though often carried out behind the scenes, are essential to ensuring the smooth and responsible functioning of the Church's administration. What follows is a summary of key areas of activity; for those interested in more

detail, I encourage you to read the full reports to the Metropolitan Council, which are available on oca.org.

Human Resources, Personnel, and Internal Transitions

Over the past triennium, the Chancery has undertaken a number of important initiatives in the area of human resources and personnel, aimed at improving organizational structure, compliance, and overall support for the Church's central administration.

Working closely with the Ethics and Human Resources Committee, we have made steady progress in key areas, including revising job descriptions, distinguishing employees from independent contractors, and drafting standardized documentation such as confidentiality agreements. One notable development was the creation of a new template for independent contractor agreements. After being finalized in consultation with the HR Committee, this template was reviewed and refined by our newly appointed General Counsel, Mr. Mark Hamilton, whose contributions have added legal clarity and rigor to our personnel practices. The updated agreement has been implemented across the board and is now in use for renewing contractor engagements.

With encouragement from the Auditing Committee, we have also taken steps to standardize the onboarding process for new hires and contractors. Though, apart from filling the position of the Secretary, we do not anticipate new full-time hires in the immediate future, establishing consistent practices has been a priority to ensure good governance and operations.

In early 2024, the Treasurer, Mr. Andrew Smith, transitioned from independent contractor status (1099) to part-time employee (W-2), reflecting his ongoing and integral role in financial oversight.

Other staffing changes have also shaped the work of the Chancery. In September 2022, Priest John Mikitish's role was expanded from part-time to full-time, and he now serves as Executive Secretary to the Chancellor and researcher and consultant to the Metropolitan. Fr. John brings a high level of theological expertise, a deep familiarity with liturgical tradition, and a cultivated intellect that greatly benefit the Chancery's work.

In the course of other transitions at the Chancery, Matushka Brenda Mikitish assumed the role of Database Administrator. In this capacity, she has provided consistently professional, thorough, and detail-oriented support to both the Chancellor and the Secretary.

As of June 1, 2023, Deacon Alexander Woodill began his service as Secretary to the Metropolitan. In a short period, Dn. Alexander has become an indispensable member of the team, ensuring the smooth coordination of His Beatitude's schedule, correspondence, and official engagements, in addition to other Chancery duties.

Additionally, beginning January 1, 2025, Matushka Jennifer Levine joined the Chancery in a part-time capacity to assist with clerical support, hospitality, and administrative projects.

Several departures also merit recognition. Priest Larry Soper and Mr. Barry Migyanko have moved on from their roles at the Chancery, each continuing to serve the Church within their respective dioceses. We remain grateful for their dedication and the professionalism they brought to their work. We also note the retirement of Judge E. R. Lanier, who concluded his service as General Counsel after many years of faithful legal counsel to the Orthodox Church in America. His contribution to the institutional development and legal health of the Church has been foundational.

As already noted earlier, the most significant transition occurred at the end of 2024 with the resignation of Archpriest Alexander Rentel as Chancellor.

In another key personnel development, Ms. Cindy Heise was reappointed as Coordinator for the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA), effective December 2024. Ms. Heise, who served as the first ORSMA Coordinator and is well known across the Church, brings stability, continuity, and professionalism to this important office.

Looking ahead, we anticipate the retirement of Mr. Alexis Liberovsky as Archivist of the Orthodox Church in America, effective July 31, 2025. Alexis has served the Church faithfully as both Archivist and historian for over three decades. His contributions to preserving the memory and institutional integrity of the Church have been invaluable.

The appointment of Mr. Mark Hamilton as General Counsel has also marked a significant step forward for the Church's administrative infrastructure. I am deeply appreciative of the ad hoc committee of legal professionals from across the Church who facilitated this search and selection process. Mr. Hamilton's expertise and the extensive work of his firm have already had a positive impact on a wide range of legal matters affecting the Chancery and the Church at large.

General operations

Over the past several years, the Chancery has undertaken a number of operational improvements and technology upgrades aimed at increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and supporting flexible work arrangements. Recognizing the need for a dexterous administrative structure—capable of functioning effectively in-person, remotely, and while traveling—we have introduced several systems that now form the backbone of our day-to-day work.

Key upgrades include the transition to a virtual server (Box.com), the adoption of a streamlined internal communication platform (Slack), a virtual phone system (MightyCall), a more cost-effective payroll solution (Accudata), and a new database platform (Airtable). Collectively, these technological improvements have enabled the Chancery to continue functioning efficiently during the relocation from Syosset and have positioned us for long-term adaptability. They have also supported the digitization of thousands of documents—including clergy files, synodal and Metropolitan Council minutes, reports, and more—both to preserve administrative records (and hence our history) and to support remote work capabilities for our staff.

Additional technology-related projects are underway. Initial work has begun on a comprehensive redesign and reorganization of the OCA website. The current design is outdated, and the navigation structure is in need of significant revision. This project will continue in coordination with the Communications and Technology teams to ensure a more accessible and functional site for both internal and public use.

Until the appointment of the new Secretary, I remain responsible for a variety of essential administrative tasks that support the wider life of the Church. These include:

- Maintaining the OCA's master 501(c)(3) list and working with parishes on tax-exempt status matters;
- Compiling and distributing the *Chancery Monthly Digest* to members of the Metropolitan Council, diocesan chancellors, and heads of stavropegial institutions;
- Managing the OCA's central calendar, accessible on the homepage of the website;
- Coordinating the planning and logistics of official meetings and events, both in person and via teleconference.

Among these events, the planning and coordination of the 21st All-American Council has been a major focus. I extend my thanks to Protodeacon Peter Ilchuk, who has again taken on the role of Council Manager and whose experience continues to be a great asset.

I hold regular meetings with Archpriest Thomas Soroka, Project Manager for the Departments, and Archpriest Nicholas Solak, Chair of the Office of Pastoral Life. These meetings ensure that His Beatitude and the central administration are kept informed of departmental initiatives, and that appropriate support can be provided.

Another project, overseen by Fr. John Mikitish and implemented in 2023, is our Clergy Ordination Portal. The portal was designed to streamline the ordination process and centralize the required documentation. This new system offers an organized, user-friendly resource for candidates for ordination, and assists in keeping the process consistent and well-documented.

Another important area of ongoing work is my regular collaboration with Insurance Systems of Independence, OH, the Church's insurance broker.

I was appointed by the Holy Synod in Fall 2023 as Chancery liaison to the Pension Board, part of a broader effort to improve coordination and communication between Church departments and the Office of the Metropolitan. Since then, I have worked closely with Mr. Michael Stieglitz, Pension Administrator, and the Board Chair, Matushka Mary Buletza-Breton. I was also asked to chair an ad hoc group of representatives from the Metropolitan Council and Pension Board tasked with working on amendments to the Pension Document, which have been critical in improving dramatically the state of the Pension Plan. I am especially grateful for the positive spirit of cooperation that continues to develop between the Pension Board and the Metropolitan Council.

These represent only a portion of the ongoing work under the purview of the Office of the Chancellor and Secretary. Many other initiatives and operational updates are detailed in the reports to the Metropolitan Council, which I again encourage all delegates to review online to gain a broader understanding of the Church's administrative life.

Finance Office

Under the careful and dedicated leadership of our Treasurer, Mr. Andrew Smith, the Finance Office continues to exercise sound stewardship over the finances of the central administration. As in previous years, we have remained committed to operating with efficiency, fiscal prudence, and transparency—efforts that have contributed to the overall stability of our financial position. I encourage all delegates to review closely the Treasurer's report, as well as the report of the auditing committee, to whom I extend my sincere appreciation for their ongoing service and oversight.

One of the major changes in the Finance office in 2023 was the implementation of a significant reorganization of its finance operations, prompted in part by the Chancery's relocation and the need for increased adaptability and efficiency. This restructuring aimed to strengthen internal controls, streamline reporting procedures, and enhance month-end financial close processes. Historically, the Orthodox Church in America has relied on an internal accounting team, though its size and structure have varied over time. As part of this recent transition, the Church moved to an outsourced accounting model, contracting with Chazin & Company (www.chazinandcompany.com), a firm specializing in financial services for nonprofit organizations, including religious institutions.

Through this partnership, several improvements have been introduced. The accounts payable system is now fully digital, allowing for expense submission, review, and approval to occur online—eliminating the need for physical checks. The credit card reconciliation process has also been modernized:

cardholders can upload receipts, categorize expenses, and align them directly with the general ledger, simplifying oversight for the Treasurer. Chazin brings a level of organizational depth and sector-specific knowledge that enhance the Church's financial infrastructure. Their involvement has been well received by both internal staff and external auditors, offering a more robust and transparent financial management system.

Expansion of the Office of Pastoral Life

One important development in the life of the Church is the expansion of the Office of Pastoral Life which was approved the Metropolitan Council and Holy Synod at their respective Fall 2024 Sessions. In response to the continued growth of initiatives under the Office of Pastoral Life (OPL), Archpriest Nicholas Solak—who has faithfully served as Chair and more recently as Director—was appointed to a full-time position within the Chancery. This development reflects both the increasing scope of the Office's work and the recognition of its importance in the life of the Church. The expansion is made possible through ongoing support from several Lilly Endowment grants, which have been instrumental in sustaining and advancing the Office's programs.

Delegates are encouraged to review the Office of Pastoral Life's report to this Council for a fuller picture of its evolving work and its pastoral significance across the Church.

Archives

Following the approval of the relocation of the Archives of the Orthodox Church in America to St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, as reported at the previous All-American Council, steady progress has been made toward completing this important transition. After extended delays due to municipal permitting issues in the City of Yonkers, St. Vladimir's Seminary was finally able to complete the necessary renovations in the Rangos Building during the summer of 2023, preparing the dedicated space to house the Archival collection.

On August 2, 2023, the Chancery engaged a specialized moving company to transport approximately 800 archival boxes from the basement of the former Chancery property in Westwood to St. Vladimir's Seminary—representing the main portion of the collection. A second major transfer occurred later in the fall, moving an additional 600–700 boxes. These moves were coordinated in consultation with the Archives Commission, which includes Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, Alexis Liberovsky, Dr. Alexandru Tudorie, and Deacon Andrew Kayaian. Following this, only a few smaller supplemental transfers remained, and the Seminary's librarian was given time to begin organizing and setting up the collection in its new home.

By mid-January 2024, the relocation of the sorted Archival collection was almost entirely completed. The remaining materials in Westwood consist of unsorted documents, photographs, and files, which are being reviewed and prepared by the Archivist, Mr. Alexis Liberovsky.

A small portion of the Archival material—specifically, collections that are frequently accessed, such as *The Messenger (Vestnik)*, *The Orthodox Church*, and select All-American Council documents—will remain with the Chancery. These items, which are still stored at Westwood for the time being, will be relocated to the Chancery's current office in Virginia once a proper transfer plan is in place.

At present, a quantity of unsorted documents remains in the Westwood basement. Their preparation for relocation has proceeded slowly and will likely require the engagement of a temporary team after the conclusion of the All-American Council.

Conclusion

I wish to express my deep gratitude to His Beatitude, whom I have the privilege of serving and working alongside each day. His prayerful, wise, and steady approach to leadership continues to be a source of inspiration and reassurance as my colleagues and I carry the shared responsibility of church administration. I am also thankful for my fellow Church Officer, Mr. Andrew Smith, whose support, competence, and faithful service to our Church are of great value.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all my colleagues at the Chancery—whether working in person or remotely, full-time or as contractors—whose dedication and quiet labors support the life and mission of the Orthodox Church in America in countless and often unseen ways.

Finally, I wish to express my deep gratitude to my family—my beloved wife, Anna, and our patient and loving sons, Luca and Nicolas—who have supported me unfailingly in my service to the Church. This past year has been especially challenging and demanding, and they have borne its many sacrifices with quiet strength, grace, and understanding.

As we gather for the 21st All-American Council under the theme *Gathered Together by Christ*, we are reminded that the life of the Church is ultimately sustained not by programs or plans alone, but by the unity we share in Christ, who calls us into communion and entrusts us with the care of His Body in this place and time.

The Orthodox Church in America continues to draw from deep historical and spiritual roots: the legacy of the Alaskan saints, the missionary outreach of the Russian Church, the dedication of immigrant communities, and the conciliar vision that shaped our autocephaly.

Our autocephaly is a gift that enables us to respond freely and responsibly to the needs of this continent. It provides the framework through which we can engage the particular realities of our time and place. We are called to serve here—mindful of our context, accountable to one another, and attentive to the people and communities in our care.

As I conclude this report, I do so with gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Orthodox Church in America during this triennium of transition and growth. Much of our work in the Chancery takes place behind the scenes—through planning, correspondence, and coordination—but it is always directed toward supporting the visible and sacramental life of the Church. Whether navigating administrative challenges, responding to pastoral needs, or coordinating the many moving parts of Church life, the goal remains the same: to strengthen the body of Christ in this land and to be faithful stewards of what has been entrusted to us.

In this spirit, I am reminded of the exhortation in Galatians: “Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart” (Galatians 6:9). These words speak not only to personal perseverance, but to our shared responsibility in building up the Church. May we continue the work before us with diligence and hope, trusting that the seeds we plant today will, by God’s grace, bear fruit in the future.

Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA)

Leadership and Structure

- **Director:** Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, Chancellor
- **Coordinator:** Ms. Cindy Heise, LMSW
- **Consultants:** *Dr. Albert Rossi - Doctorate of Psychology; Bob Koory – Lawyer; Dr. Randa Anderson - Doctorate of Psychology; Fr. Stephen Dusenberry – Clergy; Jim Overby – Therapist.*

ORSMA operates under the authority of the Metropolitan and reports to the Holy Synod of Bishops. Day-to-day supervision is provided by the Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America in collaboration with the ORSMA Coordinator.

As of January 1, 2025, Ms. Cindy Heise began serving as the ORSMA Coordinator on a contractual basis. In this capacity, she has undertaken a thorough review of both active and newly reported cases of sexual misconduct received since the Coordinator position was last occupied. One of the primary tasks has been updating and organizing the ORSMA database, as well as compiling statistical data from recent years.

This work is essential for assessing the Church's overall response to allegations of sexual misconduct. The data not only offers insight into current and past case management but also enables the identification of potential trends. These may include patterns across dioceses, demographic correlations, and common risk factors such as social isolation, marital difficulties, or substance abuse. Such analysis will better inform the Church's efforts in prevention, education, and pastoral support—especially with regard to the well-being of our clergy and lay leaders.

While cases of sexual misconduct remain relatively infrequent within the Orthodox Church in America, their impact—spiritually, emotionally, and institutionally—can be profound. The harm extends beyond individuals and affects entire communities. When such cases become public, the potential damage to the Church's witness and integrity only increases.

It remains imperative that we continue to approach these matters with transparency, accountability, and compassion. Through the continued work of ORSMA, and with the support of the Holy Synod and the broader Church, we remain committed to upholding safe environments for all the faithful and addressing misconduct with the seriousness and care it requires.

Clergy, diocesan leaders, and other Church personnel are reminded that any report or concern regarding possible sexual misconduct must be directed to ORSMA without delay. It is not necessary for the reporter to determine whether a clear violation of the Policies, Standards, and Procedures (PSPs) has occurred. When in doubt, report. The responsibility for determining whether an allegation warrants further inquiry or formal investigation lies with the ORSMA Coordinator and the Chancellor in consultation with qualified consultants and subject matter experts. Failure to report concerns to ORSMA at the outset creates serious challenges for the Church at multiple levels—legal, ethical, and pastoral.

It is important to note that not every report results in a formal investigation. Upon receipt of an allegation, the Coordinator typically conducts an initial inquiry to assess the nature and credibility of the report. Only when warranted is a formal investigation initiated, which may involve the convening of a trained response team. This tiered approach allows for discernment, appropriate response, and responsible stewardship of Church resources, while ensuring that allegations are taken seriously and the safety of the faithful remains paramount.

Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC)

Membership (as of 2025)

Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, Chancellor, ex officio

Cindy Heise, ORSMA Coordinator, ex officio

Archpriest David Mezynski

Archpriest Justin Patterson

Protodeacon Peter Danilchick

Deacon Ken Liu, Esq.

Robert Koory, Esq.

Ms. Allison Nix

Mandate and Purpose

The Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC) was established by the Holy Synod of Bishops in 2010 to support the work of the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA). Originally known as the “Sexual Misconduct Allegations Review Committee,” SMPAC functions in an advisory capacity, offering expertise on matters related to sexual misconduct prevention, education, and policy.

SMPAC’s role is strictly consultative and does not extend to the handling of individual cases, which remains the responsibility of the Diocesan Hierarchs and ORSMA, in accordance with the Policies, Standards, and Procedures (PSPs) on Sexual Misconduct of the Orthodox Church in America.

SMPAC operates under the authority of the Holy Synod and is chaired by the Chancellor of the Church, who supervises the day-to-day operations of ORSMA. The Committee draws upon the professional experience and ecclesiastical insight of its members, who represent a range of fields including pastoral care, psychology, law, theology, and nonprofit management.

Core Responsibilities

- Advise on the improvement and application of the PSPs.
- Assist in monitoring diocesan compliance with PSPs and recommending best practices.
- Recommend updates to educational and training resources for clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- Respond to specific requests for input from the Holy Synod or ORSMA.
- Assist Dioceses in the implementation of the PSPs.

Recent Initiatives and Activities (2022–2025)

Since the 20th All-American Council, SMPAC has engaged in the following work:

- Held regular quarterly meetings via teleconference to address policy questions, review compliance reports, and consult on ORSMA matters.
- Continued refinement of background check processes and related documentation.
- Evaluated case timelines and procedural delays in investigations to improve responsiveness.
- Reviewed annual diocesan PSPs compliance data and analyzed trends.
- Updated compliance forms and documentation on the OCA website.
- Reviewed the Church’s policy on registered sex offenders.
- Evaluated and recommended revisions to clergy and youth worker training materials.
- Participated in an ongoing revision of the PSPs and related ORSMA practices.

Conclusion

SMPAC remains committed to supporting the Church's efforts to ensure safe, transparent, and accountable practices in addressing sexual misconduct. The Committee affirms that safeguarding the faithful is a shared spiritual, pastoral, and administrative responsibility—one that must be met with seriousness, compassion, and vigilance.

Through continued collaboration with ORSMA, the Holy Synod, and diocesan leadership, SMPAC seeks to contribute to the integrity and health of Church life at every level.

Report of the Treasurer of the Orthodox Church in America

21st All-American Council

July 14-18, 2025

Your Beatitude, Your Eminences, Your Graces, Esteemed Delegates to the 21st All American Council:

Greetings in Christ!

It is once again humbling and an honor to address the All-American Council as Treasurer of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). While the role has become more familiar to me since the last Council, I'm nonetheless amazed at the new challenges, opportunities, and vocational joys that continue to come my way while serving Christ's church in this manner. I remain most grateful to His Beatitude, the Metropolitan Council, the Holy Synod, my colleagues at the Chancery (both past and present), and indeed all the faithful throughout the OCA, for their support and prayers.

In what follows, I address both the financial position of the OCA Chancery and specific finance-related initiatives and projects that have highlighted the interim period since the last Council.

Financial Highlights: 2021 - present

The period from 2021 to the present has been one of continued improvement and stabilization with respect to the financial health of the central administration of the Orthodox Church in America.

Exhibit A shows comparative Statements of Financial Position (i.e., Balance Sheets) from audited financial statements at 12/31/2021, 12/31/2022, and 12/31/2023, as well as an unaudited Balance Sheet at 12/31/2024 (the 2024 audit is underway at the time of this writing). Key highlights include:

- Increase in investments from \$3.54M in 2021 to \$5.02M in 2024
- Increase in total assets from \$6.44M in 2021 to \$8.59M in 2024
- Increase in total net assets from \$6.05M in 2021 to \$8.37M in 2024
- Undesignated net assets have remained consistent from \$1.52M in 2021 to \$1.51M in 2024.

(Note: Undesignated net assets is an important measure of financial health as it generally constitutes what we might consider 'operating reserves'. I deem a healthy operating reserve to consist of an amount that would cover at least six months of operating expenses and \$1.5M puts us above that metric.)

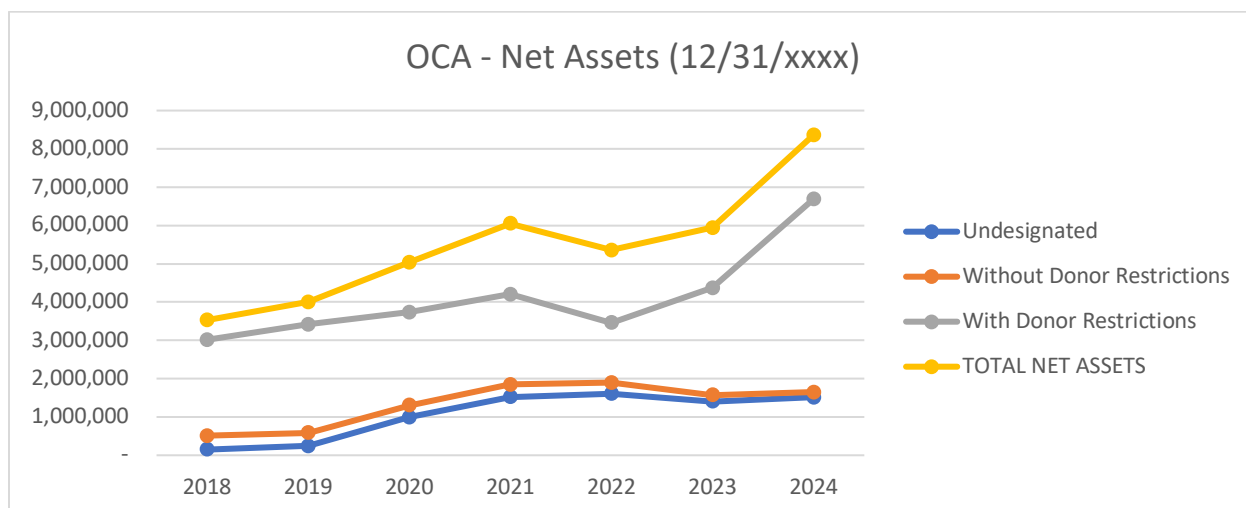


Exhibit B shows comparative Statements of Activity (i.e., Income Statement) from audited financial statements for the years ended 12/31/2021, 12/31/2022, and 12/31/2023, as well as an unaudited Statement of Activity for the year ended 12/31/2024 (the 2024 audit is underway at the time of this writing). Key highlights include:

- Diocesan contributions to the central administration have held relatively constant over the period (averaging \$1.86M). During this time, however, the contribution percentage applied to diocesan net operating budgets has decreased for most territorial dioceses from 40% in 2021 to the current 34%.
- In 2023, we received \$500,000 in grant funding from the Lilly Foundation for the continuation of Thriving in Ministry initiative, and in 2024 we received \$1,250,000 from the Lilly Foundation for the newly established Financial Health Initiative.
- There have been several generous annual gifts (totaling over \$500,000 since 2020) from a single donor, restricted for use in the Mission Planting Grants program, along with several significant unrestricted donations.
- In 2022, the OCA raised over \$700,000 to support Ukrainian refugees. The funds were remitted to the humanitarian agency of the Polish Orthodox Church (ELEOS) to support them in their efforts to provide basic needs to Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

Significant Initiatives

Since the last All-American Council, I as Treasurer and those who help with the finance function more broadly, have undertaken or provided significant assistance with a number of major initiatives:

- **Facilitation of the move of Chancery operations from New York to metro-D.C.** In 2022, the OCA formally moved from Syosset, NY to Springfield, VA. The finance office, working with the Property and Finance & Investment Committees of the Metropolitan Council, has been very involved in all phases of this relocation process,

assessing budgetary impacts of the relocation itself and providing analysis as to the feasibility of maintaining two locations while marketing the Westwood property in Syosset. The office continues to provide support as the OCA seeks to affect the close of the sale of Westwood and secure a new permanent home in metro-D.C.

- **Change in accounting structure.** In summer 2023, the OCA undertook a significant restructuring of the finance office that was designed to introduce greater flexibility to its accounting function in light of the Chancery relocation, while improving processes, internal controls, month-end close, and internal and external reporting. The OCA has long retained an in-house accounting staff (of varying sizes and comprised of varying structures and titles), but with this change we are now outsourcing the function to a third party, Chazin & Company (www.chazinandcompany.com). Chazin works exclusively with not-for-profits, including other religious institutions, providing accounting solutions tailored specifically to the client. With Chazin, our accounts payable function is now entirely web- and app-based with review and approval of expenses online rather than through paper checks. Further, we shifted from a cumbersome credit card expense process to one that allows for seamless uploading and storage of receipts, explanation and coding of expenses by the credit card user in a manner that mirrors our general ledger, and monitoring of expenses by the Treasurer. Chazin provides us a kind of vertical structure and expertise that we wouldn't otherwise have, and their introduction to our finance function has been met with support by both our external and internal auditors.
- **Pension discussions and enhancements.** In the wake of the often-challenging discussions leading up to and at the previous All-American Council, I am quite pleased to report that the various bodies involved in pension discussions (Pension Board, Metropolitan Council, joint committees, etc.) have worked with a collaborative and communicative spirit over the last three years, making decisions and taking actions that have allowed the Plan to attain near- and medium-term stability. I will leave the details to the Pension Board, but it suffices here to note that the Plan is now in a much better cash flow position, which in turn provides the foundation for working toward long-term funding status goals.
- **Grant and restricted funding.** The OCA finance office operates and provides financial reporting consistent with accepted standards and practices of non-profit fund accounting. This is important in that it honors donor intent around our endowment and other restricted giving that comes to us. Recently, these practices, and our overall financial health, have helped us demonstrate to significant donors and grantors that we have the means to manage their dollars in appropriate and fruitful ways, consistent with their intent. We have a single donor who has consistently funded the Mission Planting Grant program and we have been the beneficiary of two significant grants from the Lilly Endowment. The Lilly grants—the first a continuing grant of \$500,000 for the existing Thriving in Ministry program and a

new grant of \$1,250,000 for the Financial Health Initiative—are both administered by the OCA Office of Pastoral Life, with the funds managed by the OCA finance office. These programs have had and will continue to have a significant impact on the life of the OCA and particularly OCA clergy.

Looking Ahead

Many of the challenges that faced us three years ago remain. Funding the central administration at a time of macroeconomic instability while operating with a relatively thin operating expense budget continues to be challenging. Our task is to continue the funding model established at the last two All-American Councils, while minimizing the risk of structural problems within the operating budget. We must do this while supporting the final move to the D.C. area and incurring such fruitful (but, nonetheless *new*) expenses as grant matching and pension administrative support

Final Words of Gratitude

As I conclude my report on the financial affairs of the church for the 21st All-American Council, I'd like to reiterate my gratitude to His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, Fr. Alexander Rentel, Fr. Alessandro Margheritino, and all the Chancery staff. Fr. Ignatius and Presbyteria Green, in Columbia, SC, continue to be great sources of spiritual strength to me and my family. And, indeed, my family: my wife, Shannon, and my now-*three* boys, Nikolas, Kassian, and Theodore. Their love, forbearance, and sacrifice makes possible all that I do, especially my service to Christ and his holy church.

Andrew D. Smith
OCA Treasurer

Report of the Project Manager of the Departments of the Orthodox Church in America

Prepared for the 21st All-American Council, July, 14-18, 2025

The purpose of the Departments of the Orthodox Church in America is to provide resources and support the various ministries, each in their own appropriate way, of the parishes, missions, and institutions of the OCA.

Historically, the various Departments served important goals in the early decades of the OCA. From providing unified service texts in the English language for the first time for all of the major feasts and services, to creating a timely approach to Christian Education for school age learners, the legacy of the Departments' foundational work is still often of great value. Today, with the advent of desktop publishing, electronic delivery, on-demand printing, smartphones and tablets, the opportunities for the development of new resources is great. However, a new challenge has quickly developed, even since the last AAC. The ease of self-publishing in almost all forms of media: print, audio, and video, has created an unprecedented situation where dioceses, parishes, individuals, and various Orthodox publishers have created an overwhelming amount of material in a very short period of time. Obviously, while some of it has varying degrees of value, not all of it is good or useful. Additionally, there is an increasing trend among some consumers that official sources for resources do not have the high status that they once possessed. For example, among the most popular YouTube channels for information about Orthodox Christianity, almost none of them are official or church-sponsored.

Therefore, Departmental work in the future should focus on areas which are essential to parish and mission life and growth. The resources should be of a high quality, reflecting the best of Orthodox practice and theology, and be a unique fruit of the journey of the Orthodox Church in America.

Detailed reports of Departmental work and development can be found along with the semiannual Metropolitan Council meeting reports. Below is a summary of the work and status of the various Departments.

Website Refresh Project

Several projects have been undertaken to reorganize the various Departmental resources in the current website structure. However, recently a deeper redesign is being planned and the Departments will have specific requirements to organize current resources for ease of access. The first challenge will be to reorganize our thousands of files of liturgical texts and music into a user-friendly, accessible format.

Department of Liturgical Music and Translations (DLM)

Liturgical Text Compilation: Consolidate texts into a unified and usable online format

Rubrical Notes for Saturday evening/Sunday morning services

Desire to expand rubrics to be published daily

Music for Matins and Vespers

Thee/Thou Music Expansion for Octoechos and Menaion

Training: Sight-Singing, Ear-Training, and Conducting courses.

New musical settings and podoben melodies

Review of liturgical textual issues

Strategic meetings with Chancery leadership

Department of Evangelization

Management of yearly Mission Planting Grants

- Program amounts were revised in 2023 to reflect more realistic and mandated clergy financial support levels

- New program applications were paused in 2025 due to low number of applications

 - Review and revision of program is underway

 - Recommendations to be made to revise mission requirements

 - Possibility to expand support to include other aspects of parish and mission outreach

Publication of approximately 50 pamphlets including a new series, “The Bishops Speak”

Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry (YYAC)

Managed AAC youth activities; discussions on national youth ministry vision.

Numerous discussions with experts and stakeholders held about the vision for a YYAC director

- Determined that a part-time position is more financially feasible

- Updated job description submitted for review

Department of Christian Education

New FOCUS units developed in new format

New Vacation Church School materials developed in new format

Release of 16-chapter “Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs” (EOCB) Manual

- Multiple reviews undertaken

- Development of supportive resources

Began development of 32-week curriculum for 5 age levels aligned with EOCB manual

Department of Christian Service and Humanitarian Aid

No major new initiatives / need for review of Department’s vision

Department of Continuing Education *(moved into Office of Pastoral Life)*

Department absorbed into Office of Pastoral Life

Respectfully submitted,

Archpriest Thomas Soroka

tsoroka@oca.org

BOARD OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Mandate

Under the direction of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, and the chairmanship of His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, the Board of Theological Education establishes, maintains, and oversees the general standards and curriculum for the education and formation of clergy in the Orthodox Church in America's three seminaries. The Board also oversees the general standards and curriculum for the Church's Late Vocations Programs, evaluates those who complete such programs, and offers recommendations to the Holy Synod of Bishops on the ordination of individuals completing such programs.

The Diaconal Vocations Program (DVP) is a program of theological study providing academic preparation for men who may be called to ordination to the Holy Diaconate but who are unable to attend a seminary. It is also designed to address specific academic and pastoral issues of non-Orthodox clergy — who may have already earned a theological degree such as an M.Div. — who are seeking entry into the Orthodox Church and may eventually be called to Holy Orders. The members of the Board of Theological Education are always mindful that the Board's oversight of theological education and the ordination process is in service of the salvific mission of the Church in the world. The Board is continually examining how best to serve the authentic needs of the Church while upholding the high standards of the Orthodox Church in America.

Membership

Archbishop Michael, Diocese of New York and New Jersey, Chairman; Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, Chancellor; Archpriest Kirill Sokolov, Director of Diaconal and Late Vocations Programs, Secretary of the Board of Theological Education; Archpriest John Dunlop, Dean, St. Herman's Seminary; Archpriest John Parker, Dean, St. Tikhon's Seminary; Dr Ionuț Alexandru Tudorie, Dean, St. Vladimir's Seminary.

Full contact information for the Board and the DVP can be found at <http://www.oca.org/dvp>.

Initiatives and Ongoing Projects since the 20th AAC

Archpriest Kirill Sokolov (appointed 2010) continues to serve as Director of Diaconal and Late Vocations and as a resource to the Board of Theological Education. Since December 1, 2023, Priest Andrew Smith has taken on responsibilities with day-to-day correspondence and has greatly improved the operating of this office as Fr. Kirill's responsibilities increased as chancellor in the Diocese of the West.

At any given moment, there are approximately forty-five candidates actively engaged in study in the Diaconal Vocations Program. Additionally, 10-15 students are enrolled in diaconal formation programs of dioceses at any given time. The Board works to coordinate the efforts of local/diocesan diaconal training programs and to facilitate clear communication between bishops, candidates, parish clergy, program directors, and the Holy Synod.

Since 2007, Diaconal Liturgical Practicums have been a required component of the DVP. Shorter programs are held in various dioceses when requested. A longer annual practicum is organized by the DVP; the 2022 and 2023 sessions were held at St. Vladimir's Seminary; the 2024 session were held at St. Seraphim Cathedral, Santa Rosa, CA. The 2025 session is also being held in Santa Rosa. The Practicums have been a regular feature of church life that bring candidates and deacons from all over North America and reliably "sell out." We would do well to host additional practica in our vast continent with the same rigorous pedagogy and attention to standardized rubrics that the Holy Synod has come to expect.

Since the last All-American Council, the Board of Theological Education has continued to

examine proposals and ideas for alternative paths of theological education leading to ordination. It is part of our Church's vision and heritage to prefer rigorous residential theological education at one of our seminaries for candidates seeking to serve as priests and it is enshrined in our Statute that exceptions to our norm are deliberated on a Synodal level.

The Board seeks to serve the Holy Synod in examining alternative programs and paths as they emerge. The exciting growth in some of our communities and demographic trends continue to suggest that we as a Church are called to discern more priestly vocations. The Board and subsequently the Holy Synod authorized a prototype grant-supported "Priesthood Formation Cohort" in the Diocese of the West operated in concert with St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. This group of eight men have previous theological training and are receiving Orthodox education and formation from Seminary professors in-person and online in a cohort setting managed by a part-time vocations director in the Diocese in addition to the diocesan authority. The Board is also discussing serious proposals from St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary to train particular types of priest candidates in other geographies. These kinds of creative efforts could help bolster our ranks without setting negative precedents or detracting from our overall vision of how priests are formed at our Seminaries if we continue to work thoughtfully.

Conclusion

We thank God for the candidates who work diligently to serve the Lord and His Church. The sacrifice of these men and their wives and families as they study in our Seminaries, in the Diaconal Vocations Program, and other programs of formation in our Church is inspiring. We are grateful for the support our seminaries and candidates receive from family, donors, and parish communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Archpriest Kirill Sokolov, Ed.D.

Director of Diaconal and Late Vocations

Secretary of the Board of Theological Education



Pension Office
P.O. Box 8121
Hicksville, NY 11802-8121
Tel/Text: 516-464-0322
Fax: 516-464-0367
Email: pension@ocapension.org

Pension Board:

Episcopal Moderator: His Grace, Bishop Gerasim, Bishop of Fort Worth,
Auxiliary to the Diocese of the South

Board members/Trustees and terms:

Chair: Matushka Mary Buletza Breton, retiring after serving 10 years.

Fr. John Dresko, continues serving until the next AAC.

Fr. Matthew Tate, retiring after serving 13 years.

Fr. Justin Griffing, clergy alternate, replaced Fr. Chad Hatfield; term completed.

Ms. Mary Ann Bobulsky, retiring after 7 years.

Mrs. Melanie Ringa, continues serving until the next AAC.

Plan Administrator: Michael Stieglitz, direct contact: 516-464-0415.

Professional Consultants:

Actuarial Services: Gabriel, Roeder, Smith & Company, Minnesota

Certified Public Accountants: Barnes Wendling CPAs, Ohio

Investment Services: Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, New York

Legal Counsel: Semo Law Group, Washington, DC

Pension database software: Milliman Inc.

Meetings

The Pension Board meets twice in person each year and via Zoom twice each year. Additional meetings are called, as necessary. After the last All-American Council, there was a training and orientation session for new Pension Board Members, including alternates.

Holy Synod, Central Administration, Dioceses, and Institutions

Our Church has experienced a renewed spirit of unity and cooperation. Guided by Christ, the Hierarchs, Central Administration, Diocesan Staff, Clergy, Parishes, and Institutions have come together with a shared vision to strengthen engagement and foster a stronger and more secure Pension Plan for the years ahead.

This collaboration has led to a significant increase in eligible members' participation, including receiving contributions from parishes and institutions whose members are not eligible to participate. This broadened engagement has directly contributed to a substantial turnaround in cash flow, enabling more effective financial stewardship across all levels. As a result, the pension funding status has seen marked improvement, ensuring greater long-term stability and security for our clergy and lay employees.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all for this transformative effort. Your faith, dedication, and unity in mission continue to shape a stronger, more vibrant Church.

Increased Participation

The Metropolitan Council, at its Spring 2024 meeting, passed an amendment requiring that all eligible clergy and lay members must participate in the Plan. Additionally, effective January 1, 2025, all parishes and institutions that have inactive members, ineligible members, and/or non-compliant members are mandated to contribute the employer 14% portion to the Pension Plan monthly.

As of May 15, 2025, there are 399 active participating members (including 64 members who participate via more than one employer) and 8 Active with In-Service Benefits (over age 75) for a total of 407 active members. As of May 15, 2025, there are 37 parish-only contributions for inactive members, ineligible members, and/or non-compliant members. In addition, there are currently 245 total monthly benefits recipients. (Some recipients may be sharing one member's benefit, as in the case of children sharing a father's benefit.)

Cash Flow Improvements

Improved cash flow has resulted from several variables. The employer contribution rate increased by 2% in 2023 and again by 2% in 2024. In 2023, the Central Church, as Plan Sponsor, began contributing \$9,000 per month towards certain expenses of the Plan. Finally, and most importantly, *participation by both eligible clergy and parishes has increased substantially. This is the most important variable in the cash flow improvement.*

For many years, through 2023, the Plan was required to take distributions from its investment portfolio to pay benefits and expenses. During 2024, transfers from the investment portfolio to pay benefits ceased due to the improved cash flow. Beginning in January 2025, the ongoing improvements in cash flow discussed above have resulted in the monthly contributions exceeding the monthly benefits payable. Therefore, not only have transfers from the investment portfolio been *eliminated*, but also the plan has been *transferring funds into the investment portfolio*. As a result, the actuarial funding of the Pension Plan has improved with a goal of achieving projected full funded status by the year 2037.

Please see the attached Pension Board Dashboard for more details, which will provide a clearer and more detailed analysis of the improvements, participation, cash flow, and funding status.

Historical reality of benefits payments

Since inception, the Pension Plan has paid 100% of monthly benefits payments, even through:

- 9/11
- 2008 real estate and financial meltdown and Madoff
- 2022 Covid-19
- 2025 post-election roller coaster

New Actuarial Firm

The Pension's Plan changed actuarial firms since last All-American Council effective January 1, 2023 to Gabriel, Roeder, Smith & Company (GRS). GRS has been serving non-ERISA church plans *for more than 40 years*.

New Audit Firm

The Pension's Plan changed audit firms since the last All-American Council effective January 1, 2023 to Barnes Wendling, who has been engaged to prepare an agreed upon procedures report for the Pension Plan. Barnes and Wendling has extensive experience with Employee Benefit Plans.

Increased and New Methods of Communication and Activity since the 20th All American Council

- Pension Board representatives have attended each Metropolitan Council meeting and have submitted expanded reports and exhibits for review and discussion. The Pension Board Chair and other trustees have made presentations to the Holy Synod and attended the special meeting held in April 2024 along with the Plan actuary.
- The Board has begun publication and distribution of a Periodic Newsletter which contains interviews with various plan members and retirees, investment information, administrative updates, and ERISA-like information about the Plan.
- The Plan administrator continues to visit the seminaries and make presentations to seminarians, especially those ready for graduation and ordination.
- The new Plan actuaries, GRS, have developed a proprietary modeling tool for the Board's use. This tool shows the results of various "what if" scenarios and can isolate and quantify the ramifications of changes in single and multiple variables. Results of several projected scenarios were presented to and discussed with the Hierarchs and other attendees at the special April 2024 meeting. The Pension Plan changed its Pension Payroll Provider to Accudata to provide better service for our members receiving a benefit.

Plan Administrator assistance

Michael Stieglitz continues to work tirelessly with parish treasurers and members who call for training on the MARC system. Michael is sensitive to the demands of volunteer parish treasurers and the location of our parishes all over the country. As such, he spends many hours at night and on weekends working with them to accommodate their schedules. He is available upon request to demonstrate the system capabilities and train personnel to input the compensation data, calculate the contribution amounts, and locate historical parish information.

For Active members, Michael is also available, to prepare customized individual projections of retirement and termination benefits. Michael can demonstrate the Member Portal and go over its benefits.

For member receiving benefits, Michael can assist with the Accudata Online portal to access payroll information and of year 1099R.

Please call or text Michael directly at 516-464-0415.

Investments

The Pension Plan assets continue to invest in a diversified portfolio of equities, fixed income, and alternative investments. The asset allocation includes a low-volatility portion similar to cash in the amount of eighteen months of monthly cash requirements. This allows the portfolio to remain intact in periods of market decline by having sufficient cash available. Ongoing improvements in cash flow have resulted in the monthly contributions exceeding the monthly benefits payable. Therefore, it has **ELIMINATED** the monthly cash transfer from our investment portfolio. Please refer to the attached dashboard.

The marketable securities portfolio, including the low volatility portion, managed by Morgan Stanley, earned 7.74%, net of fees for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2024. This compares to 11.45% earned for the same period by our benchmark representative of an asset allocation of 60% global equities, 35% intermediate bonds, and 5% cash. The S&P 500 Index earned 25% vs. the S&P 500 equally weighted performance of 13% for the same period, thus showing the effect of the “Magnificent Seven” on the cap weighted stock market indices.

The performance of non-marketable alternative investments is subject to delayed reporting of 1 to 5 months and therefore ***their recent performance is not yet reflected in the Plan’s above total performance***. Because of this, the Plan’s performance is best evaluated over a longer period of time. These investments produced an average net return of 3.6% per year during the 3-year period ending September 30, 2024. Our Plan’s benchmark for that period returned 5% per year.

As of December 31, 2024, the Plan’s investments totaled \$26,648,556.

Conclusion

We appreciate the time and energy everyone has contributed towards the progress which has made since 2022.

Respectfully yours in Christ,
The Pension Board
His Grace, Bishop Gerasim, Episcopal Moderator
Bishop of Fort Worth
Auxiliary to the Diocese of the South

Matushka Mary Buletza Breton, Chair
Fr. John Dresko
Fr. Matthew Tate
Fr. Justin Griffing
Ms. Mary Ann Bobulsky
Mrs. Melanie Ringa

	Orthodox Church in America Pension Plan						
	Plan Metrics and Highlights						
	For the Actual Years 2022 - 2025 and Projected 2026 (where applicable)						
	Per Actuarial Valuation dated 1/1/	2022**	2023	2024	2025	Projected 2026	Projected 2037***
a	Active Members	339	333	359	384	399	399
b	Terminated Members	102	97	93	73	72	***
c	Retired Members	233	244	239	255	251	***
d=a+b+c	Total Participants	674	674	691	712	722	***
e	Employee Contribution Rate	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
f	Employer Contribution Rate	10%	12%	14%	14%	14%	14%
e+f	Total Actual Contribution Rate	16%	18%	20%	20%	20%	20%
g	Recommended Actuarial Contribution Rate*	26.7%	32.1%	30.4%	27.6%	26.8%	19.5%
h	Total Plan Assets (in \$000's)	\$ 28,848	\$ 22,713	\$ 24,659	\$ 26,649	\$ 28,748	***
i	Total Plan Liabilities (in \$000's)	\$ 56,580	\$ 59,649	\$ 60,974	\$ 62,102	\$ 63,525	***
j=h/i	Actual Funded Ratio	51%	38.1%	40.4%	42.9%	45.3%	***
k	Projected Plan Assets (in \$000's)	\$ 56,413	\$ 51,960	\$ 60,214	\$ 68,278	\$ 72,959	\$ 100,008
l	Projected Plan Liabilities (in \$000's)	\$ 73,260	\$ 78,558	\$ 81,214	\$ 85,784	\$ 88,321	\$ 100,006
m=k/l	Projected Funded Ratio	77.0%	66.1%	74.1%	79.6%	82.6%	100.0%
n	Actual Cash Flow for the years ended	12/31/2021	12/31/2022	12/31/2023	12/31/2024	12/31/2025	
o	Total Contributions Received	\$ 3,177,044	\$ 3,303,690	\$ 4,105,238	\$ 5,058,939	\$ 5,584,663	***
p	Total Benefits Paid	(4,050,793)	(4,469,808)	(4,452,903)	(4,622,371)	(4,702,580)	***
q	Total Expenses Paid	(389,843)	(421,481)	(451,437)	(462,312)	(486,483)	***
r	OCA Contribution for Expenses	0	0	108,000	108,000	108,000	108,000
s=o+p+q+r	Net Cash Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$1,263,592)	(\$1,587,598)	(\$691,103)	\$82,257	\$503,599	
	Investment Return	10.8%	-16.7%	12.1%	7.7%	7.0%	7.0%
	* Recommended Actuarial Contribution Rate						
	The recommended contribution rate is a calculation at a point in time by the actuaries.						
	The Plan's actual contribution rate is approaching the recommended contribution rate.						
	** 2022 Note:						
	The decline in participation after the 2022 AAC coupled with the stock market decline contributed to the negative change from 2022 to 2023.						
	***2037 Note:						
	This information is taken from the proprietary Projection Tool created by our Actuarial Firm.						
	Certain numbers denoted by *** are unavailable.						
	These projections are conservative and assume no net growth in active participants.						

Institutional Chaplains

Mandate:

The Office of Institutional Chaplaincy supports the ministry of full and part-time hospital, hospice, long-term care, prison, fire, police chaplains, and those in other settings.

The Orthodox Church in America is a member of the Commission for Ministry in Specialized Settings (**COMISS Network**) and endorses chaplains to serve in specific institutional settings and toward certification with the Association of Professional Chaplains (**APC**), the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (**ACPE**), and the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (**CPSP**). The OCA is also a member of the Association of Religious Endorsing Bodies (**AREB**), and Fr. Steven is a past-chair of this endorsing community.

His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON is the Orthodox Ecclesiastical Endorser for OCA clergy and laypersons who are clinically trained and serving as institutional chaplains; this office initiates recommendations for endorsement. Archpriest Steven Voytovich serves as the Office's Director, supporting the formal endorsement process for institutional chaplains and facilitating dialogue among those ministering in a variety of institutional settings.

Institutional Chaplaincy endorsement has formally functioned since 2003, and was identified as an office in 2006, to formally endorse those engaged in ministry in specialized settings such as hospitals, hospices, long-term care, correctional, emergency response, and other settings. This office remains within budgeted funding parameters as far as can be ascertained.

Clergy and qualified laypersons need this formal endorsement to accept employment positions, and to be certified as chaplains. Like military chaplains, institutional chaplains receive their endorsement from the Office of the Metropolitan. As we are a formal endorser, this Office Chair represents our Orthodox Church in America in an endorsing capacity, as well as attending credentialing body meetings. At the writing of this report, several new developments have unfolded as related to institutional chaplaincy, and will be highlighted below.

Membership: (Members here are all those who are currently endorsed and certified chaplains.)

Fr. Steven Voytovich, Chair; Fr. Paul Fetsko; Fr. Michael Medis; Fr. Joseph McCartney; Chaplains: Dn. Abraham Labrada Santiago; Mat. Jenny Schroedel, Elaine Mayol (celebrating 20 years!) Jessica D'Angio; Larisa Waya; Anna Nikitina; Brett McKey Dan Hopkins.

Website: <https://orthinc.oca.org/>

E-mail: voyts90@gmail.com

Reflection on AAC Theme: Gathered Together in Christ

His Beatitude has encouraged reflection on where we find ourselves in this moment in the life of the Church, and where the Spirit may be calling us. It is important to take this invitation seriously. Our chaplains, serving in a variety of hospitals, long-term care, hospice, and other settings, continue to offer the presence of Christ to those they minister to. They do this through their presence, their witness, their ministry, and their abiding faith, whether or not any of these dimensions are overtly mentioned in pastoral encounters. You see, our chaplains minister in pluralistic settings, to persons of diverse faith communities, or not part of an organized religious community. They are called upon to journey with those who suffer, and to aid them in seeking meaning in the midst of these journeys. How often do we hear Jesus say to those who are healed: *"Your faith has made you well"*? Our chaplains seek to aid their patients to similarly call upon their faith in time of crisis or need.

Please continue to pray for our institutional chaplains. Many of us continue this ministry among other roles. As can be glimpsed from current membership, several are clergy, we have a clergy wife, a deacon, and many laypersons. Please be reminded that laypersons are commissioned in their parish communities where they worship, being set apart for this ministry. This continues to be a significant ministry in the life of the Orthodox Church, and a witness to the Orthodox Faith in the greater North American context.

Initiatives and Projects Since the 20th All American Council

1. Fr. Steven continues to represent the OCA before the Commission on Ministry in Specialized Settings (COMISS Network, a national roundtable of pastoral care credentialing bodies, endorsers, those who employ chaplains, and theological institutions) and the Association of Religious Endorsing Bodies (AREB). He served as **Chair of COMISS** from 2023-2025.
2. As of October 2022, Institutional Chaplaincy has been developed under ACOB. This model, initially framed by Fr. Steven, was further developed by a multi-jurisdictional work group, and utilizes a multi-jurisdictional appointment council to ensure fair and open access for endorsement. The OCA Holy Synod has decided to maintain our current endorsement office at this time, and at the request of Archpriest Alexander Rentel, then our OCA Chancellor, a Memorandum of Understanding has been created to differentiate Fr. Steven's participation as Director of this office, and now Endorser under ACOB.
3. This year, 2025, represents the **100th anniversary of institutional chaplaincy**! Dr. Richard Cabot called upon theological students to participate in a year of theological inquiry in 1925, inviting them to engage in theology at patients' bedside. (The word "clinical" literally means being at the bedside with real patients.) Meanwhile, another founder, Rev. Anton Boisen, invited students to come and be attendants to psychiatric patients. One of his first students was Helen Flanders Dunbar, who would become the founder of psychosomatic medicine.



These would become some of the pioneers founding what would become clinical pastoral education (CPE). I offered a presentation on this 100th anniversary to the COMISS Network, at its first in-person Forum (Jan. 2025) since the pandemic, sharing some visionary thoughts about next steps for our clinical training communities. My CPE supervisor from 30 years ago, who first introduced me to COMISS was also present for this Forum!

Plans, Initiatives and Projects for the Future

- 1.To continue building our endorsement practices in conjunction with best practice models and in keeping with our unique Orthodox ecclesiastical frame.
To begin framing out a handbook related to the functioning of institutional chaplains. It has been challenging to begin this work during the pandemic these past years.
- 2.Prepare and develop new leadership to continue advancing the work of the department.
- 3.This Office will continue to support our institutional chaplains, and remain ready to collaborate in advancing institutional chaplaincy in the greater Orthodox Church, and in the greater pastoral care and counseling context.
- 4.While serving as the Chair of COMISS Network, I began to meet with representatives of the pastoral psychotherapeutic community. Their association, AAPC (American Association of Pastoral Counselors) ceased operations, and many have been unsatisfied at the present circumstances for practitioners. Moreover, five states license pastoral psychotherapists. We are currently meeting regularly to explore what next steps might be possible for this community. This will have ramifications for this office, the greater counseling community that is itself exploring the reality of compacts across state lines, and may be an opportunity to re-vision the role and function of pastoral psychotherapy. These are exciting times.

Conclusion

One of the present challenges before this office is made real by the advent of credentialing bodies that do not conform to existing standards of theological education, or relationships with faith traditions. This means that persons can now be credentialed who may have one or even neither of the above. This means that we as the Orthodox Church in America will now need to take a more active role in articulating what have been standards for credentialing to our candidates for credentialing: an M.Div. degree or equivalent, endorsement through this office, and four units of recognized clinical training. The best way for us to proceed is to in fact develop a handbook for our institutional chaplains, and to hold our endorsed institutional chaplains to these standards.

Respectfully submitted,
Archpriest Steven Voytovich, Director
Office of Institutional Chaplains

Office of Orthodox Church in America Military and Veterans Affairs Medical Center Chaplaincies 21st AAC Report July 2025, Phoenix, Arizona.

Office of the Military and VAMC Chaplaincies of the Orthodox Church in America.

Very Rev. Theodore Boback, Jr. –
Dean/Executive Director OCA Military and VA Chaplaincy
Very Reverend Joseph J. Gallick -
Assistant Dean/Deputy Director OCA Military and VA Chaplaincy

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, serves as Ecclesiastical Endorser for the US Military and Veterans Affairs Medical Center Chaplains
His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel, serves as the OCA Episcopal Liaison

General

The Office of the OCA Military and VA Chaplaincies oversees the requirements of the Military and VA Chaplaincies in regard to the Armed Forces Chaplains Board, the branch Chiefs of Chaplains and the VAMC National Chaplain and staff. The Office actively participates in the various annual meetings of the National Conference of Ministry to the Armed Forces, the Endorsers Conference of Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy, and the Armed Forces Chaplains Board meeting with the Chiefs of Chaplains. The Office provides support to the active duty, reserve component and national guard chaplains and the part time, full time, fee based VAMC Chaplains. The office reviews the requests for ecclesiastical endorsement, discusses with the appropriate Diocesan Hierarchy, and discusses the final recommendation with Metropolitan Tikhon who is the endorser for the Orthodox Church in America.

Vision

The Orthodox Military Chaplain is an Orthodox Priest in uniform who serve in the Armed Forces of the United States of America. The Veterans Affairs Medical Center Chaplain is an Orthodox Priest who serves in the Department of Veterans Affairs in a medical center. They are active members of the respective chaplaincy and share a common core of professional responsibilities for worship services, pastoral and personal counseling, administrative duties, pastoral visitations, cultural activities, humanitarian projects, moral leadership, and appropriate collateral duty assignments.

They in addition to fulfilling the disciplines, dogmas, doctrines of faith and other canonical directives required of all Orthodox Priests, comply with the administrative requirements of their Ecclesiastical Endorsing Agency.

They exercise their priestly mission in three ways: to those of the Orthodox Faith, to those of other faiths, and to those who have no religious affiliation.

Mission

The mission of the OCA's military chaplain is the propagation of the Orthodox Faith; to serve, worship, and love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and to bring spiritual nourishment and enlightenment to thousands of Orthodox military personnel and their families serving their country throughout the world.

The mission of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) Chaplain is to counsel and to bring spiritual nourishment through the Holy Sacraments to hundreds of Orthodox veterans in VA Medical Centers throughout the United States of America.

Operation

The Orthodox Church in America endorses Orthodox Priests for the Military and VAMC Chaplaincy. The Office of Military and VAMC Chaplaincies currently operates directly under the supervision of the Metropolitan and forms a unique deanery of the Church. According to the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America (Article XI section 4 a. and 4b.), the Dean of Orthodox Military and Veterans Administration Chaplains is appointed by and directly responsible to the Metropolitan.

The Executive Director/Dean of Chaplains is the chief administrator for the Metropolitan in all matters concerning the OCA chaplains in the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, and the Veterans Administration. The Executive Director/Dean is the representative of the Metropolitan to the National Conference of Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) and the Endorsers Conference for Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy (ECVAC). The Assistant Executive Director works with the Executive Director.

The Executive Director/Dean and the Assistant Executive Director recruit and screen candidates for the chaplaincy, prepare ecclesiastical endorsement for the Metropolitan and maintain contact with all Orthodox chaplains and with the Executive Director of the Armed Services Chaplains Board, Military Chief of Chaplains and the VA National Staff Chaplain and chaplain staff. They do this through telecommunications, email, correspondence, and by participating in various meetings and site visitations throughout the world. The Executive Director/Dean provides guidance to chaplains serving throughout the world on spiritual matters and ensures that Orthodox personnel, regardless of where they are stationed can freely exercise their religious beliefs. The Executive Director/Dean attends all conferences and executive board committee meetings of the NCMAF and ECVAC.

The Military chaplains from the Orthodox Church in America serve in the United States Armed Forces in the United States, Germany, Korea, Japan, and the Middle East. The Veterans Affairs Medical Center Chaplains serve within the United States at VAMC Hospitals.

Reflection:

The Orthodox Military Chaplain perform a full cycle of liturgical services including Vespers, Matins, Divine Liturgy, Feast Days, and services during Advent, Great Lent, the Dormition and Apostles Fasts, Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts and administering the Sacraments of the Church. Our Orthodox Priests have been deployed in support of the Global War on Terror. Our priests provided worship Services during holy Week and Pascha in tandem with other Orthodox Chaplains from other branches of the services. Other Orthodox Military Chaplains have served with coalition forces for example from Estonia, Georgia, and Romania while others have mentored and have served with the first Orthodox Chaplain in the Canadian Forces since WWI. Others have advised on various issues and concerns such as those who served with the Coast Guard in Alaska where they advised on coastal Alaskan communities which are indigenously Orthodox.

Included among the continued Ministry Concern of our chaplain are:

Spiritual Renewal, Ministry of Present, Moral Injury, Readiness, Interfaith and Ecumenical Ministries Programs, outreach programs, service on various boards such as family action; biomedical ethics, advisory councils.

“For no greater love is there – than to give one’s life for a friend.” (John 13:15). As the Orthodox Military and VAMC Chaplain journeys in his ministry, he shares unconditionally in the life of the servicemember/veteran. His faith, trust, and hope operate through love. He has love of God and those to whom he ministers. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ is the example for the Chaplain in serving. The chaplain is dedicated and is an example of love to others and he has respect and care for all entrusted to him. The chaplain brings God to the “servicemember and the servicemember to God” and they “nurture the living, care for the wounded and honor the fallen.” – Gathered together by Christ.

Among Initiatives and projects since the 20th AAC are:

- The Office successfully recruited chaplains for service in the US Armed Forces and the Veterans Affairs Medical Centers.
- Archbishop Daniel made Archpastoral visit to Military Installations and Bases.
- The office provided updates to Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Daniel, as the OCA Hierarch member representatives on the committee for military and VA chaplaincy of the Assembly of Canonical Bishops of North America.
- The office, in January of each year, participates in the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF), the Endorsers Conference for Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy (ECVAC) and the Armed Forces Chaplains Board (AFCB) with the Chiefs of Chaplains from each branch of service.
- Completion of protocols and of the reissuance of the OCA Military Chaplain Cross.
- The office provided updates to Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Daniel.

- Virtual meetings with Metropolitan Tikhon, Archbishop Daniel, and military chaplains, Newsletter with military and VAMC Chaplains articles, pictures. Information. Thanks to Fr. Sean and Matushka Jennifer Levine for editing and publishing it.
- The office submitted a written report to the Holy Synod of Bishops and Metropolitan Council as required.
- Prepared ecclesiastical forms for submission by the Metropolitan to the various agencies.
- Received invitation and participated in the annual Memorial Day Service for deceased veterans at Saint Tikhon Monastery prior to the Pandemic.
- Continued work on the Memorial Shrine for Veterans and Chaplaincy.
- Worked (partnered) with the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) in supporting the military chaplaincy program through providing various religious materials to the Orthodox Military Chaplains. Also worked with Churches which wanted to do an outreach program.
- Worked with Churches which wanted to do an outreach program.
- Communications with chaplain candidate, chaplains (Armed Forces and VAMC)
- Provide required annual report to the Armed Forces Chaplains Board
- Communications with the recruiters from the various branches of service. The recruiters will be present in the exhibition hall with information on military chaplaincy.
- Communication with the VAMC Chief of Chaplain Office and Personnel Office.

In particular,

Endorser's Conferences:

The annual National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF), the Endorsers Conference for Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy (ECVAC) and the Armed Forces Chaplains Board with the three branches Chief of Chaplains is conducted annually in the month of January. Fr. Theodore Boback participated in the Conferences and business meetings. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon has attended past conference but was unable to attend recently because of prior commitments.

Some highlights of the past conference were presentations: National Veterans Affairs Federal Bureau of Prisons, Chaplain presentation; Compassion fatigue and self-care; Free Exercise of Religion Challenges and in US Culture.

Other Conferences:

Commission on Ministry in Specialized Settings (COMISS): The OCA Office of Military and VAMC Chaplaincy is also a member of the Commission on Ministry in Specialized Settings (COMISS) which is in session prior to the NCMAF and ECVAC Meetings. Both the Military and Institutional Chaplaincy have a delegate representative for the COMISS, Very Reverend Steven Voytovich, Director of the OCA Institutional Chaplaincy Office attends the COMISS meetings and is the voting member representative for the OCA.

Fr Ted Boback was able to attend the Annual COMISS Network Meeting this past year, which was held in Silver Springs, Maryland. The theme was “Celebrating 100 Years in Clinical Pastoral Education and Training: Pastoral, Present and the Future.” Fr Steven is the current COMISS Network Leadership teach Chair.

Military Chaplains Association: The Military Chaplaincy Association (MCA) Conference is held on an annual basis. Fr Ted Boback attended and participated in the meetings. He is also a member of the Susquehanna Chapter. The 2025 Annual Military Chaplain Association which is chartered by Congress in 1925 will be held in Columbia, South Carolina from 31 July through 2 August 2025 where 100 years will be celebrated. The Army Chaplain Corps will also celebrate 250 years in July.

Orthodox Church in America Military Chaplain Pectoral Cross: The Military Chaplain Cross protocols have been written. Thanks to those who were an instrumental part of the process of the reissuance of the OCA Military Chaplain Pectoral Cross being awarded to the OCA Military Chaplains. Thanks to Archbishop Daniel, Episcopal Liaison to the Office and Fr. Alexander Rentel and Fr. Alessandro Margheritino for their assistance and continued support of the project. We are in discussion about the need to order more Crosses for the future, awarding to OCA Military Chaplains and the process of funding such purchases.

Chaplaincy Kits: Since providing Liturgical items to the first United States Armed Forces Orthodox Military Chaplain (Fr. Vladimir Borichevsky), the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) has supported the Chaplaincy in various ways. The FOCA had a “Gifts of Love” Project for collecting monies for the buying of religious materials and articles to give to our chaplains for service members and veterans. The FOCA also conducted such projects several years ago. Remaining packets with other religious materials were distributed to the chaplains this past year.

MILITARY AND VA CHAPLAIN PERSONNEL STRENGTH

This year our OCA Military Chaplaincy in the United States Armed Forces celebrates the 82nd anniversary of the first Orthodox Priest serving as a chaplain in the United States Armed Forces. Since the first Orthodox Priests to serve as a chaplain in North America, Protopresbyter John Osvanitsky with the Canadian Armed Forces during WWI, and the first US Armed Forces Orthodox Priests (in 1943, Archpriest Vladimir Borichevsky, Army; Archpriest Michael Kovach,

Army; and Archpriest John Kivko, Army) and Fr. Alexander Seniavsky, who entered into the US Navy October 1944, Later, Fr. Basil Stroyen, Fr Nicholas Kiryluk and Fr Michael Margitich in the United States Air Force, through to our current chaplains who are listed in this report and who serve today, the mission of our chaplain continue. Gathered together by Christ.

Personnel Statistics have changed through the years, and it continues to change based on requirements of the United States Armed Forces and the Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in fulfilling their respective missions.

Priests of the OCA are endorsed for the United States Armed Forces as a Military Chaplain.

The Orthodox Military Chaplain is an Orthodox Priest in uniform who serves in the Armed Forces of the United States of America, there is a need for Orthodox Military Chaplains.

Current Orthodox Church in America Military Personnel Strength.

There are fourteen (14) OCA Priests serving in the United States Armed Forces.

Active Duty

Father Ovidiu Pacurar Chaplain, Captain, USAF, Ramstein, Germany
Father Thaddeus Werner Chaplain Major, Warren AFB, Wyoming
Father George Volkovinsky, Chaplain, Captain, USAF, Lackland AFB, Texas
Father Timothy Yates, Chaplain, USAF, Keesler AFB, Mississippi

United States Army

Father. Matthew Fuhrman Chaplain (CPT) USA Fort Moore, GA
Father George Hill, Chaplain (LTC), USA Schofield Barracks, HI
Father Sean Levine, Chaplain (LTC), USA Chief of Chaplains Office, Washington, DC
Father George Oanca, Chaplain (MAJ) USA Bavaria, Germany

United States Navy

Fr. Jordan Kingery, LTJG, CHC, USN Naval Station Mayport, FL

Reserve Component

United States Air Force

Father Oliver Herbel Chaplain, NDANG
Father Gregory Bruner, Chaplain, Major, INANG
Father Herman Klarr, Chaplain, Captain, USAFR

United States Army

Father Danut Palanceau Chaplain (MAJ) USAR

United State Navy

Father Herman Kincaid, LCDR, CHC, USNR

Chaplain Candidate Programs:

Seminarian Joel M Bridge was recently accessioned as a chaplain candidate in the New Jersey Army National Guard. There is another seminarian who has submitted a packet.

Veterans Affairs Medical Center Chaplains

The OCA endorses Priests to be VAMC Chaplains. The Orthodox VAMC Chaplain is an Orthodox Priest who serves in the Department of Veterans Affairs in a Medical Center. There is a requirement by the VAMC for four units of Clinical Pastoral Education in order to apply for positions at the VAMC as a Chaplain. VA Chaplains might attend training that equips them to perform specific tasks and or to fill certain positions such as Post Traumatic Stress, moral injury, palliative care, substance abuse; etc.

The Department of Veterans Affairs employs Orthodox Priests as chaplains in various types of positions: Full time – 40 hours per week; part time – 10 to 35 hours per week; intermittent – no regularly scheduled hours; and fee based.

Note that in addition to educational requirements and the Ecclesiastical Endorsement, 4 units of Clinical Pastoral Education /(CPE) is required and 2 years of pastoral experience.

Among the first OCA VAMC Chaplains was Archpriest Eugene Pianovich, who was the first Orthodox Priest to serve in the VAMC in Wilkes-Barre, PA followed by the late Archpriest George Pawlush, then Fr. Joseph Martin together with our current VAMC chaplains who are listed in this report. Our priests in the VAMC Chaplaincy ensure the seamless transition of the requisite ministry from the military to the VA health care system.

We are grateful to our retired VAMC Priests and to our current VAMC Chaplains for their continued ministry to our veterans ensuring the seamless transition from military to VA Healthcare System.

One OCA Priests serve our VAMCs

Father George York, Pittsburgh, PA – Intermittent

Retirements and transitions:

Military: Fr. Eugene Lahue retired from the United States Air Force in 2023. His dedication and devotion to pastoral ministry to the service members and families was outstanding and resulted in spiritual nourishment and enrichment for those served. May God grant His Choicest Blessings to Fr. Eugene and family. Many Years!

After retirement from the US Navy Chaplaincy, Fr. Jerome Cwiklinksy served as a Civilian Volunteer Worship Provider in providing Worship and other Sacraments of the Church to the various bases where he volunteered in his ministry. Fr Jerome completed serving as a CVWP through PASCHA 2024 since Orthodox Active-duty military chaplains were assigned to the particular locations. Thanks to Fr. Jerome for his continued service to the servicemembers and families over these years since his retirement from active-duty service, May god grant Fr. Jerome and family His Grace and choice Blessings and Many Years!

Posthumous Award: The 80th Anniversary of the first Eastern Orthodox Priest to serve in the United States Armed Forces was Fr. Vladimir Borichevsky in the United States Army. Metropolitan Tikhon posthumously awarded the Order of Saint Innocent, Silver Class for the many accomplishments of Fr. Vladimir. He presented the medal to Fr. Vladimir's daughter, Anastasia,

and members of the family at Saint Matthew Orthodox Church in Columbia, Maryland December 2023. May God grant Fr. Vladimir rest eternal in His Heavenly Kingdom where there is life everlasting. Memory Eternal!

Memory Eternal:

Metropolitan Herman (Swaiko) who had served as the Endorser for the Orthodox Church in America when he was the Primate of the OCA. He had fallen asleep in the Lord on the 6th of September 2022. He was buried at Saint Tikhon Monastery Cemetery. He was a veteran, he had served in the United States Army Adjutant General's Corps.

Archpriest Peter Telencio, United States Army Retired 15 October 2024. After retirement from the military, he was "on loan" to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. Metropolis of Atlanta where he served in parishes of the Archdiocese, Fr Peter was buried at Saint Tikhon Monastery Cemetery, where a funeral and burial service was served by Metropolitan Tikhon, with Fr, Theodore Boack and Father Daniel Donlick and Father John Kowlaczyk.

May God grant them rest eternal in His Heavenly Kingdom, Memory Eternal! and grant His Grace, Comfort and Peace to the families.

Retired Military and VAMC Chaplains

There are over 30 retired Orthodox Military Priests from the United States Armed Forces with many of them serving within the OCA in various ministries. Six OCA VAMC Chaplains are retired. The retired chaplains have a range of specific skills and are an additional asset within our Orthodox Church.

Many of our retired military and VAMC Priests upon retirement from the military continue to serve our Orthodox Church as parish priests or serve in missions; in support of the religious program of the armed forces in a civilian capacity; participate and serve in various leadership roles in military organizations; serve and volunteer in Orthodox Outreach.
For example:

Archpriest Joseph Gallick served after retirement from the US Army as the parish priest of Annunciation Orthodox Church, Natick, MA for over two decades. He is a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and he has served as the National VFW Chaplain. He was awarded the Saint Innocent Medal Silver Class for his over 50 years of pastoral ministry, his over two decades at Annunciation Orthodox Church and his ministry as an Orthodox Military Chaplain, his service to the Office of Military and VAMC chaplaincies, and the veteran organizations. Many Years!

Archpriest Peter Baktis serves as a parish priest in the Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow Mission, Princeton, New Jersey. He is also a member of the Military Officer Association of America (MOAA), where he serves as president of the NJ Lakes and Pines Chapter and President of the Virtual Chaplain Chapter. He recently was selected as the MOAA National Chaplain on the MOAA Executive Board.

Chaplains, such as, Fr Paul Mayernick and Fr. Theodore Boback serve as Frontliners with International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), providing for emotional and spiritual care. Fr. Paul is “on loan” to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Metropolis of Atlanta where he serves in a parish of the Archdiocese in Florida. Fr Ted serves at the rector Saint Andrew Orthodox Church in Baltimore, and he also represents IOCC at the Maryland Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and is active in the Susquehanna MCA Chapter and a member of the national MOAA. He served on Diocesan and National Church offices and committees.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

- Continue to ensure that the Orthodox Tradition is upheld in a pluralistic environment.
- Participate on the committee for military chaplaincy of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North America through Archbishop Daniel and Metropolitan Tikhon
- Continue to update Metropolitan Tikhon, Ecclesiastical Endorser; Archbishop Daniel, OCA Episcopal liaison to the Office of the Military and VAMC Chaplaincies; the OCA Chancellor as needed and as required.
- Provide materials for parish clergy and faithful about the deployment cycles, the spiritual and emotional challenges, helping to care for the caregiver.
- Conduct an OCA Military Chaplain Conference and an OCA VAMC Chaplain Conference.
- Coordinate with Fr. Stephen Voytovich and conduct a second Joint Conference of OCA Military, OCA VAMC and OCA Institutional Chaplains.
- Develop a database of training qualifications of the Orthodox Military and VAMC Chaplains and provide a link of this information to the various departments and offices as the need for certain skills and resources are identified and needed or required.
- Ensure that Orthodoxy is not dismissed as a religious body within the Department of Defense, Department of the VA, US Armed Force Chaplains Board as well as with the various support organizations, such as, NCMAF and ECVAC.
- Maintain our role and Orthodox Voice in NCMAF and ECVAC.
- Recruit Orthodox Priests for active, reserve component and national guard military chaplaincy and VA Chaplaincy.
- Update strategic plan for the OCA military and VA Chaplaincy.
- Update Military Chaplain Handbook and guidelines.
- Continue to work on memorial monument for veterans and OCA military chaplains.

- Visit seminaries and expand the military chaplain candidate program.
- Continue to encourage chaplains to submit articles and photographs for the various Church media. OCA web page; etc.
- Continued partnership with the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) and other such organizations.
- Continued partnership with churches who desire to do outreach programs for our chaplains, veterans, and service members.
- Ensure that the office of military and VA Chaplaincy budget is submitted annually and that an increase in budget for visitation of Orthodox Military and VAMC communities.

CONCLUSION:

The Office of Military and VA Chaplaincies continues to be an active member and participant in the National Conference of Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) and the Endorser Conference for Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy (ECVAC) and COMISS. The Orthodox Church in America is recognized by the Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Armed Forces Chaplain Board as an ecclesiastical endorser as well as by NCMAF ECVAC and COMISS, and the VA National Chaplain Center as the endorser for OCA priests.

For a priest to be considered for the military or veterans affairs medical center chaplaincy, a candidate must first have his Diocesan Bishop's Blessing, then an ecclesiastical endorsement from the Metropolitan, which is prepared by the Dean/Director, Office of the OCA Chaplaincies as well as the candidate must meet the requirements of the United States Armed Forces or the Veterans Affairs Medical Center National Chaplain Office.

If you are interested in serving, please contact the OCA's Office of the Military and VAMC Chaplaincies at chaplains@oca.org.

Thanks to all who continue to support the Office of the Military and VAMC Chaplaincies, to Fr. Joseph Gallick, the Deputy Director, to our active duty, reserve component, national guard, VAMC and retired chaplains and various members of the office, to the Chancery Staff for their consultation on various concerns and various items. We express our gratitude to all who worked and consulted in many ways. Thanks to Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Daniel for their archpastoral support and guidance. We especially express our gratitude to the Hierarchs of the OCA Holy Synod of Bishops who give their blessings in support of the priests to be endorsed by the Metropolitan to serve as chaplains in our US Armed Forces and the VAMC and for their prayers.

Whether in peace time or war time, during the WWII, Korea, Vietnam, "Cold War", Afghanistan, Iraq, Middle East, Bosnia, Balkans, or other conflicts our priests volunteer to serve our Church and our nation in a viable and dynamic ministry to the men and women in the United States Armed Force, authorized civilians, families and sometimes coalition forces. Remember our chaplains and their families in your prayers.

Visit the US Army, US Navy, and US Air Force Chaplain Booths to receive more information as well as our OCA military and VAMC booth in the exhibit area.

Our office and the chaplains continue on the journey before us in the 21st century in trust in God and go forth with faith, hope, and love in all aspects of ministry and of our endeavors, Gathered together by Christ, for the Glory of God and our Church.

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL – 2025
OCA OFFICE OF HISTORY AND ARCHIVES REPORT

***MANDATE:** The Office of History and Archives promotes the ongoing development of the historical legacy and vision of the Orthodox Church in America as an essential element of the Church's Mission, and endeavors to assure proper preservation and accessibility of the historical record of Orthodox Christianity on the North American continent.*

To fulfill this mandate, the Office collects and preserves the inactive records of the OCA Central Administration as well as other historically valuable collections that document the presence of Orthodox Christianity in North America since the arrival of the first missionaries in Alaska in 1794. The Office provides historical reference or documentation to OCA administrative bodies, local communities, seminarians and outside researchers. The Archivist lectures on historical topics both in the US and abroad. The Office assists dioceses, parishes and institutions in developing their own archival preservation efforts locally.

Since the 20th All-American Council (AAC) in July 2022, the following have been the major concerns and activities of the OCA Office of History and Archives.

As foreseen in the Office of History and Archives report submitted for the 20th All-American Council, a Memorandum of Understanding between the OCA and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary (SVOTS) concerning the OCA Archives was signed in early July 2022, just before that Council. Prior to the agreement, SVOTS had cleared a space in its library, which an OCA ad hoc committee approved as suitable for the OCA Archives. Following the signing of the Memorandum, the Seminary ordered the shelving units needed to accommodate the OCA Archives and applied for the required construction permits to install them and to complete other modifications in the space designated to house the OCA Archives. Shelf installation was completed in spring 2023 and transfer of the Archives from Westwood to the SVOTS began in late June 2023. Over several months, the archival boxes were systematically prepared for sequential transfer by van and truck to the Seminary, where the archival holdings were methodically conveyed to the new shelves in the proper order. This process allowed for a seamless transition between archival repositories, with materials easily locatable by finding aid, even in the midst of the transfer. SVOTS President, Dr. Ionut-Alexandru Tudorie, and Librarian, Deacon Andrew Kayaian, deserve much gratitude for their close cooperation with the OCA to facilitate a smooth transfer of the Archives to its new home.

The OCA Archivist continues to respond to numerous historical inquiries by email and phone from the OCA administration as well as from researchers within and outside the Church, scanning and transmitting copies of documents and photos as requested. Since the relocation of the Archives, the Archivist has also accommodated in-person researchers from both the US and abroad, guiding them to archival materials pertinent to their study at the OCA Archives' new location in the SVOTS Library. The nature of the archival holdings of the OCA demands that the Archivist possess not only a thorough knowledge of OCA and related history in various contexts,

but also the language skills necessary to study the archival documents in order to answer daily inquiries and provide capable guidance to researchers.

Over the last eight years, continuing to serve research needs and maintain other normal functions in the Archives has been particularly challenging. This protracted period began with site studies of the Oyster Bay Cove (Syosset) location, followed by various relocation plans which were investigated at length only to be rejected, and, eventually, preparation, packing and transfer of six rooms of archival materials, with an administration mandated pause on access to the Archives by outside researchers in order to focus on tasks related to an anticipated move. Certain unprocessed or unsorted materials, the most recent additions to the OCA Archives, remain for the moment at Westwood, where they are being readied for transfer to the new location at SVOTS. Selected non-archival holdings, mainly publications and certain artifacts, will be transferred to other repositories.

A significant project in the life of the Archives, pursued since the last Council, was the grant-funded digitization of our most valuable and imperiled visual and audio media (video, film and audio recordings) at The MediaPreserve, a division of Preservation Technologies, a world-renowned digitization company located outside of Pittsburgh. This company was chosen after a careful search and cost analysis. A total of one hundred thirty-five fragile and historically significant recordings were digitized at a cost of \$8,670.00, fully covered by the grant. Magnetic tapes and film degrade over time, even under ideal circumstances and these were old at a critical point of reaching the end of their viable lifespan — it was essential that steps be taken to ensure that the recorded media was digitized before total loss. With these necessary steps taken to properly conserve these one hundred thirty-five audio and video recordings in high-resolution archival quality, the media files produced from digitization comprise a volume of twelve terabytes. The digitized recordings are currently housed on a dedicated external hard drive; further steps to safeguard the data through appropriate backup procedures are ongoing.

Ongoing goals of the Office include the continued processing of received materials, the cataloging of existing collections, and the preservation of both using optimal technology. In addition to preserving the inactive records of the Church Administration, the OCA Archives contains some one hundred separate collections of the personal papers of North American hierarchs, as well as prominent clergy and laity. These individual subsections of the Archives are among the most treasured and sought after holdings, as the personal correspondence and papers of these luminaries and spiritual predecessors provide poignant contemporaneous insight into various periods of the Church in North America. Equally engaging primary sources are the truly unique photographs, videos, and audio recordings held in the Archives' media collections, all of which together contribute to our collective narrative. Additionally, the Archives houses various commemorative books, historical publications and periodicals of particular historical importance. Donations of archival materials suitable for preservation by the OCA are gratefully welcomed. The Office seeks to heighten awareness of the archival treasure that is a resource unparalleled in any other Orthodox institution in America. In service to the historical mission of the Church, the Archivist regularly writes articles for the OCA website highlighting key historical events and personalities drawing on research in the OCA Archives, and thereby bringing the benefit of the Archives to a wider audience. The Archivist is also available to speak on historical topics to parish or other groups.

The OCA Archives, although no longer housed at the chancery, remains the property of the OCA and the Archives is poised to continue serving the Church and academic researchers through the invaluable historical documents and other items in its collections. The new location for the Archives in the Florovsky Library at SVOTS is a climate-controlled environment suitable for archival storage and it brings together side-by-side, in a single central location, unparalleled bibliographic and archival resources. It is hoped that the totality of these collections in one location will enhance research opportunities and further the development of the historical vision of the OCA. It should also be noted that while the Seminary Library and the OCA Archives are housed together in the Rangos Building, the accessibility of each collection is maintained separately and in accordance with distinct norms for a library and an archive. Whereas the library stacks are open for browsing by patrons, the archives are not. Researchers in the archives are given a single folder or one archival box at a time to study pertaining to their topic of interest. This maintains the good order of the documents and ensures the integrity and security of the OCA Archives holdings – many of which are unique and irreplaceable - in accordance with archival best practices.

The theme of the 21st All-American Council *“Gathered Together by Christ”* was conceived as an expansion of the vocations theme from the last Council with added focused reflection on mission, education, stewardship and philanthropic outreach. These subthemes are manifested in the work of the Office of History and Archives in several ways. The Archivist strives to fulfill his vocation to promote the ongoing development of the historical legacy and vision of the Orthodox Church in America as an essential element of the Church’s Mission, and to be a steward through proper preservation and accessibility of the historical record of Orthodox Christianity on the North American continent. By fulfilling its stated purpose, the Office seeks to support the ministries of parishes and institutions and the vocations of hierarchs and clergy and every member of the Church in providing for them grounding and education in the knowledge of the Church’s history as found in archival documents, in order to strengthen the Church as community gathered together by Christ, in imitation of the Saints who came before us in this land.

To further the mission and vision of the Orthodox Church in America, it is vital that the clergy and faithful of our Church delve deeper into the history of Orthodoxy on this continent and leverage the archival patrimony of the OCA, not only in service of worthy scholarly pursuits, but also in the academic papers of our seminarians and the historical needs of our parishes and church administration. The Office wholeheartedly encourages researchers to conduct inquiries in the OCA Archives, which has now become accessible again to on-site guided research following the pandemic and the protracted relocation process.

According to the late eminent scholar, Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan, who, at the end of his life was Chairman of the OCA Department of History and Archives: *“Christian identity is defined by Christian memory. The Orthodox tradition above all approaches its future, under God, by cherishing, preserving, and reappropriating its past. The present and the future are only two dimensions; to cope with either one, we need the third dimension that only the past can provide.”* He advocated tirelessly for archival preservation at all levels of the Orthodox Church in America. In accordance with his wise counsel, the Office of History and Archives continues to serve the Church in facilitating archival preservation of documents, in order to uncover our history,

so that its study and interpretation can guide the Church's mission in the present and the future. It is incumbent upon all of us to work as we can to accomplish this.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Liberovsky,
OCA Archivist
Director – Office of History and Archives



Report of the Office of Pastoral Life
All-American Council – 2025
Archpriest Nicholas J. Solak, Director

Introduction

The work of the Office of Pastoral Life (OPL) has never been more important than it is at this moment. In a time of significant challenge and great opportunity for the Church, our clergy and clergy wives are being called to serve with deeper resilience, renewed clarity, and stronger support. The OPL exists to meet that moment—to strengthen the hearts of our clergy and clergy wives, and by extension, the life of every parish and mission in the Orthodox Church in America. We are guided by the conviction that healthy, supported, and spiritually renewed pastors are essential to the vitality of the Church. When our clergy are strengthened, their parishes are strengthened; when clergy families flourish, the witness of the Gospel deepens across our communities.

Since the last All-American Council, the Office of Pastoral Life has experienced remarkable growth. What was once a small, part-time office has developed into a more robust and responsive ministry with full-time leadership, expanded staff, and a wide national reach. This growth has been made possible through the vision and support of the central Church administration, the encouragement of the Holy Synod, and the strong sense of shared responsibility that defines our Church life. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the partnership of the Lilly Endowment, whose grant funding has helped launch and sustain two major initiatives that are now central to our work.

With strong foundations and growing capacity, the Office of Pastoral Life is well-positioned to continue serving clergy and clergy families across the Orthodox Church in America. What follows is a summary of our recent progress and the key programs that now shape our efforts.

Growth and Capacity

Since 2021, the OPL has:

- Transitioned to full-time leadership with the blessing of the Holy Synod.
- Built a stable and professional staff team with clear roles in program management, communications, and administration.
- Designed and implemented two major grant initiatives—**Thriving in Ministry** and the **Financial Health Initiative**—with matching fund requirements and long-term sustainability plans.



- Developed communications infrastructure, including CRM adoption (Salesforce), digital marketing (Mailchimp), and new organizational and workflow processes.
- Increased donor engagement and initiated fundraising efforts to meet matching grant goals.
- Extended its reach across dioceses, clergy families, and pan-Orthodox networks.

What follows is a summary of the key programs and initiatives currently stewarded by the Office of Pastoral Life.

Key Initiatives



FINANCIAL HEALTH INITIATIVE
for OCA Clergy Families

Financial Health Initiative (FHI)

At the heart of the FHI is a simple but often overlooked truth: a priest under financial strain carries hidden burdens that can quietly erode his ministry and family life. This initiative is designed not only to provide education or financial assistance, but to foster personal stability, vocational clarity, and greater freedom to serve. As priests become more financially healthy, they are better equipped to lead their communities toward healthier stewardship and financial practices—a key investment in the overall vitality of parish life.

- Launched in Spring 2025 with 30 clergy families nominated by diocesan bishops and chancellors.
- Provides financial education (via **Ramsey SmartDollar**), coaching, financial tools, and access to a grant fund supporting debt relief, retirement savings, and—starting in 2026—clergy children scholarships.
- Matching funds are actively being raised to support direct financial assistance through the FHI Fund.
- Designed to reduce the hidden financial stressors that often go unspoken but have real consequences for parish ministry, family life, and spiritual well-being.
- Anchored in the belief that clergy health and parish vitality are closely linked, and that supporting clergy families is a strategic investment in the mission of the Church.
- Greater financial health for the priest often leads to more confident and effective leadership in parish financial life, creating stronger, more resilient communities.



Thriving in Ministry

Thriving in Ministry (TiM)

Now in its sustainability phase, the TiM program is a cornerstone of the Office's work to foster clergy and clergy wife well-being through structured, peer-based support. These groups offer a space for mutual encouragement, shared wisdom, and practical reflection on the challenges and joys of ministry and family life. Originally designed to support 30 groups, TiM is now expanding its vision to include 40 active peer groups over the next three years. Importantly, the program also includes dedicated groups for clergy wives—acknowledging their vital role in the health of our parishes and Church. Each group is led by a trained facilitator.

TiM is currently supported by a Lilly Endowment sustainability grant, but our goal is to become fully self-supporting through a combination of participant fees, parish support, and donor contributions. A short video highlighting the program, produced by the Lilly Endowment, will be available to view at the OPL booth.

- 30+ active peer groups with clergy and clergy wives across multiple dioceses, with plans to expand to 40 groups by 2028.
- As mentioned, peer groups are facilitated by trained facilitators, with annual retreats for facilitator training and continuing education.
- Recent regional expansion into the Midwest, supported by grants from the Hellenic Foundation, now includes six groups in the greater Chicago area.
- Overseen by a dedicated Program Director, part-time administrative assistant, and a seven-member advisory board.
- Matching funds continue to be raised to sustain the program beyond the life of the Lilly grant.



Synaxis

Synaxis

The Synaxis program provides real-time learning opportunities for Orthodox Church in America clergy to sharpen their pastoral skills and strengthen their ministry. Originally launched in response to the challenges of the pandemic, Synaxis has since pivoted to meet the opportunities of the current moment, offering focused support around the lived realities of

pastoral life. While not supported by grant funding, Synaxis represents a meaningful giving opportunity for those who wish to invest directly in the ongoing formation of our clergy.

- Quarterly Zoom-based gatherings for Orthodox Church in America clergy and deacons.
- Features keynote presentations followed by facilitated small group conversation.
- Recent themes have centered on pastoral practices such as spiritual renewal, self-care, and navigating parish life.
- Participation remains steady, offering clergy a rare space for honest, supportive exchange.
- Administrative support provided by OPL staff to ensure smooth planning and coordination.



Clergy Wives Ministry

Clergy Wives Ministry (CWM)

The Clergy Wives Ministry works to build connection and community among OCA clergy wives and to deepen the Church's understanding of the essential, often unacknowledged, contributions clergy wives make to parish life. Their presence, support, and service are integral to the well-being of our clergy and parishes. The ministry also provides ongoing care and encouragement for clergy widows, helping them remain nourished in the faith and remembered by the Church they have long served.

- Offers quarterly online gatherings and retreat-style sessions for reflection, prayer, and mutual support, plus two additional sessions specifically for clergy widows.
- Publishes an online quarterly newsletter for clergy wives/widows with news and information. Selected articles are translated into Spanish and shared with clergy wives in the Diocese of Mexico.
- Engages in outreach to seminary student wives to foster early connection and encouragement.
- Provides a social media presence that strengthens bonds and communication among clergy wives across the Orthodox Church in America.
- Presents CWM activities at Diocesan Assemblies and has contact with Diocesan Point People.
- Maintains a directory of contact information of clergy wives/widows.
- Has raised sufficient funds to commission a reliquary for Blessed Matushka Olga, their patron.
- Has initiated plans for an Orthodox Church in America-wide in-person clergy wives retreat for 2026.

In-Person Clergy and Clergy Wives Retreats

The Office of Pastoral Life hosted a successful National Clergy Retreat in 2023, offering a rich time of fellowship, prayer, and education for nearly 120 bishops and priests from across the Orthodox Church in America.

- Held October 17–20, 2023, at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois.
- The retreat theme centered on the Prayer of the Heart, led by Very Rev. Archimandrite Dr. Maximos Conostas.
- Sessions included theological reflection, instruction in the Jesus Prayer, and time for spiritual renewal.
- Divine Liturgy was celebrated at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Chicago, followed by a memorial service and community luncheon.
- His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon and members of the Holy Synod participated and offered reflections and support.
- Participants received liturgical spears as a symbol of prayerful unity among clergy.
- A festive banquet and moments of brotherhood marked the closing of the retreat.

The next National Clergy Retreat will take place **September 28–October 1, 2026**, at the same location. Parishes are encouraged to begin preparing now to financially support their priest's participation.

The Clergy Wives Ministry is also planning their first in-person retreat, anticipated for the summer of 2026. Parishes are encouraged to support their clergy wives in attending this important gathering, just as they do for their priests. This will be a significant step in deepening connection, support, and spiritual nourishment among clergy wives.

Organizational Development and Infrastructure

Since the last All-American Council, the Office of Pastoral Life has invested in the foundational systems and tools needed to sustain and scale its growing ministry. These efforts—across marketing, communications, data systems, and fundraising—are essential developments that are being carefully cultivated. While still in progress, each is beginning to show meaningful impact, expanding our reach, improving our operations, and strengthening long-term viability.

- Transitioned to a more robust communications platform to improve email outreach, with staff training and website updates in progress.
- Initiated a broader communications strategy to raise awareness and increase engagement across all OPL programs.
- Implemented a centralized data system to manage records related to clergy, clergy wives, donors, and program participants.
- Worked with a consulting firm to develop internal workflows and structure data processes for key programs.

- Consolidated online meeting tools and enhanced onboarding procedures for new team members.
- Began building out donor records and communications to support current matching fund goals and future development needs.
- Positioned communications and fundraising efforts to align with the broader mission of the Church and invite deeper engagement from the faithful.

Looking Ahead

As the Office of Pastoral Life continues to mature, its efforts remain focused on sustainability, collaboration with dioceses, and building a culture of pastoral support and excellence within the Orthodox Church in America. This is a shared work—one that cannot be done by any one office alone. But with continued support from the Holy Synod, the Metropolitan Council, our bishops, donors, clergy, and their families, and the faithful of our parishes, we believe the seeds being planted today will bear fruit for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,
Archpriest Nicholas J. Solak
Director, Office of Pastoral Life

Report of the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) To the 21st All American Council

MISSION:

Witnessing Our Faith by Charitable Works through Fellowship

We are an official organization of the Orthodox Church in America. Our mission is to proclaim, share, and reveal our Orthodox Christian Faith through service, fellowship and example.

We strive to accomplish this by:

- Studying the tenets of our Faith
- Supporting and encouraging Orthodox ministries
- Supporting and encouraging missionary growth of our Church
- Encouraging and promoting unity among all Orthodox jurisdictions
- Establishing practical means for Orthodox Christians to foster lasting friendships on local and national levels through networking
- Providing educational, cultural, social and athletic activities for the people of our Orthodox Faith

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

Spiritual Advisor - Very Reverend Nicholas Wyslutsky, Mogadore, Ohio

President - Reader Basil Kochan, Mogadore, Ohio

Vice President - Nicholas Ressetar, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Secretary - Alexis Steffaro, Arlington, Virginia

Treasurer - Michael Bowan, Hartland, Wisconsin

Immediate Past President - Allison Steffaro, South River, New Jersey

OVERVIEW

As we approach nearly 100 years of service to Orthodox Christians in America, we reflect on the good works that we have done for all and look to the future in strengthening our community to build on our Faith. We are blessed to have His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon as our Spiritual Leader and His Grace, Bishop Gerasim as Liaison to the Holy Synod of Bishops.

The National executive Board is elected annually by the national convention body and oversees projects, communications, and administration of the Fellowship.

Accomplishing tasks over the decades in youth ministry, religious education, liturgical music and practices, seminary and seminarian assistance, leadership development, and endless special projects, we strive to promote fellowship in all of these endeavors through the four pillars of our organization; pray, study, toil, and be temperate.

INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS SINCE THE 20TH AAC

Since our convening in Baltimore adjacent to the All American Council of the OCA, we have held successful fund drives to assist multiple needs in and out of the OCA. Following the call at the 21st AAC, we distributed funds collected nationally to the Diocese of Alaska and the Diocese of

Mexico. We were able to assist St. Herman's House of Hospitality in Cleveland, Ohio with a sizable monetary donation. This men's facility is the only center in Cleveland that is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week, 365 days per year. This past year, we gave a substantial donation to St. Vladimir's Camp which hosts the National Sports Camp of the FOCA as well as two weeks of camping for different age groups. As you will witness at this convening, we collected funds for the restoration of St. Theodosius Cathedral in Cleveland after it suffered a tragic fire in May of 2024.

Our annual on-line concert celebrating the Nativity of Christ continued through the last three years. 2024 even brought us international participation from Canada and Poland. We are pleased to present these concerts annually that draw in viewers from all over the world witnessing the beauty of our church choirs and beyond. All previous concerts are still available for viewing on our YouTube Channel under the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America.

We continue our St. Nicholas "Wish List" program that provides gifts for families of seminarians at our OCA seminaries. Both St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's seminarian families are presented many requested gifts as a result of the organized drive of the FOCA. St. Herman's Seminary receives gift cards so that they may fulfill their lists as well. This past year alone saw over \$20,000.00 in gifts and gift cards distributed through the St. Nicholas Project of the FOCA.

As a result of our 2023 convention in Williamsburg, Virginia, we moved our organization to assist in funding OCA camps and campers. We are currently in the development stages of offering grants to camps and campers in financial needs that arise. It is our belief that strengthening the Faith in our youth through the strong camping programs that already exist in the OCA encourages them to make lifelong connections with others who share their same beliefs. This fosters the entire essence of fellowship. Our hope is to be a part of growing the camping initiatives in the entire OCA. What we have seen historically in the success of these programs fills many of our churches today.

At our 2024 convention in Mogadore (Akron), Ohio, we reinstituted an Emergency Assistance Fund for OCA seminarians at our three OCA seminaries. There are times when those who are studying to serve the Church experience unforeseen financial burdens and do not have the full financial resources to simply pay bills. There are diocesan and local church helps. We just want to be available to assist as much as possible when needed.

Our national organization continues to evolve to serve the immediate needs of the faithful. We are in the process of reworking bylaws to meet contemporary standards in organizations such as ours. Many younger people across the US see little need for belonging to organizations. One of our pressing current missions is to examine any and all issues in our bylaws that prove as stumbling blocks in recruiting new members and chapters. As our national Church grows, we want to continue to lead in fostering connections from parish to parish throughout the country.

CONCLUSION

As you will see here in Phoenix, the FOCA is a vibrant organization that is always seeking to focus our mission on that of the OCA. We are pleased to present the screening of Sacred Alaska and

have a panel discussion on the canonization of Saint Matushka Olga to further celebrate our Gathering Together By Christ. Further, we have minimized our convention meeting times to more fully engage in the workings and worship of this 21st All American Council. We don't have FOCA sight-seeing excursions planned or separate banquets scheduled because we want our own membership to be fully immersed in the life of the OCA at its triennial convening.

As we prepare to celebrate our 100th anniversary of the FROC/FOCA in 2027, we reflect on what has brought us to this point. Founded in 1927 by Fr. Vladimir Prislowsky, we hold very true to the original endeavors set forth at the inception of the organization. All of our works are for the Glory of God alone. We implore you to ask the question, why you should become a part of the FOCA. We have the support of the Holy Synod of Bishops. Our mission continues to evolve in strengthening the overall objectives of the OCA. When given the opportunity to discover the rich history of the organization and its contributions and the desire to move forward with the Church, I am certain that the value we have seen in our efforts will be fully revealed to you as well by joining us.

AAC Report for St. Tikhon's Monastery 2025

St. Tikhon's Monastery is America's oldest Orthodox Monastery founded by St. Tikhon of Moscow and Archbishop Arseny (Chagovtsov) in 1905 in South Canaan, Pennsylvania. Five canonized Saints have lived, walked, taught and loved St. Tikhon's Monastery along with countless others who gave their lives and treasures for the building of St. Tikhon's. The primary work of St. Tikhon's Monastery is prayer both personal and corporate for the entire world. Liturgy and the full cycle of services is offered daily for the entire Church both living and departed on behalf of all and for all. St. Tikhon's Monastery is connected with St. Tikhon's Seminary providing support for the training of future clergy for the Orthodox Church throughout the world. In partnership with Archbishop Michael and Fr. John Parker, Abbot Archimandrite Sergius co-labors with St. Tikhon's Brotherhood to teach and train the next generation of priests for the Orthodox Church.

Brotherhood

Currently the brotherhood numbers 20 fathers and brothers: Archimandrites Sergius (Abbot) and Gabriel, Igumens Sophrony, Innokenty and Raphael, Hierodeacons Marc, David and Gerasim, Monk Kyril, Riasaphore-monks Stephen, Stephanos, Paul, Michael, and Andrew, Novices Jeremiah, Noah, Panteleimon, Hesychios, Zechariah and Cyril. We currently have one room open and we are at maximum capacity.

Music Program/Museum

The museum is open and its collection is completely intact. However, the museum has been consolidated and was renovated to present the collection to visitors in a new and updated beautiful format. The museum space is also now partially used for the music center for St. Tikhon's Monastery which now offers a one-year music program for choir directors. With four faculty, the music program is one of a kind and is offering formation in a much-needed area for the Church (that is currently not being formally offered anywhere else.) We encourage anyone that has the aptitude to apply for the residency program at St. Tikhon's in this amazing program. We also offer several weekend workshops every year for those who would like to come for an intensive music program but who cannot make a longer term commitment. Please visit sttikhonsmusicprogram.com for more details about weekend music workshops or to apply for the year long program.

Bookstore/Publishing

The monastery's press continues to gain recognition for producing finely edited and beautifully bound books for the faithful of the Orthodox Church. Over the past three years, STM Press has published over twenty titles. The most significant of these has been our collaboration with Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press in the publication of The Holy Psalter. This joint project represents a huge step toward a more conciliar model of publishing and we look forward to working with SVS Press on future projects. These include a forthcoming Horologion and the Services of Holy Week.

Most recently, the monastery published Ralph Sidway's photographic pilgrimage of American monasteries, *The North American Thebaid*. This lavish coffee table book has proved immensely popular and is already in its second printing. Our best-selling title continues to be our prayer book, now in its 13th printing.

The monastery had been printing this book and many of our fine hardback volumes in China. Last year, the press formed a new relationship with Gomer Press in Great Britain. We have already printed several titles with Gomer and have been thrilled with their quality and expediency—whereas, from China we were waiting up to six months for delivery, with Gomer this time has been reduced to six weeks.

The monastery has many projects nearing completion. Among these are a second volume to our prayer book, a second edition of the *Hieratikon*, a second edition of the *Liturgy Book for the Laity*, a pocket version of *The Holy Psalter*, a newly typeset and enlarged version of the *Lenten Triodion* and *Festal Menaion*, a music book for Sunday Matins in our common book of church hymns series, a new edition of the *Great Book of Needs*, and a translation of the prayer book in Spanish.

Coffee Shop/Coffee roasting and Monastery products

The monastery roasts quality, organic micro-lot fair-trade coffee under the brand *Burning Bush Coffee*. For more info, please visit burningbushcoffee.com. The monastery also produces a wide variety of products and services for the church: monastery wine (a proprietary custom monastery recipe sourced from the oldest and now one of the only sacramental wineries in America), monastery hand-dipped candles, hand-made monastery roasted chocolate bars, monastery honey (once again from our own bees) icons, commissioned paintings and art, and large iconography projects installed across America. The bookstore also sources from local vendors to have a community base represented: bread, soaps, local ice cream, local painters works, as well has an ongoing presence from the monastery at the local farmers market. The brotherhood also teaches at the seminary, offers retreats, and travels extensively with the miraculous *St. Anna Icon* to visit parishes and raise awareness about *St. Tikhon's*, Orthodox spirituality and monasticism.

Finances

The monastery is currently in a stable financial position thanks to many of our kind and generous benefactors to whom we are greatly indebted and are ever so thankful for. Anyone who loves *St. Tikhon's* is greatly beloved by the Brotherhood and by the Lord. Our current audited financial statements are available online at sttikhonsmonastery.org for review.

New Icon Studio

Thanks to a restricted endowment, the monastery has finished construction on the *Kulik Iconography School* and currently has 6 students studying under the tutelage of

Anton and Ekaterina Daineko. The program is at least a three-year program and is accepting new students although housing is limited. For more information please visit stmarts.org to review and apply for the program.

Final Thought

We recently had our 121st annual pilgrimage to the delight of all who visited. A great success, we invite everyone to return for next year's pilgrimage to be renewed and refreshed by the mercy and grace of God which are so tangible present here during that special weekend. We thank you for all your continued support and know that St. Tikhon's Monastery is a home for the Orthodox Church in America. All are remembered here and are offered to visit, stay for retreats, and attend services: everyone will always be welcome! We thank you for your continued love and support of St. Tikhon's Monastery.

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*A stavropegial monastic community for women
under the omophorion of Metropolitan Tikhon
founded in 1977*

As of May 2025, we number 3 life-professed members and 2 postulants:

Mother Raphaela, Abbess
Mother Katherine (chanter and choir director, farm and business manager)
Mother Michaela (guest mistress, phone and correspondence)
Emily (hospitality, newsletter and online store)
Nektaria (housekeeping, plants)

* * *

Sister Piama returned to her community in Idaho in August 2024 and is recovering well from her health issues.

Mother Anna passed away at home in February 2024.

We are a monastic community where women and pilgrims may come for a lifetime, or for shorter visits, to enter into the fullness of the Christian calling. We offer space where individual guests and small groups of pilgrims may take time for solitude and silence, an experience of the traditional life of prayer away from cell phones and television and within a beautiful wild and rural farm environment. With the Covid epidemic behind us, the number of guests has recently been increasing.

We trust that by living out our lives with the daily services and quiet offered by our environment, our growth may be like that of St. Herman's, whose relics are found in our chapel altar. He has always been a true inspiration for us, even though his monastic community ended with him so that he died alone and forgotten by all but his immediate Native Alaskan neighbors, until he was recognized and canonized in the 20th century.

In addition to our daily monastic readers' services, we attend Sunday liturgies at local parishes, typically St. Innocent Orthodox Mission in Oneonta with Father Micah Breland. Father Myron Oryhon and Father James Dutko serve as confessors to the community in addition to serving occasional weekday and feast day liturgies in our chapel.

Mother Katherine leads the monastery chanting and choir and oversees much of our business office with the help of John Elnicky, a parishioner from Herkimer. However, her main care is for our farm (aided by a handyman, when available), where she does many things, from animal midwifery to shearing sheep. Our 12 chickens, 15 goats, and 50 sheep provide us with eggs, milk and wool.

Mother Michaela acts as our guest mistress and main reader in chapel, in addition to helping with all sorts of things, from phone calls and correspondence to taking care of the indoor cats.

Emily started as a postulant in January and has stepped in where needed, helping with hospitality, grocery shopping, barn work, donation acknowledgements, and revitalizing the newsletter and online store.

Nektaria joined as a postulant in April and works on housekeeping and caring for the many indoor plants that help to create the beauty we live with, even in the wintertime.

The fruits of our labors, such as liturgical texts, Orthodox greeting cards, wool fleeces, and knitted hats, may be found at our online store, local farmers markets, and the Artisans' Guild in Oneonta, where Mother Katherine is an active participant.

We invite you to spend time with us. Our guest facilities are small but comfortable, set in the scenic environment of rural Upstate New York. Our guest house sits on our mill pond, complete with fish, geese and other wild creatures. The woods and wetlands also provide beautiful places for walks.

There is more to growth in the Church than numbers and we invite you to grow with us in all these ways. We look forward in 2027 to celebrating the 50th anniversary of the monastery's founding.

Monks of New Skete
Report to the 21st all-American council

1. Name and Mission of the Institution/Monastery

The Monks of New Skete

Mandate:

New Skete is a monastic community of men and women rooted in the tradition of the Eastern Church. Through prayer, worship, and the work of our hands, we seek to respond to the mystery of God and the Gospel's power to transform human living. Welcoming all, we seek to bridge the old with the new and to witness to the sacredness of all creation.

To carry out this mission we embrace our responsibility to foster the single-minded search for God in each other and in those we meet. We are open to others of all beliefs through retreats, days of recollection and liturgical services. We interact with the wider community in accord with our way of life. We are firmly committed to the equality of all persons, and, in very simple ways, we reverence all of creation as the dwelling place of God.

Our Vision:

We aim to be responsive to the prophetic character of our vocation which from the very beginning of monasticism in the desert of Skete has made monks and nuns responsible not only for attaining the end for which they were created but for that of all God's people.

As heirs of these primitive Christian monks and nuns, we want to live in harmony with their spirit especially that of the Eastern monastic fathers and mothers. In adapting our own everyday life from tradition, we hope to show in our own lives the perennial nature of Christian monasticism, especially for contemporary America.

Though the emphasis may vary in monastic life at different times and places, our life emphasizes the liturgical offices of each day. Every aspect of our life receives impetus and nourishment from the daily and seasonal celebrations of the church. We live in union with the praying church. Our worship seeks to edify, to inspire and to raise us all to that reality for which we were made: union with God.

Monastics strive for enlightenment and wisdom by seeking to grow in knowledge and understanding. Therefore we continue day-by-day to reflect on all aspects of the spiritual life.

We live with the conviction that an authentic and vibrant monasticism is an essential ingredient to healthy Church life. By nature, the monastic vocation is contemplative and apostolic, challenging both the Church and the world at large to fuller life.

Monasticism has always incarnated itself within a particular cultural context, so throughout our history we have worked to express the mystery and dynamism of our vocation in a manner appropriate to our culture and times.

Monastics pray in the secret of their hearts, in the privacy of their cells, fostering a spirit of silence and recollection which permeates all other aspects of our lives. Personal prayer is cultivated with the simplicity and freedom of the children of God. Like all else, personal prayer is nourished by and benefits from the choral worship of the entire community.

In accord with the simplicity that characterizes monastic life, we earn our daily bread by our own hands. As all the fathers and mothers of the monastic life have taught and practiced themselves, so do we value and esteem this work. We find in work a time-honored means of self-discipline and growth.

We hold in special esteem the virtue of hospitality. Though our own means are limited, we extend to all who come our way the basic courtesies of Christian charity and hospitality. Whenever possible, we are ready and willing to provide whatever may be asked of us in a friendly and cheerful way with respect and compassion. What we do to others so do we do to Christ, mindful always that we are brothers and sisters of all.

2. General membership list

Br Christopher (Savage)	Prior, Hieromonk
Br Luke (Dorr)	Econom
Br Marc (Labish)	Hieromonk
Br Peter (Kushner)	Archdeacon
Br Stavros (Winner)	
Br Ambrose (Miles)	
Br Gregory (Tobin)	
Br Brennan (Krellar)	Riassaphore
Br Theophan (Miskovic)	Novice

3. Reflecting on Metropolitan Tikhon's invitation to the 21st All-American Council:

Defining our moment and our understanding of Mission:

Metropolitan Tikhon's encyclical letter was straightforward in admitting that while we as a Church have passed through challenging times, we are now in a position of "greater stability and great opportunities." We agree with this assessment and have prayerfully considered what opportunities the Holy Spirit is calling our Church to capitalize upon in this hour. We find ourselves at a time when our country is deeply divided and this no doubt reaches into our various communities. In order to be a means for healing, reconciliation and discernment, it is imperative for the Orthodox Church to dedicate itself to the uncompromising message of the Gospel. This Gospel challenges all of us to metanoia, and that will necessarily involve facing issues, both personal and social, that will make us feel uncomfortable. Yet the fruit of such a discipline will

be a witness that is humble and free of hypocrisy. Our country, our world desperately needs to see and hear a Church that is true to its Gospel core, that is not afraid of embracing its radical message. This will demand courage and fearlessness to speak the truth in love, even when it challenges and disturbs the powers that be. The prophetic example of so many of our forebears should guide us. Now is not a time to play it safe.

Following from this, when we speak of the mission of the Church, we believe it to be much more expansive than simply swelling the numbers of our churches throughout the land and providing spiritual direction to seekers. While these are important, we believe our times call for a bolder agenda. It is a matter of being what we say we are. What is the role of our Church in the moral and spiritual leadership of our country? It must be more than public statements, as necessary as those are. We have to lead by example, by welcoming the stranger, the poor, refugees, immigrants and all the misunderstood and marginalized into our midst. Specifically, it seems to us, following the clarion call of the Gospel, that we need to show mercy and compassion to refugees from the Middle East, Ukraine, and Latin America, who have fled to our country to escape the violence and terror in their own lands. All of these are those whom Jesus called “blessed”... We need to join our voices with other Christians to be the conscience of our country at this hour. As a Church, perhaps we could collectively heed the admonition of St. Maria of Paris, “At the last judgment we shall not be asked whether we were successful in our ascetic exercises, nor how many bows or prostrations we made. Instead we shall be asked did you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and those in prison?” In these challenging times, that seems like every bit as much as a prophetic word as came from the lips of the prophet Isaiah.

Education

As an Orthodox monastic community, we recognize the crucial role ongoing education plays in the vitality of the Church. For ourselves, growing in faith means supplementing our prayer and praxis by spiritual reading, sermons, conferences, as well as online classes and talks offered by such institutions as St Vladimir’s Seminary, the Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies, and the Institute for Studies in Eastern Christianity. Further, we provide our newer members with regular formation classes that are intended to deepen their own monastic identity and life in this community. We have a very respectable monastic library that provides our monastics with a wealth of spiritual support.

With respect to our outreach to those beyond our walls, we have a modest chapel community for whom we are spiritually responsible and provide guidance to as we are able. We update our website regularly with sermons and newsletter articles that share what we have learned. New Skete has a tradition of modest publications, both liturgical and spiritual that are resources for spiritual seekers from whatever background. We also have a non-resident “Companions of New Skete” program which is meant to spiritually support those who have found an important connection with the community. In addition to welcoming companions on individual retreats, we send out thrice-weekly meditations to the whole group that come from within the community. In addition, we offer a yearly group retreat for companions that is both on-site and digitally viewable for those living far from the monastery. Throughout the year we conduct several theme retreats for several parishes as well as a Lenten retreat that is open to the general public. Several monastics are involved offering regular spiritual direction, and we have a

yearly pilgrimage in August that is open to the general public and always features an engaging Orthodox theologian.

Beyond this, we are passionate about the spiritual inheritance and vitality of the Orthodox Church. We believe it is essential to support ongoing theological dialogue through publications and conferences and we applaud much of the current cutting edge studies in Patristics, Anthropology, Liturgy and spirituality. Our hope and prayer is that the AAC will encourage new ways to get the fruits of modern theological research more accessible to the laity.

4. Initiatives and Projects since the 20th AAC

-Events at New Skete: Each year we host a pilgrimage on the Saturday of the octave of the Transfiguration. Ordinarily we have a live event that features Divine Liturgy, a guest speaker, and afternoon events. Since the last All-American Council we have had Fr. John Jillions (2023) and Patricia Bouteneff (2024), who both delivered inspiring talks. This coming year our guest speaker will be Fr Geoffrey Ready.

- Retreats and Workshops: We continue hosting several formal retreats here at the monastery, one during Great Lent and several in the fall. Throughout the year individual retreatants come for several days of spiritual renewal and we do our best to guide and support them. We continue to be open to presenting a weekend retreat to individual parishes as well as organizations such as “The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians” at individual chapters. We have also hosted 2 iconography workshops this past year led by Russian iconographers Philip Davydov and Olga Shalmova, as well as a yearly dog training seminar led by Brother Christopher and renowned dog trainer Marc Goldberg.

-We continue to host many group tours, with groups coming from other churches and organizations in the area.

-The Companions of New Skete: In January of 2017 we launched the Companions of New Skete as a non-residential community of friends that wish to be more connected with New Skete. The response to this initiative has continued to be encouraging and we have approximately 220 members. Since the pandemic, communication has been conducted primarily over the Internet, and the Companions receive spiritual meditations three times a week to help support their spiritual practice. This past year we also hosted a fall retreat for about 30 companions. There is a rule of life that they follow, and we are hoping to gradually expand what we can offer them for spiritual support.

-The Volunteer Residency Program: Since the last All-American Council we have continued our program for individuals who are interested in living with us for an extended period of time. We call this “The Volunteer Residency Program”. There are no strings attached to this program, save for being serious about experiencing the monastic life and deepening one’s own spiritual practice. Such people may or may not be interested in a monastic vocation. The program is intended to give a person the opportunity to be immersed in our life and to be a source of help to us in the various types of work we do. A number of people have taken advantage of this opportunity and have been enriched by the experience.

Vocations: We are looking for creative ways to develop monastic vocations in the Church, through videos, podcasts, and other forms of social media. We continue to host guided retreats for individuals who are exploring the possibility of a monastic vocation. These retreats allow interested individuals to experience monastic life firsthand for several days to a week, in a program designed specifically to that interest.

All of the ministries at the heart of our life are not for ourselves alone, but truly “for the life of the world”. Our monastic life is formally dedicated to doing whatever we can within the context of our vocation to make the Gospel come alive for people in our day and age.

7. Conclusion

In Jn 10:10 Jesus says, “I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.” Since our beginning in 1966, New Skete, as a monastic community, has dedicated itself to bringing a bit of that Gospel abundance to both the Church and world at large. As disciples of Jesus, our life is truly not for ourselves alone, but for the life of the world, being fueled by the vision of the Lord Jesus. As monks, we believe our vocation is to live the monastic life as honestly and authentically as possible, in a manner appropriate for our day and age. Our hope is that in some small way this may further God’s vision for world by sharing the fruits of our life with those we come in contact with.

OUR LADY OF THE SIGN -- NUNS OF NEW SKETE
REPORT FOR THE 21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL

Name and Mission of the Monastery

THE NUNS OF NEW SKETE- OUR LADY OF THE SIGN

Mandate:

New Skete is a monastic community of men and women rooted in the tradition of the Eastern Church. Through Prayer, worship and the work of our hands, we seek to respond to the mystery of God and the Gospel's power to transform human living. Welcoming all, we seek to bridge the old with the new and to witness to the sacredness of all creation.

To carry out this mission we embrace our responsibility to foster the single-minded search for God in each other and in those we meet. We are open to others of all beliefs through retreats, days of recollection and liturgical services. We interact with the wider community in accord with our way of life. We are firmly committed to the equality of all persons, and in very simple ways, we reverence all of creation as the dwelling place of God.

Our Vision:

We aim to be responsive to the prophetic character of our vocation which from the very beginning of monasticism in the desert of Skete has made monks and nuns responsible not only for attaining the end for which they were created but for that of all God's people.

As heirs of these primitive Christian monks and nuns, we want to live in harmony with their spirit especially that of the Eastern monastic fathers and mothers. In adapting our own everyday life from tradition; we hope to show in our own lives the perennial nature of Christian monasticism, especially for contemporary America.

Though the emphasis may vary in monastic life at different times and places, our life emphasizes the liturgical offices of each day. Every aspect of our life receives impetus and nourishment from the daily and seasonal celebrations of the church. We live in union with the praying church. Our worship seeks to edify, to inspire and to raise us all to that reality for which we were made: union with God.

As Monastics we continue day-by- day to reflect on all aspects of the spiritual life. We live with the conviction that an authentic and vibrant monasticism is an essential ingredient to healthy Church life. By nature, the monastic vocation is contemplative and apostolic, challenging both the Church and the world at large to fuller life. Monasticism has always incarnated itself within a particular cultural context, so throughout our history we have worked to express the mystery and dynamism of our vocation in a manner appropriate to our culture and times.

Monastics pray in the secret of their hearts, in the privacy of their cells, fostering a spirit of silence and recollection which permeates all other aspects of our lives. Personal prayer is nourished by and benefits from the choral worship of the entire community.

In accord with the simplicity that characterizes monastic life, we earn our daily bread by our own hands. As all the fathers and mothers of the monastic life have taught and practiced themselves, so do we value and esteem this work. We find in work a time-honored means of self-discipline and growth. We hold in special esteem the virtue of hospitality. Though our own means are limited, we extend to all who come our way the basic courtesies of Christian charity and hospitality. Whenever possible, we are ready and willing to provide whatever may be asked of us

in a friendly and cheerful way with respect and compassion. What we do to others so do we do to Christ, mindful always that we are brothers and sisters of all.

General Membership List

Sr. Cecelia (Harvey), Prioress
Sr. Patricia (Lawless), Econom
Sr. Rebecca (Cown), Secretary
Sr. Patricia Cassidy, Resident

Defining our understanding of our Mission

Reflecting on Metropolitan's invitation to the 21st All-American Council

As a church we are indeed passing through challenging times, and greatly need to prayerfully consider what opportunities the Holy Spirit is calling us to. At this time our country is deeply divided which even reaches into our various communities. In order to be a means for healing, reconciliation and discernment, we, the church, need to dedicate ourselves to the message of the Gospel. Our country, our world, needs to see and hear a church that is true to its Gospel core, that is not afraid of embracing its radical message. This demands courage and fearlessness to speak the truth in love, even when it challenges and disturbs those in power. The Gospel challenges all of us to metanoia and that will involve facing issues, both personal and social, that make us uncomfortable.

What is the role of our church in the moral and spiritual leadership of our country? Honest and authentic statements are necessary. Leading by example by welcoming the stranger, the poor, refugees, immigrants and all the misunderstood and marginalized into our midst is equally necessary. The Gospel calls us to show mercy and compassion to refugees who have fled to our country to escape the violence and terror in their own lands. We need to have a care that our own country does not become as bad as where they fled from. We need to join our voices with other Christians to be the conscience of our country at this hour.

Education

As an Orthodox monastic community, we recognize a crucial role ongoing education plays in the vitality of the Church. Growing in faith means supplementing our prayer and praxis by spiritual reading, sermons, conferences, online classes and talks offered by various institutions as St. Vladimir's Seminary, the Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies, and research by Axia and various Journals such as the Wheel. Further, newer members are provided regular formation classes intended to deepen their own monastic identity and life in our community. Our own library as well as the monks' library provides a wealth of spiritual support for all.

Regarding our outreach to others, we have a modest chapel community for whom we are spiritually responsible and provide guidance as we are able. Our website is regularly updated with our sermons and newsletter articles that share what we have reflected and learned. We have a non-resident "Companions of New Skete" program intended to spiritually support those who have found a connection with the community. These companions and many others are welcomed to individual retreats. Online thrice-weekly meditations are sent to the whole group as well as a group retreat that is both on-site and digitally viewable for those unable to travel here. Several theme retreats are conducted for several parishes as well as a Lenten retreat that is opened to the general public. Several monastics provide regular spiritual direction to many. A yearly

Pilgrimage on or near Transfiguration is open to the general public and features an engaging speaker and theme.

We believe in supporting ongoing theological dialogue through publications and conferences in the studies in Patristics, Spirituality, Anthropology and Liturgy. We hope and pray that the church will encourage new ways to get the fruits of modern theological and biblical research more accessible to the laity.

Initiatives and Projects since the 20th AAC

Events at New Skete

We host each year a Pilgrimage on the Saturday of the octave of Transfiguration, the patronal feast of the Monks of New Skete monastery. It begins with Divine Liturgy, a guest speaker and afternoon events. This year the scheduled speaker is Father Geoffrey Ready. The last two years Father John Jillions and Patricia Bouteneff delivered inspiring talks.

Retreats and Workshops

Several formal retreats are held during Great Lent and in the fall for groups, parishes and organizations such as “The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians”. Individual retreatants come for several days of spiritual renewal. We do our best to provide guidance and support.

We have hosted several icon painting workshops led by Russian iconographers Phillip Davidov and Olga Shalmova. Numerous Dog training seminars led by Brother Christopher and Mark Goldberg have taken place.

For outreach tours of the monastery are provided as well as a yearly special day of blessing the animals.

The Companions of New Skete

In January 2017 the Companions were launched as a non-residential community of friends that wish to be more connected with New Skete. Communication is conducted mainly over the internet and receive spiritual meditations three times a week to help support their spiritual practice. They have a rule of life based on Scripture that they follow and we hope to gradually expand what we can offer them. This past year we hosted a fall retreat for about 30 Companions.

The Volunteer Residency Program

The program is intended to give a person the opportunity to be immersed in our life and to be a source of help to us in various types of work we do. There are no strings attached save for being serious about experiencing the monastic life and deepening one’s own spiritual practice. They need not be interested in a monastic vocation. Those who have taken advantage of the opportunity seem to have been enriched by the experience.

Vocations

We continue to host guided retreats for individuals who are exploring a monastic vocation. Thus, interested individuals are allowed to experience monastic life firsthand for several days to a week in a program specifically for them.

Our monastic life is formally dedicated to doing whatever we can within the context of our vocation to make the Gospel come alive for people in our day and age not for ourselves alone but truly “for the life of the world”.

As nuns we strive to live the monastic life as honestly and authentically as we can, in a manner appropriate for our day and age. In some small way we hope this may further God’s vision for the world by sharing the fruits of our life with those we come in contact with daily.

21st All American Council - 2025
St Catherine Church Moscow Russia
Representation of the Orthodox Church in America to Moscow Patriarchate

St. Catherine's Church in Moscow serves as the Representative Church of the Orthodox Church in America to Moscow Patriarchate. On December 7th 2024 by God's grace, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of our representation in Moscow and a witness of Orthodoxy in America.

St. Catherine's serves the purpose of nurturing the spiritual life of its parishioners and representing the Orthodox Church in America in ecclesiastical and diplomatic engagements.

Staff

Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk - Dean

Archpriest Christopher Hill

Priest Afanasi Ogeruk

Deacon Michael Goroyan

Evgeni Boiko - Starosta

Bookstore - 3 employees

Security - 3 employees

Cleaning - 3 employees

Grounds - 1 employee

Parish Life

The church maintains a daily liturgical schedule, open from 8 am to 7 pm.

Liturgical services are conducted in both Church Slavonic and English. Monthly schedule of services can be found on our website ocapodvorie.ru

By God's grace we were able to complete our iconography project in the narthex with saints who have labored in North America - St Tikhon, St Innocent, St John, St Herman, St Raphael and St Nikolai of Zicha.

Special gratitude to Archbishop Ireneë for allowing us to bring the Belt of St. John to St Catherine's. It's become a tradition for the past ten years.

Outreach and Education

Children's choir directed by Matushka Vera enhances Sunday Liturgies and fosters youth involvement.

English club and Charity Shop - weekly meetings and daily operations support community engagement and charitable work.

Sunday school - divided into three age groups, meets weekly after Divine Liturgy on Sundays.

AA meetings - weekly gatherings provide pastoral care for those in need.

Representative Role of the Orthodox Church in America to Moscow Patriarchate

Father Daniel represents His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon and the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America to the Moscow Patriarchate. It is expected that the representative serves with the Patriarch during specific Feasts and celebrations throughout the year.

The representative also maintains close ties with other autocephalous Orthodox Churches.

During the year 2024 we had three OCA hierarchs visit St Catherine's:
Archbishop Daniel participated in the 20th anniversary of the return of Tikhvin Icon to Russia

Archbishop Alexei participated in the celebrations dedicated to the 180th anniversary of the missionary work of St Innocent

Bishop Gerasim took part in the celebration of the parish feast day December 7th

OCA representation maintains close relationships with our US and Canadian Embassies. Both Ambassadors participate in the memorial services on September 11th, remembering victims of terrorist attacks.

Conclusion

St Catherine's Church exemplifies the OCA's mission in Moscow, blending vibrant parish life with ecclesiastical representation. Despite many setbacks the church has maintained full cycle of liturgical services, nurtured community outreach and reinforced its diplomatic role. Going forward St Cathrine's is poised to deepen its impact as a bridge between the OCA and Moscow Patriarchate as well as other autocephalous churches.

Respectfully submitted
Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk



SAINT TIKHON'S
SEMINARY



ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT 2025
21st All-American Council



Mandate & Reflection

The primary mission of the Seminary lies in providing the necessary theological, liturgical, spiritual, and moral foundations for Orthodox men to become, as God so wills, good shepherds of His Holy Orthodox Church. At the same time, however, the Seminary also recognizes that many individuals choose to enroll in a professional theological training program for the fulfillment of needs other than those of ordained ministry.

*The faithful are gathered to God in the covenant sacrifice of Christ. (Ps. 50:5)
The faithful gather to discern truth in their midst, and Christ is with them. (Matt. 18:20) At the hour, the faithful are gathered by Christ to the clouds in his glory. (1 Thess. 4:17)*

From the beginning of life in Christ to the fulfillment of life eternal, Christ gathers his people together. As we convene together for the 21st All-American Council, St. Tikhon's Seminary reminds our beloved Orthodox Church in America that our mission is also one of gathering, both in method and outcome. Since the last council, we have gathered new leaders, new instructors, and new supporters to create a more robust educational infrastructure. We gather together (or rather, the Father calls!) students from all Orthodox jurisdictions in North America to shape a theological outlook "in full accord and of one mind" (Phil 2:2). Perhaps most importantly, we continue our 86-year unbroken tradition of sending men into the fields to gather communities to the Gospel preached and lived in their midst. We are pleased to present this report to our gathered brethren at an exceptionally blessed juncture in our Seminary's history.

Academic Summary

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) conducted a re-accreditation site visit in October 2023. The Seminary received a full 10-year re-accreditation in early 2024—the maximum allowable term for re-accreditation under the ATS—and was petitioned as a case study for ideal self-study initiatives.

The framework for a complete curriculum revision is formally approved as of 2025, and faculty are beginning to adopt master syllabi for coursework. Coincidentally, the Seminary is integrating Populi, a full-scale integrated LMS (Learning Management System), to streamline syllabi and coursework production, grading, and internal communications. There is partial and growing adoption of the LMS as of the end of the 2024-25 academic year, with planned adoption throughout the full curriculum within the next 1-2 academic years.

St. Tikhon's Seminary is also in the early planning phases of expanding its educational

programming to meet the needs of contemporary trends in seminary candidacy. More information will be made available on these processes and outcomes as preliminary steps are completed and new milestones are established.

Programs of Study

Our flagship Master of Divinity program leverages our symbiotic relationship with St. Tikhon's Monastery to offer an immersive and practical preparation for Holy Orders and academic pursuits with a rare degree of practical experience bolstered and scaffolded by rich theoretical development and reflection.

Additionally, we continue to develop and support vocations to the Holy Diaconate through the Certificate in Diaconal Formation program, organized off-site at two locations: St. Stephen's Orthodox Cathedral (Philadelphia, PA) and Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church (Wayne, NJ).

In partnership with the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM), St. Tikhon's Seminary now offers a Certificate in Prison Ministry, which accomplishes propaedeutic work in the early calendar years, concluding with an intensive week-long residency program that simultaneously ministers to the inmate population of State Correctional Institution –Waymart.

There is also a revived movement toward integrating chaplaincy certification as part of our broader expansion planning. The Seminary has commenced a partnership with Clinical Pastoral Education International to introduce a program facilitated exclusively by and for Orthodox clergy.

Financial Performance Indicators

Year Ending June 2024

Total Expenditures:	\$2,073,313
Total Revenue:	3,088,187
Operating Surplus/Deficit:	592,369
Balance, Long-Term Investments:	4,239,170
Net Assets:	8,281,140
Net Asset Increase/(Decrease):	1,014,874

Year Ending June 2023

Total Expenditures:	\$1,994,760
Total Revenue:	3,242,150
Operating Surplus/Deficit:	382,261
Balance, Long-Term Investments:	2,745,580

Net Assets:

7,266,266

Net Asset Increase/(Decrease): 1,247,390 **Audited Financials**

Annually audited financial statements can be found at <https://stots.edu/financials>

Grants & Funding

1. Hellenic Foundation: Funded a Pan-Orthodox Prison Ministry Conference in Chicago titled *A Look Into Prison Ministry*; the event scheduled for 17 May 2025 introduced attendees to OCPM, their work in prison ministry, and the Certificate in Prison Ministry program in partnership with St. Tikhon's Seminary.
2. Lilly Endowment, Inc.: *Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative* Phase I grant for \$50,000 to fund planning for seminary strength and growth, including establishing hybridized satellite study programs.
3. InTrust Center for Theological Schools: \$10,000 for board development; most recently, we are working on strategic recruiting and onboarding of new members.

Board of Trustees

Onboarded / Newly Recruited

Marissa Hedge (OCA, Morristown, NJ) – *New Board Member (2023)*

Patrick Crosson (GOA, Detroit) – *New Board Member (2024)*

Samuel Jacob (OCA, Lorraine, OH) – *Returning Active Board Member (2024)*

Archpriest Nikolai Breckenridge (OCA, Bethlehem, PA) – *Ex Officio, President, St. Tikhon's Alumni Association*

Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino – *Ex Officio, Chancellor of OCA*

Departures / Reassignments

David Jarrett – *New Chairman, Board of Trustees*

Deacon Luke Carpenter – *New Vice Chairman, Board of Trustees*

Michael “Mickey” Herzak – *Chair Emeritus*

John Babiak – *Trustee Emeritus*

Nancy Kohudic – *Trustee Emerita*

Human Resources

Onboarded / New Hires

Brian Cardell – *Director, St. Patriarch Tikhon Library*

Katherine Cardell – *Registrar; Director, Institutional Assessment & Effectiveness*

New Office Created

David Getz – *Administrative Assistant to the Dean*

Dr. Justin Gohl – *Associate Professor of Scripture & Old Testament*

Priest Demetrios Harper – *Associate Professor of Dogmatic & Systematic Theology*

Presvytera Marina Harper – *Director of Communications *New Office Created** Archpriest

John Kowalczyk – *Interim of Pastoral Theology; Director of Field Education* Priest Caleb

Lewis – *Director of Music*

Martha Spreen – *Controller*

New Roles / Reassignments

Priest Paul J. Witek, Ph.D. – *Dean of Academic Affairs *New Office Created**

Miscellaneous

Priest Victor Gorodenchuk – *Lecturer in Comparative Theology & Mystagogy*

Dr. Daniel Tolan – *Visiting Assistant Professor of Patristics*

Retirements

Dr. Mary Ford

Dr. Christopher Veniamin

- Recent board meeting approved the hiring of a Director of Vocations; candidate search will commence in the near future.
- We are aiming to open a full-time faculty search shortly for one of two positions, which will be determined in the near future.

Admissions & Enrollment Statistics

	Applicants	Accepted	Enrolled	Graduated	Ordained OCA Graduates
AY 2022-23	20	13	OCA – 27 ACROD – 1 Antiochian – 5 Malankara – 8 ROCOR – 1 Ukrainian – 1	OCA – 7 Antiochian – 2 Malankara – 4	Priest – 6 Deacon – 0
AY 2023-24	19	18	OCA – 34 ACROD – 2 Antiochian – 4 Malankara – 6 Ukrainian – 1	OCA – 16 ACROD – 1 Antiochian – 2 Malankara – 2	Priest – 13 Deacon – 0
AY 2024-25	18	16 (1 deferred)	OCA – 26 ACROD – 1 Antiochian – 7 Malankara – 4 Ukrainian – 1	OCA – 5 Antiochian – 2 Malankara – 2 Ukrainian – 1	Priest – 3 Deacon – 0

New / Ongoing Projects

1. **Married Student Housing:** Construction is staged to begin in Summer 2025; the first phase is fully funded by a private donor, with pledges for subsequent phase funding in tandem with project completion milestones.
2. **St. Nikolai Shrine & Endowed Scholarship:** Private donors allowed completion of the St. Nikolai Velimirovich Shrine in the seminary building along with a fully endowed scholarship in his honor; this shrine hosted Presanctified Liturgy on his feast day during Lent 2025.
3. **Metropolitans Platon & Leonty Sitting Rooms:** Descendents of both hierarchs have helped construct and outfit two sitting rooms—one each for Metropolitan Platon and Metropolitan Leonty—on either side of the seminary foyer, complete with historical relics and memorabilia from the life of each.
4. **St. Tikhon's Seminary Legacy Society & FreeWill Partnership:** On the Sunday of the Cross in Lent 2025, the Seminary inaugurated a legacy society honoring constituents with

planned gifts to support the Seminary; a partnership with FreeWill—entering its second year—makes creating and reporting planned gifts free and accessible to all constituents.

5. **Organizational Rebranding:** The Seminary unveiled new logos in 2024 and is currently redesigning its web page and social media platforms to reflect new marketing strategies. Real and web-based infrastructure adjustments are underway, followed by a digital storefront of professionally produced merchandise launched in May 2025.
6. **Major Renovations:** Major cosmetic and functional updates to the gymnasium (Archangel Michael Convocation Hall), St. Patriarch Tikhon Library, dormitory, main building roofing and siding, installation of a student lounge and fitness center, installation of a fully-equipped Ancient Faith Radio Studio, and the installation of a courtyard garden area honoring the Most Blessed Theotokos.
7. **Dean's Bi-Annual Address:** The Dean is hosting Zoom conferences twice annually for major constituents to increase transparency, visibility, and stakeholder engagement. Behind the scenes, rigorous CRM refinements are improving connectivity with supporters.
8. **Intentional Discipleship for Ministry:** A formal working group of active and retired OCA clergy is actively reviewing vocational discernment materials from non-Orthodox religious institutions to adapt current best practices for an Orthodox parish setting. Outputs will include publications disseminating a discipleship protocol for identifying, mentoring, and vetting future candidates for Holy Orders.
9. **Here I Am! Send Me!:** We will host a two-part vocations webinar during the fall semester for laymen interested in making preliminary investigations of ordained vocations and seminary life.
10. **Annual Employee Assessments:** Each January, staff and administrative personnel interview with the Dean to review processes and establish goals and a career path for the coming calendar year.

Seasonal / Intermittent Activities

1. Lecture Series are hosted each spring (St. Nikolai of Zicha Lecture) and fall (Founder's Day Lecture).
2. Bi-Annual *Tikhonaire* publication reporting important organizational news and written materials from various seminary personnel.
3. St. Tikhon's Summer Camp is held on campus each July in cooperation with the Diocese of

Eastern Pennsylvania.

4. Continuing Education Retreats held each June for clergy targeting relevant pastoral concerns.
5. OCPM Certificate in Prison Ministry Residency takes place on-campus annually each June; inaugural cohort attended in summer 2024.
6. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd—a Montessori-based early childhood education program—hosts an annual week-long training seminar on campus each June.
7. Seasonal Spring Appeal and Fall Appeal campaigns for additional funding and support.
8. Giving Tuesday and Make-a-Will Month campaigns for additional funding and support.
9. The Seminary continues its annual presence at the March for Life in Washington, D.C.

Events & Other Activities

10. The Orthodox Inter-Seminary Movement (OISM) has held retreats on-campus several times in recent years, the most recent being from 08-10 November 2024.
11. Archpriest John Parker, along with several seminarians, made a missionary trip to Africa in summer 2024 with the help of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), acquiring an array of texts—liturgical and otherwise—in indigenous languages.
12. Seminary Dean, Archpriest John Parker, spoke at PHAICON, a conference in Athens exploring emergent issues around posthumanism and artificial intelligence, in November 2024. Father John's address at the conference, a response to the Vatican's *Fiducia Supplicans*, can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqXh4PrheDo>
13. The Dean visited the Diocese of Mexico (10-15 January 2025) for the Primatial visit and Diocesan Assembly.
14. The OCMC convened a board meeting in April 2025, hosted on-site at St. Tikhon's Seminary.
15. Priest Demetrios Harper attended the 2024 Oxford Patristics Conference, The Theology of History Conference at Marquette University, and the Encounters in Systematic Theology Workshop at the University of Notre Dame.
16. Priest Demetrios Harper faithfully serves his nation abroad in the Armed Forces; he has been on military leave since the end of fall 2024 and is slated to return to professorial duties in fall 2025.

17. Other faculty, including Archpriest John Kowalczyk, Dr. David Ford, and Dr. Justin Gohl, have recorded active attendance and presentations at various conferences, seminars, and retreats as part of an active academic contribution to their respective fields.
18. St. Tikhon's Seminary proudly and prayerfully graduated Michael ('24) and Carlyn Pak, OCMC missionaries to the Diocese of Mexico in Santiago de Querétaro.
19. Sister Magdalen visited from Essex for family/parenting retreat talks in February 2025.

Future Projects

1. New Iconostasis, Seminary Chapel: fully funded and in planning stages.
2. Antiochian Archdiocese Convention: the Seminary is hosting an inaugural Alumni Reception at the 2025 Antiochian Archdiocese Convention at the invitation of His Eminence, Metropolitan Saba.

Report to the OCA All-American Council

St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary

May 2022 – May 2025

Introduction

This report details the significant developments, transitions, and ongoing initiatives at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary (SVOTS) during the period spanning May 2022 to May 2025. This timeframe has been characterized by substantial change, including key leadership transitions, a concerted effort towards financial stabilization, and a renewed focus on the seminary's core mission of academic excellence and spiritual formation within a vibrant pan-Orthodox context.

The seminary has navigated a period of significant leadership transition. Since July 2024, I have been serving as Interim President and Academic Dean, fostering a year of repair and renewal at all levels of the institution. Key to this period has been a collaborative spirit with faculty, staff, and the Board of Trustees.

In May 2025, the Board of Trustees formally recognized His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon as President of the Seminary and me (Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie) as Dean. This is a departure from a Governance-Leadership model adopted in 2017 (CEO as "President" and OCA Primate as "Chairman of the Board"). The position of Academic Dean, as a statutorial position of the by-laws, was eliminated. An associate dean for academic affairs will be appointed by the Dean from within the esteemed faculty, further strengthening our academic leadership and allowing for streamlined operations that best serve our students and preserve our budget.

Other key leadership roles include Mr. Peter Kopcha as Chief Financial Officer, the Very Rev. Dr. Alexander Rentel as Chief Operations Officer and Rector of Three Hierarchs Chapel, Mrs. Ginny Nieuwsma as Chief Advancement Officer, and Mr. Zachariah Mandell as Director of Admissions, Financial Aid, and Alumni Relations, all of whom took their positions over the 2024-25 leadership transition.

I. Distinguished Faculty

St. Vladimir's Seminary is privileged to have a world-class faculty, deeply committed to the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. Full-time Faculty members who have guided the seminary during this period include:

- **Dr. John Barnet:** As Associate Professor of New Testament and Director of Institution Assessment, Dr. Barnet plays a crucial role in ensuring the academic rigor and effectiveness of our programs.

- **Dr. Peter C. Bouteneff:** The Professor of Systematic Theology and Kulik Professor of Sacred Arts, Dr. Bouteneff's expertise continues to enrich the theological discourse within the seminary community.
- **The Very Rev. Dr. Bogdan G. Bucur:** As Associate Professor of Patristics, Fr. Bogdan's scholarship and teaching provide students with a deep grounding in the wisdom of the Church Fathers, and his pastoral presence as clergy is vital to the spiritual formation of students as they worship in chapel and prepare themselves for ministry.
- **The Very Rev. Dr. Sergius Halvorsen:** As Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Rhetoric, Fr. Sergius equips future church leaders with the essential skills for effective preaching and communication. He also serves as the director of the Compelling Preaching Grant.
- **The Very Rev. Dr. Chad Hatfield:** The Skvir Professor of Pastoral Theology and President of the Seminary, Fr. Chad shared his decades long expertise with our students. He also served (until June 2024) as the Rector of the Three Hierarchs Chapel.
- **Dr. Michael Legaspi:** Recruited in 2022 as the Associate Professor of Old Testament, Dr. Legaspi brings significant expertise in biblical studies to the curriculum.
- **The Very Rev. Archimandrite Dr. Vasily (Vitaly) Permiakov:** Serving as Assistant Professor of Liturgical Theology, Fr. Vasily's focus on the liturgical life of the Church is central to the SVOTS experience. Notably, Fr. Vasily was also tonsured into monastic orders during this period and we look ahead to his higher calling in the Church, at which point we will bid him farewell from this position.
- **The Very Rev. Dr. Alexander Rentel:** Serving as Assistant Professor of Canon Law and taking on the essential role of Rector of Three Hierarchs Chapel, Fr. Alexander's leadership has strengthened both the administrative and spiritual foundations of the seminary. His care for the Chapel has been deeply appreciated by the community, and he has elevated the attention to life in the Chapel for both students and the broader student community.
- **The Rev. Dn. Dr. Harrison Basil Russin:** As Assistant Professor of Liturgical Music and Associate Dean for Residential Life, Dn. Harrison has been instrumental in fostering a supportive and enriching environment for our residential students and leading the musical life of the seminary.
- **Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie:** The Peter N. Gramowich Professor of Church History, Academic Dean and Interim President, Dr Tudorie passionately shared his expertise in the field of Byzantine Studies and Church History with our students and actively recruited the best Faculty (both full-time and part-time) for our academic programs.

II. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press

Very Recent Publications:

SVS Press continues its vital mission as a leading publisher of Orthodox Christian literature, contributing significantly to theological scholarship and making Orthodox thought accessible to a wider audience. Notable titles published during this period include:

- Nicolae Steinhardt, *The Journal of Joy* (2024): This long-awaited publication offers profound spiritual insights
- Fr. Philip LeMasters, *Sex and Salvation: An Orthodox Christian Understanding* (2025): This work addresses contemporary issues with a traditional Orthodox perspective.
- Pdn. Peter Danilchick, *Theology of Leadership: Servant, Sacrifice, Shepherd, Leader* (2025): This publication explores key aspects of leadership within the Orthodox Christian context.
- Metrop. Kallistos Ware, *Reminiscences and Recollections* (2025): This volume offers a glimpse into the life trajectory of Metropolitan Kallistos.
- St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith* (2022): This is a much-needed translation into English of the best comprehensive treatment of the Orthodox dogmas from the Patristic time.
- *Journal to Simplicity: The Life and Wisdom of Archimandrite Roman Braga* (2024): This publication invites the reader to immerse into the life and struggles of Fr. Roman Braga from Communist Romania to the United States via Sao Paolo, Brazil.

Press Operations:

In a strategic move to ensure the long-term sustainability and reach of SVS Press, the seminary has successfully outsourced its bookstore and warehouse operations. This transition allows the seminary to focus its resources on the core strengths of the Press: academic and editorial quality, as well as enhanced marketing and broader dissemination of its publications. The Press is now operating with improved efficiency, and we are optimistic about future opportunities and enhancements that will further its impact.

III. Transformation and Change in Leadership

The period from May 2022 to May 2025 has been marked by significant transitions in leadership, demonstrating the seminary's adaptability and commitment to strong governance:

- **Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie's Leadership:** Dr. Tudorie's dedicated service as Interim President and Academic Dean since July 2024 has been crucial in navigating a complex landscape. His leadership has fostered a year of "life, love, and fruit" within the seminary community.
- **Key Administrative Appointments:** The appointments of Peter Kopcha as Chief Financial Officer, the Very Rev. Dr. Alexander Rentel as Chief Operations Officer, and Ginny Nieuwsma as Chief Advancement Officer have brought significant expertise and stability to the seminary's administration.
- **Board of Trustees Decision:** In a significant decision at the May 2025 board meeting, the by-laws were amended to formally recognize His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon as President of the Seminary and Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie as Dean. This structure provides clear leadership and direction for the seminary's future. The appointment of an associate dean for academic affairs from within the faculty will further strengthen academic leadership.

IV. Vibrant Public Events

St. Vladimir's Seminary remains a vital center for Orthodox Christian thought, spirituality, and community engagement, hosting a diverse array of public events:

- **Commencement Exercises:** The seminary celebrated the accomplishments of its graduates with moving commencement ceremonies for the Classes of 2023 (May 20, 2023), 2024 (May 18, 2024), and 2025 (May 17, 2025). The 2025 commencement was particularly memorable with the return and address of Professor Emeritus, the Very Rev. Dr. Paul Tarazi.
- **Academic Symposia:** SVOTS hosted its 1st Annual Academic Symposium (October 27-29, 2022) focusing on *Liturgy and Theology*, 2nd Annual Academic Symposium (November 2-4, 2023) exploring the *Entangled Christian Polemics in the Late Byzantine Empire (13th–15th Century)*, and the 3rd Annual Academic Symposium (November 13-15, 2024) with the title: *"I Saw the Lord (Isa 6.1)": Entangled Jewish and Christian Perspectives on the Encounter with God*, bringing together leading scholars in those respective areas of Theology.
- **Father Alexander Schmemmann Memorial Lecture:** These Annual lectures, yearly held on January 30, continuing a tradition of significant theological reflection, featured the following scholars: Dr. Hans Boersma (2023), Dr. Robin Darling Young (2024), and Henri Maguire (2025).
- **SVS Press Book Launches:** Public events, such as the launch of *The Journal of Joy* by Nicolae Steinhardt (February 20 & May 23, 2025 / Yonkers & London), provide opportunities to engage with new theological publications.
- **Open Houses (Admissions):** Regular open houses, including the 2024 Fall Open House (October 13, 2024) and the 2025 Winter Open House (February 16, 2025) to mention only the most recent events, welcome prospective students to experience seminary life.
- **Alumni Town Hall:** An important event for fostering connection and dialogue with our alumni community (December 7, 2024).
- **Education Day Online:** Reaching a broad audience with accessible theological content (August 13, 2022 / August 5, 2023 / July 13, 2024), featuring our own Faculty and their special guests.

V. Diverse and Dedicated Student Body

St. Vladimir's Seminary continues to attract a vibrant and diverse student body from across the Orthodox Christian world:

- The seminary welcomed a new cohort of 32 seminarians at the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year, representing four countries and eight Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, including fifteen in the M.Div., three in the M.A., six in the Th.M., and seven in the D.Min. programs.
- In Spring of 2025 our enrollment in our academic programs included 89 students.

VI. Academic Developments

St. Vladimir's Seminary remains committed to academic excellence and expanding its offerings:

- The seminary continues to offer its Master of Divinity (MDiv), Master of Arts (MA), Master of Theology (ThM), and Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degrees.
- The St. Vladimir's Online School of Theology continues to expand, providing accessible theological education globally. There are many opportunities for expanding these offerings and we look to our constituents to weigh in with their ideas, especially during our strategic planning.
- The seminary is exploring the possibility of offering a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in Orthodox Christian Studies within the next years. Our application was already approved by the Association of Theological Schools in the Spring of 2023 and we are expecting the final approval from the New York State Department of Education.

VII. Institutional Advancement and Alumni Relations

St. Vladimir's Seminary is working to secure its financial future and enhance its campus:

- The seminary has laid the groundwork for a strategic planning process, which already commenced in May 2025, actively seeking input from all constituents. This process will inform a master plan for buildings on the Crestwood campus.
- The recent purchase of a new house adjacent to our campus clearly indicates our decision to invest in the Crestwood campus.
- A comprehensive capital campaign will be implemented to support these strategic initiatives and long-term development.
- *St. Vladimir's Society* (<https://www.svots.edu/give/monthly-giving>) is one recent tool to reconnect the Seminary with our esteemed alumni body.
- Regular town hall alumni meetings will strengthen this partnership. This effort towards reconnection with our alumni will also include regional meetings in the United States: a faculty member and an administrator will share news about the Seminary life, asking for input on the strategic directions of the Seminary.

VIII. Accreditation

St. Vladimir's Seminary holds a distinguished accreditation history with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), having been accredited since 1973. The most recent comprehensive reaccreditation occurred in 2021, with affirmation for seven years. However, the Board of Commissioners (BOC) noted the seminary's "somewhat vulnerable" financial future (concerning unbalanced budgets and internal borrowing) as a rationale for a visit in January 2025 following an official letter to St. Vladimir's Seminary in June 2024.

In preparation for this focused visit, SVOTS provided audited financials for FY 2022-2023 and FY 2023-2024, a narrative of the FY 2024-2025 operational budget with cash flow projections, a response to specific ATS standards related to financial stability, and projected budgets for FY 2025-2026 and FY 2026-2027.

The ATS focused visit team observed that SVOTS underwent a significant transition following the departure of its long-serving previous President, the Very Revd. Dr Chad Hatfield, with a subsequent ad-hoc Transition Committee of business, financial, and organizational experts supporting the interim administration's efforts toward fiscal transformation.

Since June 30, 2024, our new administration uncovered operational and financial process issues, made difficult personnel decisions, and implemented substantial cost-cutting measures. The ATS team noted a clear commitment to a more austere and conservative approach to budgeting and staffing, alongside pursuing operational efficiencies, including within SVS Press.

A significant strength identified by the ATS team was SVOTS's diversity of cash flow streams, with five relatively balanced sources: tuition and fees (17.7% projected for FY 2025-2026), bookstore revenue (31.0%), contributions (33.3%), auxiliary revenue (7.6%), and endowment (10.4%).

The report highlighted SVOTS's intentional efforts to decrease its annual deficit. Including implemented changes, personnel reductions, and efficiency savings, the projected net operating budget for FY 2024-2025 indicates a small cash flow surplus (final results for this fiscal year remain to be seen as of the time of this report). The ATS team gained confidence in this projection through conversations with the interim president, transition committee chair, board chair, and the new CFO, noting consistency in communication and achievable budget assumptions.

Despite years of recurring deficits leading to a decrease of \$3.7 million in net assets without donor restrictions between June 30, 2022, and June 30, 2024, the ATS report acknowledged that SVOTS's balance sheet, with no debt, \$24 million in assets, and only \$461,000 in liabilities, can be returned to health with proper management. The imperative remains to balance the budget from a cash flow perspective to avoid further reliance on the endowment.

The ATS focused visit committee recommended accepting their report, acknowledging the progress made, and emphasized that continued financial sustainability will be carefully examined during the February 2028 comprehensive reaccreditation visit. While we had a significant deficit this past year, we are pleased to now be on very level footing, and recently approved a nearly-balanced budget at the May 2025 board meeting.

Conclusion

St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary has navigated a period of transition with resilience, achieving financial stabilization and reaffirming its commitment to academic and spiritual formation. With a clear vision for the future, guided by strategic planning and a collaborative spirit, SVOTS continues to serve the Orthodox

Church and I look forward to leading this next chapter. Thank you for your trust and for your support of our mission-critical work.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "I. Tudorie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie

President-Elect and Academic Dean as of May 2025

(Dean as of July 1, 2025)

Orthodox Church in America
Auditing Committee Report

Matushka Sharon Hubiak, Chair
Maha Adranly, Member
Diane Dorogy, Member

May 19, 2025

The Holy Synod of Bishops, Metropolitan Council, AAC Delegates
Orthodox Church in America
PO Box 31409 Alexandria, VA 22310-9998

Your Beatitude, Your Eminences, Your Graces, Brothers and Sisters in Christ:
Most Blessed Master Bless!

Our role as the Auditing Committee is to contribute to corporate governance by providing the organization's directors and Finance committee with independent reviews of, and suggestions for, improving the design and operation of the organization's financial and non-financial control environment. Internal Audit objectively enhances the organization's business practices and provides management with a value-added service where weaknesses in a process may be caught and corrected prior to external audits.

The Auditing Committee has spent the past several months performing the internal audit of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). Again, this year, we were able to meet in person at the Chancery office in Springfield, Virginia from February 6, 2025, to February 7, 2025, and performed further review and follow-up remotely. In addition to the internal review of the accounting and fiscal systems and reports issued, we reviewed the disposition of items identified in prior year Auditing Committee Reports as well as new processes and controls implemented. We continue to work with the Treasurer and Chazin, the outsourced Accounting & Bookkeeping firm, to review and develop internal controls & processes for the Accounting and Finance department.

In the areas that we looked at, all were in good order with some items and recommendations noted in our detailed report. All the controls and process improvements noted have been reviewed and agreed upon with both the OCA Treasurer Andrew Smith and the Chazin Accounting Team.

With the engagement of Chazin to serve as the OCA's outsourced accounting staff, several of the findings from prior audits have been resolved. We also note that several recommendations included in prior audits have been actioned on and/or are in the process of being implemented.

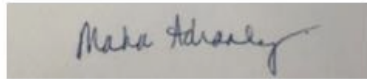
We would like to thank especially Andrew Smith, Very Reverend Alessandro Margheritino, the Chazin Accounting Team, and the Chancery Staff for their promptness in replying to our requests and their great attention to detail regarding the finances of the Orthodox Church in America. If you have any questions or require additional details regarding our findings, please let us know.

Yours in Christ,

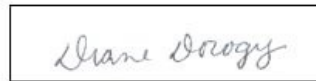
Matushka Sharon Hubiak, Chair



Maha Adranly, Member



Diane Dorogy, Member



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
21st ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT

Rationale

This amendment to Article V, Section 3.b provides essential clarity and standardization to the terms of office for Diocesan Representatives serving on the Metropolitan Council. While the current statute establishes a three-year term length, it does not specify when these terms begin and end, which has led to inconsistent practices across dioceses and potential confusion about exact dates of service. By establishing January 1 as the universal start date and December 31 as the end date, the amendment creates a clear framework that aligns with the calendar year and enables smoother transitions between representatives. This standardization is particularly important for ensuring consistent diocesan representation at Metropolitan Council meetings that often occur around the time of diocesan assemblies, when new representatives are typically elected. The clear delineation of term dates eliminates any ambiguity about which representative—outgoing or incoming—should attend these meetings.

The proposed standardization of term dates also offers practical administrative benefits for both diocesan and central church operations. It allows for better planning of council activities and facilitates more orderly elections and transitions of leadership in Metropolitan Council's committees.

Current Statute: Article V, Section 3.b—Metropolitan Council

Terms of office

- b) Diocesan Representatives to the Metropolitan Council are elected for a term of three (3) years.

Proposed Amendment

Terms of office

- b) Diocesan Representatives to the Metropolitan Council are elected for a term of three (3) years. This term begins on January 1 of the year immediately following their election and concludes three years later, on December 31.

PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT

“Pension Board”

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

Summary:

This Statute revision proposal adds professional qualifications for Pension Board Members. Further, it replaces the popular vote for Pension Board members (at the All-American Council) and enshrines a collaborative process between the Pension Board and the Metropolitan Council that will facilitate a comprehensive vetting and endorsement process. Those Board candidates (and alternates) determined by the committee to be the best qualified will be submitted to the Metropolitan Council for endorsement and then presented to the All-American Council for ratification before beginning their terms. This proposal also enshrines the participation mandate to include not just the “Pension Plan, which is a retirement plan established and mandated by the Church,” (Statute, Article III, Section 16) to read, “[alternately, the Pension Plan or any other] official OCA retirement plan that might be established in the future.” (text of amendment proposal).



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PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

Article III, Section 4: Competence of the All-American Council

Revision #1 - Edit: bullet point “h. Elect Members of the Pension Board and alternates,”

... to read:

Ratify, by acclamation, the slate of any new Pension Board Members and alternates nominated for service by the Joint Pension Trustee Vetting Committee (JPTVC) and endorsed by the Metropolitan Council.

[END OF SECTION REVISION]



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

Article III, Section 16: Pension Board

Proposed: Edit Article III (All-American Council), Section 16 (Pension Board):

REVISION #1 – “Definition” replaced with “Definitions”

CURRENT:

a. Definition

The Pension Board is an autonomous executive body, established by the All- American Council, that supervises administration of The Orthodox Church in America Pension Plan, which is a retirement plan established and mandated by the Church for all eligible clergy and lay employees. The assets of the Pension Plan constitute property held in trust for beneficiaries of the Pension Plan and are not assets of The Orthodox Church in America.

NEW LANGUAGE

a. Definitions:

- i. “Pension Board” (the “Board”) is an executive body, established by the All-American Council. The Pension Board shall supervise, administer, and oversee the Pension Plan for the purpose of ensuring the retirement security of the Plan’s participants as defined in the governing Plan documents.
- ii. “Assets” The assets of the OCA Pension Plan constitute property held in trust for beneficiaries of the Plan and are not assets of The Orthodox Church in America.
- iii. “Board Members” *are* the Trustees appointed or elected to serve on the Pension Board of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) for governance and oversight of the OCA Pension Plan.
- iv. “Trustees” are the individuals appointed under the Pension Plan’s trust agreement to manage the assets of the Pension Plan (in accordance with applicable law and the governing trust documents).
- v. “Ratification by acclamation” refers to a formal acceptance of a pre-vetted, pre-endorsed slate of candidates (in this case, Pension trustees) at the gathering of eligible voters during the All-American Councils (regular) without the need for a contested vote—endorsing the choice as a matter of record, rather than deliberating among multiple nominees. In practice, this takes the form of a simple, vocal affirmation or show of hands, signifying collective agreement with the slate of candidates without significant opposition.



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

REVISION #2 – Add Element: “Participation”

NEW ELEMENT

- b. Participation:
 - i. Participation in the Pension Plan, or another official OCA retirement plan that might be established in the future, shall be mandatory for all eligible clergy and lay employees of the Church, to the extent permitted by applicable law.



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

REVISION #3 – “Composition”

CURRENT:

- b. Composition
 - i. The Board consists of seven (7) members. The Holy Synod appoints one bishop to membership on the Pension Board; the All-American Council elects the remaining members.
 - ii. The Pension Board appoints one or more trustees from its membership.

NEW LANGUAGE

c. Composition:

The Board shall consist of seven (7) reputable members,

- i. Five (5) Board members shall be selected by the Joint Pension Trustee Vetting Committee (JPTVC) and ratified by acclamation at each AAC. These Board members must have significant professional experience in retirement planning, financial risk management, captive insurance, human resources, financial services, or another relevant professional discipline.
- ii. One (1) member of the Board shall be the clergyman who is the Chairman of the Pension Plan Advisory Committee (PPAC).
- iii. One (1) member of the Board, appointed by the Metropolitan, shall be a member of the Holy Synod of Bishops. This member serves at the Metropolitan’s discretion.
- iv. There shall be three or more alternates for the Board seats. These alternates will not participate on the Board unless they are called to serve in a vacated seat. Alternates may be invited by the Board to attend Board meetings in an observer capacity.



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

REVISION #4 – Replace “Competence” with “Duties and Responsibilities”

CURRENT:

e. Competence

The following matters are within the competence of the Pension Board. The Pension Board shall:

- i. Submit the Pension Plan and any proposed amendments to the Pension Plan to the Metropolitan Council for adoption;
- ii. Uphold the provisions of the Pension Plan as defined by the Plan Document and comply with United States Internal Revenue Service regulations and any other applicable regulations that qualify it for favorable tax exempt status as a qualified pension plan;
- iii. Consult on a regular basis with professional investment, legal, actuarial, accounting and auditing providers, as it deems appropriate in order to evaluate plan provisions and capabilities, while securing the stability, financial security and viability of the Pension Plan, with a goal of providing optimum benefits for plan participants; and
- iv. Report to the All-American Council on the activities and status of the plan and each year to the Metropolitan Council.

NEW LANGUAGE

d. Duties and Responsibilities

Members of the Pension Board are the “Trustees” of the Pension Plan

- i. When acting as Trustees of the Plan, members owe fiduciary obligations to participants, consistent with applicable civil law, canon law, and the governing plan documents. These duties include loyalty, prudence and acting in the best interests of the Plan. Trustees shall act in accordance with the Plan’s trust agreement to avoid conflicts of interest.
- ii. Trustees’ obligations include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a) Trustees shall develop investment policies, select investment managers, monitor investment performance and ensure that adequate levels of risk management are in place.



- b) Trustees shall establish governance and advisory policies, ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements and ensure the timely delivery of all applicable filings and reports.
 - c) Trustees shall monitor funding levels, recommend contribution rates, and engage actuarial services to monitor the program.
 - d) Trustees shall maintain plan documents and design and recommend retirement instruments and provisions with any changes requiring approval of the OCA Metropolitan Council.
 - e) Trustees shall ensure transparent reporting to include regular reports to plan participants and for regular meetings of the Metropolitan Council and the Holy Synod of Bishops.
 - f) Trustees shall oversee and manage liquidity requirements, review and adjust program expenses, and ensure the long-term health of the Plan.
 - g) Trustees shall ensure the continuing education for Board Members and staying current with industry best practices.
 - h) Trustees shall ensure that the OCA Pension Board has the right mix of skills and experience to effectively oversee the Plan. This shall include succession planning for key leadership roles within the Board to ensure continuity and effective governance.
 - i) Trustees shall report to the Metropolitan Council at its regular meetings on the activities and status of the plan, including financial details such as assets, liabilities, market value funding ratio, actuarial value funding ratio, surplus/deficit, plan participation, and other relevant information as the Metropolitan Council directs.
 - j) Trustees shall report to the All-American Council on the activities and status of the Plan.
 - k) Trustees shall solicit, vet, appoint and manage members of the Pension Plan Advisory Committee (PPAC).
- iii. The Board shall retain the services of qualified and competent professionals as necessary to perform their fiduciary duties.



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

REVISION #5 – Add Element: “Pension Plan Advisory Committee”

NEW ELEMENT

e. Pension Plan Advisory Committee (PPAC)

The Pension Plan Advisory Committee, a committee reporting to the Board, oversees the routine administration of benefits and addresses stakeholder concerns regarding the OCA Pension Plan.

- i. The Pension Plan Advisory Committee will be constituted and governed according to procedures documented and established by the Pension Board Trustees.
- ii. The chairman of the Pension Plan Advisory Committee shall be elected from among its clergy representatives; this individual will also be a member of the OCA Pension Board per Article III, Section 16.c.ii
- iii. The Advisory Committee, while acting on behalf of participants’ interests, does not assume the fiduciary duties of Trustees. Its role is advisory in nature: to receive, convey and address participant concerns and assist in improving transparency and communication about the Plan. Their duties may include benefit administration advocating on behalf of participants and other appropriate work as the Trustees delegate.
- iv. The OCA Pension Plan Advisory Committee reports to the Chairman of the Committee, who in turn reports to and sits on the Pension Board.



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

REVISION #6 –Add Element: “Joint Pension Trustee Vetting Committee (JPTVC)”

NEW ELEMENT

f. Joint Pension Trustee Vetting Committee (JPTVC)

An ad hoc (non-standing) committee called the Joint Pension Trustee Vetting Committee (JPTVC) consists of one (1) member of the Pension Board selected by the Pension Board and one (1) member of the Metropolitan Council selected by the Metropolitan Council. The JPTVC shall meet as necessary to fulfill its assigned duties as assigned by the Pension Board.

- i. When activated, the JPTVC reports to the Board and the scope of its charge is defined by the Board



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

REVISION #7 – Replace “Terms of Office” with “Selection and Terms of Office”

CURRENT:

c. Terms of Office

The bishop appointed to the Pension Board shall serve at the pleasure of the Holy Synod. The other members of the Pension Board are priests or deacons and laypersons in equal number, with relevant professional experience, elected as follows:

- i. At each All-American Council, if there are vacancies on the membership of the Pension Board to be filled by election by the All-American Council, the priest or deacon and the layperson who receive the highest number of votes are elected for a term from one All-American Council through the next two All-American Councils excluding any extraordinary All-American Council.
- ii. The priest or deacon and the layperson who receive the next highest number of votes are elected for a term from one All-American Council through the next All-American Council excluding any extraordinary All-American Council.
- iii. The All-American Council also elects two alternates, one priest or deacon and one layperson. The priest or deacon and the layperson who receive the next highest number of votes are elected as alternates for a term from one All-American Council through the next All-American Council excluding any extraordinary All-American Council.
- iv. An alternate shall fill a permanent vacancy on the Pension Board, complete the balance of the vacated term of the person whom he or she replaces, and assume all member duties and privileges relating to re-election.

Members of the Pension Board may continue to be eligible for re-election by the All-American Council.

NEW ELEMENT

g. Selection and Terms of Office

The members of the Pension Board may be priests, deacons or laypersons, with relevant professional experience, selected as follows:

- i. Well qualified board candidates, vetted and selected by the JPVTC and equal in number to the number of vacancies, shall be submitted to the Metropolitan Council for approval.



- ii. Well qualified alternates, vetted and selected by the JPVTC shall be submitted to the Metropolitan Council for approval.
- iii. Pension Board members equal in number to vacant seats (if any exist) are introduced, and their official terms commence, after ratification by acclamation at the All-American Council (regular only).
- iv. Irregular or unexpected Board seat vacancies shall be filled by the Board from among the ranks of previously endorsed alternates, and their terms will remain effective until the next regular All-American Council.
- v. Terms of office for Pension Board members shall be limited to three (3) full, consecutive, three-year terms after which members must step down for at least one (1) year. If necessary, waivers of this requirement may be authorized by the Metropolitan Council in one (1) year increments up to three (3) times.
- vi. Board members, except for the Episcopal appointee who serves at the pleasure of the Metropolitan, may be dismissed from the Board for non-performance, ethical lapses or any other reason deemed appropriate by the Metropolitan Council and a majority vote of the existing Board members. Upon removal from the board, the dismissed member's seat shall be declared vacant and the interim appointment process initiated.



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

REVISION #8 – Periodicity

CURRENT:

- d. Periodicity
The Pension Board shall meet quarterly, or as often as is necessary to accomplish effective, professional, and prudent administration.

NEW LANGUAGE

h. Periodicity

The Pension Board and the Pension Plan Advisory Committee shall meet quarterly, or as often as is necessary to accomplish effective and prudent administration. The Joint Pension Trustee Vetting Committee meets only as required to fulfill its obligations.

N.b.: The entire section would be given new alphanumeric letters as appropriate to ensure consistency.

[END OF SECTION REVISION]



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

Article V, Section 7: Competence of the Metropolitan Council

CURRENT: Section 7

- a. Implement the decisions of the All-American Council and continue the work of the All-American Council between sessions in the areas of its competence;
- ...
- u. Resolve disputes regarding the minutes of the All-American Council, as provided for in Article III, Section 1:2.

Revision #1 - NEW LANGUAGE

- ...
- l. Endorse for confirmation by the Holy Synod the Metropolitan's selection of the Chancellor, Secretary, Treasurer, and other officers of the Church whose competence or service extends beyond the boundaries of a single Diocese;
- m. Endorse, for ratification by acclamation at the All-American Council, candidates vetted and nominated by the Joint Pension Trustee Vetting Committee (JPTVC) to serve as Pension Board Trustees and alternates;
- n. Provide for publication and dissemination of materials for promoting the Orthodox Faith;
- ...

N.b.: The entire section would be given new alphanumeric letters as appropriate to ensure consistency.

[END OF SECTION REVISION]



Effectiveness of Proposed Amendment

This amendment will take effect immediately upon passing, allowing for the selection and ratification process outlined herein to be acted upon as swiftly as possible as permitted by Article XVII, Section 5 of the Statute.

The board as constituted under the previous language in the Statute will remain operational upon the acceptance of this new language. To ensure continuity during this transition, currently seated Board members will serve out the remaining time in their terms, and the OCA Administration will facilitate the implementation of this change (to include seating new Board members to vacant seats according to the new requirements).



PROPOSED STATUTE AMENDMENT
Pension Plan

21ST ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL
Phoenix, AZ – July 14-18, 2025

ATTESTATION

**Submitted by the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the South
Orthodox Church in America**

In accordance with Article III, Section 7 of the Bylaws of the Diocese of the South, the Diocesan Council approved this proposal on the 9th day of April 2025. Pursuant to the amendment process set forth in Article XVII of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, and with the blessing of His Eminence, Alexander, Archbishop of Dallas and the Diocese of the South, the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the South hereby submits this proposal for consideration by the Commission on Canons and Statute of the Orthodox Church in America.

Respectfully,



V. Rev. Peter Robichau
Secretary, Diocese of the South
Orthodox Church in America



APPENDIX

Background:

Helping to provide a dignified retirement for our clergy is a very important responsibility of the OCA. Recently the Pension Board, in concert with the Metropolitan Council and the Holy Synod of Bishops, has taken significant steps to improve the financial position of our Pension Plan. Almost as important as improving the financial stability of the Pension plan is the governance structure of the plan. Administering such a plan is quite complex, both in terms of financial management and in terms of knowledge and compliance with the many applicable federal, state and local laws. Administering the pension plan of an ecclesiastical body is a specialty field unto itself. Currently our Pension Board is elected at our All-American Council (AAC). Those elected to oversee the Pension are servants of the church, might or might not have significant financial experience, and all have worked faithfully on behalf of the plan in recent years. But typically, they do not have significant experience in pension plan administration. Moving into the future, we feel that for the stability of the plan, the trustees should have significant past professional experience in relevant fields. To ensure the selection of such trustees will require an amendment of the OCA Statute.

About:

The OCA is the official sponsor for the Pension Plan and has a fiduciary responsibility to do everything within its power to ensure the health and good governance of the plan. While many people have invested a great deal of time and effort to address the present unfunded liability of the plan, the current language in the OCA Statute prevents the OCA from most effectively addressing challenges and managing the retirement plan for OCA Clergy and Employees. There are some changes that could be made to the OCA statute that will improve the way that the plan is governed and would better protect the interests of those participating in it.

The main proposal is to change how the Pension Board members are chosen. Currently, they are elected at the All-American Council based on nomination and popular vote (as required by Statute) however it is not a requirement that nominated/elected Board Members be qualified professionals in the field of pension management, banking, risk management, insurance and actuarial science. It is best practice that our elected Board members have the necessary skills to appropriately manage the outside agencies and professionals who are supporting them.

At its core, a change in board composition would emphasize the importance of strong governance, which is especially important for something as complex as our retirement plan. Good governance by the most qualified trustees ensures the highest levels of responsible financial management and helps the plan adapt to changing regulations and economic conditions under the careful watch of people with a great deal of professional experience in this field.



The OCA Pension Plan is exempt from the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), a federal law governing most private-sector pension plans. While this exemption was wisely chosen to avoid the costs and complexities of ERISA compliance (like complex audits, numerous rules and expensive premiums), the OCA plan still needs to follow state laws, particularly those laws that exist in the state where the OCA is headquartered.

These state laws, often based on the Uniform Trust Code and Uniform Prudent Investor Act, outline the responsibilities of those managing the plan, emphasizing loyalty, prudence, impartiality, and transparency.

Even though it is not bound by ERISA, the OCA Pension Plan can still benefit from *more closely* aligning with the best practices of other retirement plans. This is a difficult path to navigate for trustees without a great depth of professional experience in these areas. A professionalized board of industry professionals can implement these practices more effectively, ensuring the plan is managed responsibly while minimizing potential legal and financial issues.

An experienced, professional board would be able to effectively make changes that could involve creating, updating or refining key documents, such as a Board Charter to better define roles and responsibilities, an Investment Policy Statement to guide investment decisions, and a Master Annual Plan Committee Calendar to track important activities.

Additionally, regular training could be effectively planned so that all involved in managing the plan properly understand their legal obligations and can fulfill their roles effectively. Regular self-audits (conducted by these experienced trustees who are intimately familiar with the intricacies and nuances of complex retirement plans and financial instruments) would be especially important to identify and address any compliance issues proactively.

Finally, the trustees would enlist the support of active plan participants in a Pension Plan Advisory Committee to assist in operational oversight and decision making on a regular basis.

The OCA has both legal and fiduciary responsibilities to ensure excellence in retirement plan advising and governance. By making these changes—which enable the OCA, as plan sponsor, to ensure the most qualified professionals serve on the Board—the OCA will demonstrate a commitment to managing the pension plan responsibly and will help to build confidence among the plan's participants and faithful members of the Church who are being asked to sacrifice in order to fund the large deficit that we presently face.



21st All-American Council

July 14-18, 2025

Phoenix, Arizona

*“Gathered Together By
Christ”*

Tentative Schedule

Sunday, July 13

Time	Event	Room
5:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Council Registration	Ballroom Foyer
2:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Council Exhibits/Displays	Sonoran Sky Ballroom
6:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Youth Registration	Ballroom Foyer
6:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Youth Registration Material Pickup and Parent/Staff Meeting	Ballroom Foyer

Monday, July 14 (Day 1)

Time	Event	Room
9:00 AM – 10:00 PM	Council Registration	Ballroom Foyer
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	DOM Assembly	South Mountain Ballroom K, L
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	DOS Assembly	South Mountain Ballroom M, N
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM	DOW Thriving Parishes Project	Palm 2A and 2B
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Choir Rehearsal	Arizona Grand Ballroom
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Holy Synod/Met Council Dinner Meeting	Sierra Ballroom 2 & 3
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM	Plenary Session I	Arizona Grand Ballroom
8:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Metropolitan's Welcome Reception	Palm Court, Sonoran Sky Patio, Camelback Patio and Paseo East

Tuesday, July 15 (Day 2)

Time	Event	Room
7:00 AM – 9:00 AM	Liturgy (Stavropegial Clergy)	Arizona Grand Ballroom
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Council Registration	Ballroom Foyer
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	Clergy Wives Breakfast	Sierra Ballroom 2,3

10:30 AM - 1:00 PM	Plenary Session II	Arizona Grand Ballroom
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Lunch Recess	
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Lunch in honor of Archbishop Benjamin	South Mountain Ballroom K, L, M
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Pension Workshop	South Mountain Ballroom N
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Addiction Workshop	Camelback A
1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	FOCA Board of Trustees	Palm 2A, 2B
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Plenary Session III	Arizona Grand Ballroom
5:30 PM - 6:30 PM	Panikhida	Arizona Grand Ballroom
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM	Choir Rehearsal	Arizona Grand Ballroom
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Committee Meetings	Palm 2A, 2B
8:00 PM - 10:00 PM	St. Tikhon's Seminary Reception	Offsite
8:00 PM - 10:00 PM	St. Vladimir's Seminary Reception	South Mountain Ballroom N
8:00 PM - 10:00 PM	FOCA Reception	Arizona Grand Ballroom

Wednesday, July 16 (Day 3)

Time	Event	Room
7:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Liturgy (Chaplains)	Arizona Grand Ballroom
10:30 AM - 1:00 PM	Plenary Session IV	Arizona Grand Ballroom
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Lunch Recess	
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Clergy Wives Informal Lunch	Palm 2A & 2B
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	DOW Nominating Assembly	Sierra Ballroom 2 & 3
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Assembly of Bishops Presentation	South Mountain Ballroom N
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	OCCIF Workshop	South Mountain Ballroom M
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Addiction Workshop	Camelback A
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM	FOCA Plenary Session I	South Mountain Ballroom K, L
1:45 PM - 2:45 PM	Choir Rehearsal	Arizona Grand Ballroom
3:00 PM - 4:30 PM	Presentation: The 100 th Anniversary of St. Tikhon's repose	Arizona Grand Ballroom
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	All-Night Vigil	Arizona Grand Ballroom
8:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Committee Meetings	Palm 2A, 2B
7:00 PM - 10:00 PM	Private Confessions	During Vigil -- Ballroom

Thursday, July 17 (Day 4)

Time	Event	Room
7:15 AM - 7:30 AM	Vesting for Liturgy	Sierra Ballroom 1
7:15 AM - 7:30 AM	Procession	
7:30 AM - 11:00 AM	Hierarchical Liturgy	Arizona Grand Ballroom
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	IOCC Presentation	South Mountain Ballroom N

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Holy Synod Brunch with Youth	Sierra Ballroom 2, 3
1:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Plenary Session V	Arizona Grand Ballroom
3:30 PM – 5:00 PM	FOCA Plenary Session II	South Mountain Ballroom K,L
5:30 PM – 6:30 PM	Reception	Palm Court, and Ballroom Foyer
6:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Doors Open for Council Grand Banquet	
7:00 PM – 9:30 PM	Council Grand Banquet	Arizona Grand Ballroom

Friday, July 18 (Day 5)

Time	Event	Room
7:00 AM – 8:00 AM	Akathist to American Saints	Arizona Grand Ballroom
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Plenary Session VI	Arizona Grand Ballroom
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Holy Synod/Metropolitan Council/ PCC Luncheon	Seirra Ballroom 1, 2 & 3
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	DOW Assembly	South Mountain Ballroom K, L

Additional Information *

**Thursday the exhibits/displays close at 5:30 pm*

Sunday-Thursday, July 13-18	Event	Room
9:00 AM – 10:00 PM	Exhibits/Displays	Sonoran Sky Ballroom
9:00 AM – 10:00 PM	St. Tikhon's Museum	Palm 2C & D

Monday-Friday, July 14-18	Event	Room
6:00 AM – 11:59 PM	Friends of Bill W	Camelback A
9:00 AM – 10:00 PM	Secretarial Room	Ocotillo B
	Storage	Ocotillo A

21st All-American Council
July 14-18, 2025
Phoenix, Arizona
“Gathered Together By Christ”

Tentative Agenda

Monday, July 14 (Day 1)

Time	Event	Room
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM	Plenary Session I	Arizona Grand Ballroom
	<i>Opening Molieben</i>	
	<i>Call to Order</i>	
	<i>Welcome/Organization</i>	
	<i>Local Committee Welcome</i>	
	<i>Metropolitan’s Address</i>	
	<i>Housekeeping</i>	

Tuesday, July 15 (Day 2)

10:30 AM - 1:00 PM	Plenary Session II	Arizona Grand Ballroom
	<i>Opening Prayer</i>	
	<i>Nominations Procedures</i>	
	<i>Resolutions Procedures</i>	
	<i>Metropolitan’s Report</i>	
	<i>Chancellor’s Report</i>	
	<i>Secretary’s Report</i>	
	<i>Metropolitan Council Statute Amendment</i>	
	<i>Questions/Discussions</i>	
	<i>Resolutions, time permitting</i>	
	<i>Housekeeping</i>	

3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Plenary Session III	Arizona Grand Ballroom
	<i>Opening Prayer</i>	
	<i>Treasurer’s Report</i>	
	<i>Financial Report</i>	
	<i>Audit Report</i>	
	<i>Funding Resolution</i>	
	<i>Pension Board Report</i>	

	<i>Stavropegial Monasteries Report</i>	
	<i>Questions/Discussions</i>	
	<i>Resolutions, time permitting</i>	
	<i>Housekeeping</i>	

Wednesday, July 16 (Day 3)

10:30 AM - 1:00 PM	Plenary Session IV	Arizona Grand Ballroom
	<i>Opening Prayer</i>	
	<i>Pension Statute Amendment</i>	
	<i>Questions/Discussions</i>	
	<i>Resolutions, time permitting</i>	
	<i>Housekeeping</i>	

Thursday, July 17 (Day 4)

1:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Plenary Session V	Arizona Grand Ballroom
	<i>Opening Prayer</i>	
	<i>Election Procedure</i>	
	<i>Elections</i>	
	<i>Office of Pastoral Life</i>	
	<i>OCA Departments Report</i>	
	<i>Resolutions</i>	
	<i>St. Tikhon's Seminary Report</i>	
	<i>St. Vladimir's Seminary Report</i>	
	<i>Housekeeping</i>	

Friday, July 18 (Day 5)

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Plenary Session VI	Arizona Grand Ballroom
	<i>Opening Prayer</i>	
	<i>Pan-Orthodox Agencies (Assembly of Bishops)</i>	
	<i>Military Chaplains Report</i>	
	<i>Institutional Chaplains Report</i>	
	<i>Final Resolutions</i>	
	<i>Installation of Council</i>	
	<i>Closing Molieben</i>	

Address of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon to the 21st All-American Council

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On September 16, 1979 a crew of eight men set sail on a three-month expedition which would take them from Saint Malo, a commune in Brittany, on the west coast of France, to the island of South Georgia, a British Overseas territory in the Antarctic region. The French crew was composed of four sailors and four alpine guides, including my paternal uncle, and had set for itself the goal of undertaking a journey by sea and by land, inspired by the expeditions of the early 20th century in the period known as the “Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration.” That age is remembered for the exploits of well-known figures such as Ernest Shackleton, who made the first crossing of South Georgia; Roald Amundsen, who was the first to reach to South Pole; and Robert Falcon Scott, who reached the South Pole but, on the return trip, perished of starvation and cold along with his entire crew.

My uncle’s expedition had the more modest goal of sailing to South Georgia, crossing the island, and ascending its central peak, Mount Paget, with an altitude of 9,629 feet. The chronicler of this expedition relates that the inspiration for this voyage was a sense of the fleeting nature of existence, a desire to accomplish something more challenging, and a quest to avoid boredom. Perhaps these, and other factors, have served as the impetus for most human endeavors, heroic or not, throughout history. One may find similar examples of heroic exploration within the Orthodox tradition. Looking to the history of the Orthodox Church in America specifically, we immediately think of the travels by sea and by land undertaken by Saint Herman and his companions.

What is it, one might ask, that distinguishes Saint Herman and his companions from the many notable explorers of the Antarctic or scalers of significant peaks? Saint Herman indeed traveled the length of Siberia, crossed the Bering Strait, and ascended the mountain of Spruce Island, but his goal was not the avoidance of boredom. Rather, given the fleeting nature of our existence in this world, Saint Herman had devoted himself to the life of the world to come. Having reached his earthly destination of Spruce Island, he built there a chapel in which he and others might glorify God through repentance and prayer, through worship and service to others.

Seas and other bodies of water, as well as mountains and hills, figure prominently in the life of our Lord, and in fact throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, it is above all in the mountains that the glory of the Lord is revealed. By making the effort to ascend such heights, the patriarchs and prophets were striving to enter into the glory of the Lord.

Often, when our Lord gathers his disciples, he gathers them in high places, such as Mount Tabor or the Mount of Olives. He also calls to them from the water, as he did when he called to them from a boat “a little ways off from the shore.” But whether on land or sea, the Lord was clearly the focal point of the gathering, the center of those gathered in the midst around him.

The appearance of the Lord in these remote and dangerous places, in the heights and hovering over the depths, reminds us of the ascetical effort required to enter into communion with Christ, the one who is revealed on the mountain-top in glory to those who can behold this “as far as they were able.” If the explorers of the past, if that crew of French adventurers, could make an extraordinary effort to cross seas and climb mountains just to stave off ennui, then it should be no surprise that the saints would make greater efforts—not only with their bodies, but with their minds and hearts—in order to behold the face of the living God.

At the last All-American Council, our theme was “Becoming Vessels of Grace,” and I spoke of the Orthodox Church in America’s past, present, and future by using the images of a nautical journey. This is one way of speaking of our collective and individual life as Christians, as the Church. This is a horizontal image, a vision of our progress as a passage from point A to point B.

But today, I would like to speak, not so much in terms of the voyage from Saint Malo to South Georgia, but in terms of the subsequent ascent of Mount Paget. Christ calls us, not just from one place to another, but from the low places to the high places. He has ascended on high and taken captivity captive, and he calls us to follow him to the heights. Just as Moses and Elijah encountered the Lord in high places, so he gathers us in an upper room in order to leave behind worldly things and encounter the Most High God.

The axis here is not horizontal, but vertical. The movement is not a passage through time, but an ascent beyond the constraints of time and space. In this address, I would like to reflect on the past, present, and future of our Orthodox Church in America, but I would like to do so with this vertical axis always in mind. I would like to consider our Church, not just in historical terms, but in transhistorical and superhistorical terms. To use an image common to the ancient Western Fathers of the Church, we are pilgrims in time, but, as our holy Eastern Tradition constantly reminds us, to be in the Church is also already to be outside of time. As we sing on September 13, the feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of the Resurrection, “The Church is shown to be a heaven filled with light, enlightening all the faithful.”

First, then, I would like to consider the legacy of the Orthodox Church in America—our heritage and our accomplishments in the 55 years since receiving the Tomos of our autocephaly.

Certainly, a major part of our legacy is liturgical. The Orthodox Church in America has been at the forefront of the revival of the practice of frequent communion, which is now once again commonplace throughout the Orthodox world. This is rightly celebrated; the faithful should be encouraged “in the fear of God, with faith and love [to] draw near” and to “taste the Fountain of immortality.” The Divine Liturgy is the summit of our existence; it is the place where, laying aside all earthly cares, we receive the pre-eternal God into our very bodies, souls, and hearts.

Frequent approach to the holy chalice can come with temptations, however: we can grow casual, lukewarm, entitled, and thoughtless. Without frequent confession and repentance, without awe, without care, the Body and Blood of Christ, a divine Fire that warms and enlightens, instead can become a dread Fire that consumes the heedless. Communion of the holy Mysteries should raise the mind on high; if we commune thoughtlessly and as a matter of habit, however, we will remain earthbound.

I quote the words of the holy bishop Seraphim of Dmitrov, martyred by the Soviet regime in 1937: “The whole meaning of this earthly life is found in nothing other than in continual preparation for the reception of the holy Mysteries of Christ: in prayerful struggle, abstinence, and pure-hearted repentance. The whole meaning of a Christian’s life is contained in this preparation for the holy Mysteries, and in the very communion of the holy and life-giving Mysteries of Christ. A Christian ought to commune as often

as possible.” Our life’s meaning is found in communion itself and in preparation for communion; frequent communion should never be divorced from constant preparation.

In this regard, it is helpful to remember the long-standing guidance of the Holy Synod of Bishops on the subject of confession and communion, issued fifty years ago: if a person communes most every Sunday, he ought to make his sacramental confession at least once per month. The transformative power of communion is not magical. Though we are never worthy of holy communion, if we do not at least make an effort to prepare ourselves, the Mysteries become a source, not of healing, but of spiritual danger.

Another element of our legacy is the adoption of English for liturgical use. Though this is now widespread among the so-called jurisdictions, the Orthodox liturgical use was pioneered by the Orthodox Church in America (and by the Metropolia prior to autocephaly) and it is in our Church that the use of English is most widespread.

The use of English in most of our communities is perhaps the clearest expression of our identity as the local autocephalous Church on this continent. In our tradition, liturgical translation is the cornerstone of missionary activity, as we see in the Lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, St. Stephen of Perm, and St. Nikolai of Japan.

However, though the missionary value of English is clear, and though its liturgical dignity, at least in potential, is undeniable, this focus on the English language also has drawbacks. We are a young Church, with much to learn from our older sisters, but relatively few of our clergy, at least outside of our non-territorial dioceses, have fluency in either the liturgical or vernacular languages of the other Orthodox Churches. This can further isolation, eccentricity, and ignorance.

Furthermore, many liturgical materials await translation into English, especially in conformity to the use of the Orthodox Church in America; at the very least, many texts are poorly disseminated. Hence, because we have lost the ability, in most of the communities of our territorial dioceses, to make even partial or occasional use of liturgical languages other than English, this incompleteness means that our liturgical life remains impoverished.

The haphazard process of implementing English in the liturgy has moreover led to a plurality of translations unknown in any other Orthodox Church; the idea that a parish priest might employ his own version of a liturgical text is a phenomenon unique to Anglophone Orthodoxy. Though unity does not mean uniformity, the lack of uniformity in this area does not accord with the tradition that we received and with the tradition and life of our sister Churches.

Finally, our rapid transition to English has meant a rapid obscuring of our heritage. In particular, the Church Slavonic and East Slavic heritage common to the territorial dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America is not merely a matter of now-fading ethnic identity; it is something sacred. Until 1970, our Church was part of the Russian Orthodox Church. This means that the saints and traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church belong to us, too, regardless of our own ethnic background. The rapid loss of Church Slavonic and our sense of connection to East Slavic Orthodoxy has weakened our connection to the great cloud of witnesses who went before us, who suffered and labored for the Faith over the course of centuries so that it could eventually be brought to North America and proclaimed in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. We must never be tempted to Protestantize our history, leaping from the apostolic era to autocephaly.

I acknowledge, and indeed emphasize, that this is not just true of our Russian Orthodox heritage; the same applies to the heritage of our non-territorial, so-called ethnic dioceses. Moreover, what I have said here concerning English equally applies to the other North American languages and language communities, notably Spanish and the Hispanophone community as well as French and the Francophone community.

Again, however, this is not merely a matter of historical understanding; there is a vertical element. A consciousness of our heritage helps connect us with the Church Triumphant. In the case of our territorial dioceses especially, this consciousness of our Church Slavonic, East Slavic, and Russian Orthodox heritage helps connect us to the many saints of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Carpatho-Rus who belong very much to us as well. In the Orthodox tradition properly understood, identity does not divide us, but unites us; it is a bridge from our individual circumstances to the eternal and universal.

In this respect, I would quote a passage from St. Paul, one which I cited during the canonization celebration for St. Olga in Anchorage. St. Paul, writing against divisions in

the Church at Corinth, says: “For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” We do not want to become attached to elements of our heritage as a divisive, partisan matter. Neither, however, do we wish to deny that which belongs to us, both historically and eschatologically.

Much more could be said about the legacy of the Orthodox Church in America: liturgical, missionary, theological, and more. But the few matters I have discussed here serve to communicate my larger point: past achievements, if they matter, matter insofar as they raise us heavenward. History presents ambiguities; indeed, as we shall discuss, so do the present and future.

However, in Christ, through asceticism and prayer, we are offered a way to transcend this sin-made earthly mess. In God is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning”; in him who is Light, there is no darkness at all; he is infinite yet simple and without contradiction. An earthly legacy necessarily carries uncertainty and question marks; but we strive toward the judgment of God, by which all questions are resolved and in which ultimate meaning is found.

We do this, however, by navigating the twists and turns of earthly existence; for now, we live in a world of becoming, not of being. So I turn again to our pilgrimage through time, and to our present circumstances.

In preparation for this present council, I issued a call for reflections. This call invited all the faithful, as concrete local communities—missions, parishes, and institutions—to reflect on the current moment in the life of our Church. The fruit of this invitation was a white paper formulated by an ad hoc committee appointed by me to analyze the responses. In addition to reviewing this report, I also took the time to review a number of these responses individually. Subsequently, the committee’s findings were offered up to the whole church in the form of an abbreviated report.

I will not address every element of these findings. I would, however, like to speak about one of the most ubiquitous responses. Many respondents reported a spike in interest in Orthodox Christianity during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This seems to be a cause for both joy and concern on the part of many. We are always happy to see our

churches grow. But this new wave of inquirers and converts, according to many, have brought on us a host of accompanying challenges.

Logistically, many of our facilities are being stretched to capacity. In an era of soaring real estate prices, it is often no simple matter for rapidly growing missions to scale up. Likewise, even as some speak of a supposed “clergy shortage,” our clergy are being asked to provide pastoral care for larger and larger congregations.

More challenging, perhaps, are the new dynamics behind this wave of interest in our Church. On the one hand, younger generations of North Americans are dealing with a new longing for belonging and identity. In the past, Old World ethnic identities undergirded many communities, but even the memory of ethnic identity is non-existent for large swaths of the population. Moreover, to speak from a United-States-based perspective, emergent “American” identity may have possessed more positive content in past decades; now, our national character seems more contested than ever—at least, more contested than any time since the Civil War—with definite alienating effects, regardless of one’s political proclivities. As a result of these factors, many young people feel totally unmoored from a much-needed sense of communal identity and belonging.

When these young people come to the Church, they bring along social and cultural needs together with the desire for everlasting salvation in Christ. This can be confusing for an older generation of Orthodox Christians who strove to strip away ethnic and cultural elements from our communities, viewing these as an obstacle to evangelism. In past decades, we would speak of the need to reach “the culture”; now, many young people do not feel themselves part of any culture at all, and in the Church, they are seeking what they miss.

A further challenge, according to many respondents, stems from the formation that new inquirers and converts find online, even before they set foot in the doors of a Church. According to respondents, many inquirers bring a host of preconceptions and misconceptions that priests and others involved in formation struggle to dispel. Gone are the days of a new arrival having read a few books or even viewed some forum posts or listened to a few podcasts; now, a first-time visitor may have consumed a great many hours of so-called content from one or more Orthodox Christian personalities online.

Though these circumstances are indeed challenging, I would once again like to suggest that there are further complications. The longing for identity is not intrinsically linked to the search for salvation, and certainly it comes with pitfalls. But at the very least, this longing can be a step in the right direction, a step toward a true longing for Christ. St. John Climacus says that we can play the passions against each other—using vanity to defeat other, more public sins, for example—and so it hardly seems impossible to use lesser longings as a step toward higher things.

Moreover, we often speak of the “incarnational” character of Orthodox Christianity, and this means that, normally, for most of our history, in most places and times, Orthodoxy is very much infused into culture. If we can provide new converts with a sense of social and cultural belonging, this may very well enrich and ground their faith now and provide for a deeper, more organic experience of Orthodoxy for generations to come. The disintegration of old ethnic communities and the failure of the monolithic mass culture to satisfy are an opportunity to reintegrate our heritage and build new social and cultural forms, not as ends in and of themselves, but as supports for the salvific mission of the Church. Many twentieth-century theologians recoiled at the term “religion.” But the word “religion” is often understood to come from the Latin root meaning “tie,” and there is nothing wrong with ties that bind, provided, of course, they bind us to one another in the shared mission of the Gospel and the shared pursuit of the kingdom of heaven, and not tie us down to this earth.

Likewise, when we encounter newcomers who bring in a host of preconceptions, we would do well to seek to form them without becoming prey to our preconceptions about Orthodox Christianity. Undoubtedly, some new arrivals may indeed bring truly harmful misconceptions; undoubtedly, many self-appointed authorities on the internet present dangerously imbalanced perspectives. But our focus, in catechesis, mystagogy, and all kinds of formation must be on Christ, not on our own brand of Orthodox Christianity.

Again, I return to that vertical axis, that ascent: the goal of formation isn’t to make Christians that conform to our ideas, but rather to help those for whom we care to ascend to Christ.

All of which is to say, it is easy to look at our present moment and present challenges and view our problems solely through a worldly lens. But this ultimately results in

absurdity. If we do not place Christ and his kingdom at the center of our endeavor, our pursuit of other particular ends is meaningless. Whether the challenge be the price of land or the number of clergy, the longing for identity or the formation of catechumens, our focus must always be Jesus Christ: his glory, his adoration. We must avoid the temptation to get bogged down in the journey from one point to another; we must always bear in mind the call to ascend.

This remains true as we turn from the present to the future. In preparing these remarks, I wrote down a lengthy list of those challenges that lie on the horizon. I will not rehearse them here, however. Much more important than addressing particular “issues” is remembrance of the one thing needful. Whatever the issue at hand is, our question should always be: how can I be saved? What does this have to do with my salvation?

In this regard, I think of that quotation from Archimandrite Zacharias of Essex, one many of us have seen on our wall calendars this month: “Just as people in the world are immersed night and day in the cares of life, so too are the workers of godliness consumed by one: ‘What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’”

Even when it comes to issues and controversies within the Church—perhaps especially when it comes to issues and controversies within the Church—we are often tempted to introduce other criteria. But really, our goal is single: the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, our criterion is one: how shall we inherit that kingdom? In other words, what does this or that matter have to do with my salvation?

When we ask that question, we find that so many issues become clear, and perhaps even more of them simply die away. “Let the dead bury their own dead,” says the Lord; let others concern themselves with trivial issues. As for us, we are called to ascend, to leave behind the snares of the fowler and to soar aloft with the spiritual eagles.

Yes, it is true: we always ascend *from* somewhere. We begin in time, in history, in between past and future. Yet the goal of the ascent is the endless present of the one named I AM.

But how do we ascend to Christ? We must first descend into the deep heart by persevering in humble, patient, quiet, consistent prayer. We cannot catechize those who are searching if we ourselves are not likewise searching; we cannot feed the

hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison, if we are not longing for our Lord – the one whose divine image is reflected in their human persons; we cannot point those broken in heart or broken in mind to genuine healing if we ourselves are not seeking that very healing; we cannot proclaim the Gospel with boldness, or offer the liturgy with purity, or provide the holy mysteries with integrity, if our own hearts are not drawing closer to the source.

Our goal is not to draw God down to ourselves but rather to lift up our mind and our spirit in order to present it before God in what Archimandrite Zacharias calls “an uprush towards heaven.”

And so, in conclusion, I return to those eight Frenchmen and their voyage to the summit of Mount Paget. As I mentioned, their reason for this journey was to escape boredom, the tedium of existence. In this age of constant content and entertainment, this may seem strange: why would you go to an isolated mountain peak to escape boredom?

But then we realize, though the color and clamor of the world may present itself to us as a source of fulfillment, ultimately this parade of noise and opinion and appearances is boredom itself. All of these lie at the base of the mountain. If we wish to go on a real adventure, if we want to breathe reality, if we want to encounter true joy and excitement, the journey is not outside, but within. It takes place in silence and struggle; it is not escapism, but true liberation.

The resolution to our finitude is indeed the ascent of a mountain, a mountain which is both Golgotha and Tabor: the place where we encounter the one who is crucified and risen, slain and ever-shining. It is he who has gathered us together in his Name, and it is he who is the One Thing Needful: the Word uttered in the silence of the Father, who is carried to us, not in the thunder of opinion or the whirlwind of busy-ness, but on a still, small voice.

Let us strive to hear that still, small voice, to keep our eyes on the things above, and to ascend together to the kingdom of Christ.

To him, our true Lord and God and Savior, be all adoration, together with his Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Chancellor's Oral Report to the 21st All-American Council

Introduction

It is an honor to present this oral report to the 21st All-American Council in my dual capacity as Chancellor and Acting Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America. We gather this year under the theme “Gathered Together by Christ”—a theme that affirms not only our shared faith but also the essential nature of the Church as a body in which each member participates in and contributes to the life of the whole.

As our Statute affirms, *“the Council brings together the various elements of the Church to bear witness to her identity, unity, and mission.”* Today, our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ gathers us in a unique way—through this Council—to come, pray, deliberate, labor, and rejoice together.

At the time of the last Council in Baltimore in 2022, the Church was just entering a new period of transition. Most notably, the relocation of the Chancery from Syosset, New York, to the territory of the Archdiocese of Washington marked a generational shift after nearly seventy years. This move brought with it administrative adjustments, new personnel structures, and a reexamination of operational priorities.

As is often the case with transitions of this magnitude, the past three years have presented both challenges and opportunities. Yet under the wise and prayerful leadership of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon—and despite a limited staff—the Chancery has continued to serve faithfully and without interruption.

The written report I submitted ahead of this Council, which is publicly available on the OCA website, offers an overview of key developments since the previous Council. It summarizes areas of work across Church administration and reflects the dual responsibilities of Chancellor and Secretary, particularly following my appointment as Chancellor after the resignation of Archpriest Alexander Rentel at the end of 2024. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Fr. Alexander for his six years of dedicated service. His professionalism and generous counsel during this transition have been and continue to be invaluable.

Rather than walk through each section of that report today, I would like to use this opportunity to reflect more fully on the theme of this Council, and what it reveals about the broader vocation of our Church and the ministry of the central administration.

Gathered Together by Christ

The words of this Council's theme—“Gathered Together by Christ”—remind us that our unity extends beyond individuals, parishes, and dioceses. It encompasses our identity as an autocephalous Church, called by Christ to minister in a particular context, with a particular mission: to bear witness to the Gospel and to serve all who dwell on this continent.

Our position as the only fully self-governing Orthodox Church in North America grants us a kind of freedom—one that allows us to respond to the realities of our time and place with creativity, pastoral attentiveness, and faithfulness to tradition. But this freedom also comes with profound responsibility. We are not here by accident. We have been entrusted with a sacred task.

Our autocephaly is not merely a structural arrangement—it is a living expression of vocation. It calls us to build up the Church in ways that are rooted in the Orthodox tradition, but shaped by the lived experience and needs of our people and communities. This vision is not abstract. It is meant to shape how we live, how we serve, and how we lead.

This vision is deeply anchored in the identity of the Orthodox Church in America. From the arrival of missionaries in Alaska in 1794 to the gradual establishment of Church structures across the continent, our growth has not been a matter of transplanting models, but of adapting the Orthodox tradition to the local reality. A key figure in that development was St. Tikhon of Moscow, who, as Archbishop in North America and later as Patriarch of Russia, recognized the need for a distinctly local expression of Orthodox life. His convocation of the first All-American Sobor in 1907—with full clergy and lay participation—set the foundation for the conciliar model of governance that still guides us today. As we mark 100 years since his repose, his vision remains as vital as ever.

That conciliar model finds visible expression in this Council. But its work does not end when we leave Phoenix. It continues through the Metropolitan Council, which—under the oversight of the Holy Synod—carries forward the decisions and direction set by this Council until we gather again in Dallas in 2028.

Sobornost in Principle and Practice

Neither the All-American Council nor the Metropolitan Council exists merely for administrative efficiency. Both are expressions of *sobornost*—a principle that speaks to the unity we cultivate through shared responsibility, collaboration, and mutual accountability. For the Orthodox Church in America, *sobornost* is not an abstract ecclesiological theory. It is the lived fabric of our Church's life.

It affirms that every person in the Church has dignity, agency, and a role to play—but also responsibility for the well-being of the whole. It calls us beyond a mindset of individualism or self-preservation and into a posture of communion, humility, and service. And true *sobornost* is not possible without real, lived repentance.

This has very practical implications for every one of us gathered here.

Sobornost requires a shift in mindset. It means being willing to step up when the Church calls us to serve—even when that call is inconvenient or unexpected. And when we do, it calls us to offer something more than the half-hearted response, “Well, if no one else will do it, I guess I can.” Our service should be generous, intentional, and grounded in love for the Church.

At the same time, *sobornost* also means being willing to step aside when the time comes—recognizing with humility and love that what we can offer may no longer be what is most needed. It means making space for others to lead, not out of resignation or frustration, but out of a desire to build up the Body of Christ.

Sobornost reframes the question from “What do I want?” or “What do I think is best?” to “What is best for the Body?”—for the diocese, the parish, the ministry, the Church as a whole.

It also calls us to cultivate continuity. At every level of Church life, we must foster a culture of passing on responsibility—not only when someone is replaced, but because the Church cannot depend on any one person alone. If you lead a ministry, find and train an assistant. If you serve on a committee, mentor a successor. This is not corporate succession planning. It is ecclesial stewardship.

And *sobornost* must also shape how we speak to one another. Whether in plenary sessions or parish meetings, we are not representatives of competing factions. “These are our friends—the ones who support our view, our resolution, our amendment, and those are those who don’t.” We are members of the one Body of Christ. This Council is not simply a governance structure. It is a living icon of *sobornost*, and it is our task to carry its spirit home with us.

Discernment, Courage, and the Work of Administration

Church administration, at its heart, is about far more than completing tasks or enforcing policies. Many of the questions that come before the Chancery are deeply pastoral and often complex—rarely lending themselves to quick or simple answers.

What may appear externally as delay or indecision is, more often than not, the fruit of careful discernment—an effort to maintain stability, preserve ecclesial order, and respond wisely to the changing realities of Church life. In an age marked by polarization, suspicion, and the pressure for instant reaction, the Church must instead preserve a spirit of thoughtful, deliberate, and prayerful engagement.

Transparency and accountability remain essential values. But the work of the central administration must always be directed toward the building up of the Body of Christ—not reacting to external pressures or popular opinion, but staying rooted in the enduring principles of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church.

At the same time, discernment must be coupled with courage. There are moments when the Church must act—decisively and without delay—not only to address current needs, but to avoid the kind of inertia that leads to stagnation or decline. Sometimes difficult decisions must be made—even if it means hurting somebody's feelings or not making somebody happy—not for the sake of change itself, but as an act of good stewardship and pastoral care. Balancing careful reflection with the resolve to act when necessary remains one of our central challenges.

What Is the Vision of the OCA Today?

This brings us to a question that arises often—sometimes quietly, sometimes quite directly: What is the vision of the Orthodox Church in America today?

At times, this question carries a tone of nostalgia. We recall the great figures who helped shape our identity and trajectory—St. Tikhon, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, Fr. Thomas Hopko, and others—whose spiritual and intellectual legacies continue to inspire us. We remember their clarity, their prophetic insight, and their unwavering conviction. They not only inspired many within the Church but also led the way forward through significant challenges.

The restoration of Confession, the revival of frequent Communion, the celebration of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, the widespread use of the local language, a renewed vision of the priesthood, the greater involvement of the laity, and the recognition of our autocephaly—these were not merely ideas. They were lived priorities. And while the work is ongoing—and will always be so—much has been accomplished in these areas. Glory to God!

Perhaps, then, rather than viewing these achievements as “the vision” of the past—that is no more—we can more accurately understand them as the work of a particular moment in time—faithful responses to the needs of their era. They were pursuits within the vision, not the vision itself.

The vision that endures today remains the same: to proclaim the Gospel, to care for the faithful, to serve this land, and to bear witness to the fullness of the Orthodox Christian faith. But even more profoundly, our vision must be Christ—not a new initiative, not a return to the past, not even a roadmap, but a person.

Christ is our vision. He is our goal. He is the One who gathers us, sanctifies us, and sends us out into the world. To be gathered together by Christ, in Christ, and for Christ—this is the vision that gives meaning to every aspect of our life.

Whatever we debate or decide at this Council—whichever proposals we adopt or reject—it must all serve the one thing needful: Christ at the center. Christ as the vision. Christ as the life of the Church. If we gain that clarity and renewed focus during our time together this week—and take it home to our parishes, communities, and institutions—then the life of the Church will continue not only sustained, but inspired, centered once again on Him who is the true heart of our life and mission.

Conclusion

I close with gratitude.

To His Beatitude, whose prayerful, steady, and wise leadership remains a source of strength.

To my fellow Church Officer, Mr. Andrew Smith, for his competence, partnership, and dedication.

To the Chancery staff—on-site and remote, full-time and part-time—whose quiet work supports the visible life of the Church. Especially Fr. John Mikitish and Dn Alexander Woodill.

And to my beloved wife, Anna, and our sons, Luca and Nicolas, who have supported me with grace and patience, a lot of patience, especially in a year of great demands.

Thank you.

APPROVED RESOLUTIONS

Metropolitan Council to Establish Standards and Requirements for Vetting of Candidates for the OCA Pension Board

Be it resolved that the All-American Council direct the Metropolitan Council to establish standards and requirements for the vetting of candidates for the OCA Pension Board. The standards for vetting of lay candidates for the Pension Board shall include (but are not limited to) assessment of academic and/or professional background in areas of financial planning, portfolio management, and accounting. The vetting shall also consider candidates to the Pension Board with expertise in non-profit governance and fiduciary duties. Recognizing that the requirements for lay candidates to the Pension Board, if applied to clergy, would severely limit the pool of those candidates, these criteria are strongly encouraged, but not required, for clergy candidates being considered for the Pension Board.

Giving sufficient time for the implementation of this process before the convening of the next All-American Council, be it further resolved that the vetting standards developed by the Metropolitan Council be presented to the Holy Synod before their Fall 2027 session for consideration.

Be it further resolved that upon approval of vetting standards by the Holy Synod, a subcommittee of the Metropolitan Council shall undertake the vetting process of Pension Board candidates for consideration by the 22nd All-American Council.

Be it finally resolved that this process be applied in the same manner to the nominating of candidates to the Pension Board for all future All-American Councils.

Implementation of this resolution will be contingent upon review of the OCA General Counsel and Pension Board Counsel.

Funding Resolution

For the budget years 2026 and following, until the next All-American Council, each territorial diocese with the exception of Canada, Mexico and Alaska shall remit its annual financial obligation for the work of the Synodal Chancery at the rate of 34% of their current year “budgeted net operating revenue.”

For the budget years 2026 and following, until the next All-American Council, the Archdiocese of Canada and the Diocese of Alaska shall remit their annual diocesan financial obligation at the rate of 10% of their current year “budgeted net operating revenue.”

The financial arrangements of the non-territorial dioceses (Romanian Episcopate, Albanian Archdiocese, and Bulgarian Diocese) are based upon agreements made when they entered the OCA and are within the competency of the Holy Synod, subject to periodic review.

“Budgeted net operating revenue” is defined as all revenue budgeted for the current year by the diocese, with the exception of pass-through activity that benefits a third party or funds a special initiative (e.g., scholarship funds, capital campaigns, revenue or expenses associated with donor restricted funds unless the restriction is for operations).

Appendix VI: Council Participants

Holy Synod of Bishops

The Most Blessed TIKHON (Mollard)
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

The Most Reverend IRÉNÉE (Rochon)
Archbishop of Ottawa
Archdiocese of Canada

The Most Reverend NATHANIEL (Popp)
Archbishop of Detroit
Romanian Episcopate

The Most Reverend MICHAEL (Dahulich)
Archbishop of New York
Diocese of New York and New Jersey

The Most Reverend BENJAMIN (Peterson)
Archbishop of San Francisco
Diocese of the West

The Most Reverend ALEXANDER
(Golitzin)
Archbishop of Dallas
Diocese of the South and the Bulgarian
Diocese

The Most Reverend MARK (Maymon)
Archbishop of Philadelphia
Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

The Most Reverend DANIEL (Brum)
Archbishop of Chicago
Diocese of the Midwest

The Most Reverend ALEJO (Pacheco y
Vera)
Archbishop of Mexico City
Diocese of Mexico

The Most Reverend ALEXEI (Trader)
Archbishop of Sitka
Diocese of Alaska

The Most Reverend MELCHISEDEK
(Pleska)
Archbishop of Pittsburgh
Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania

The Right Reverend NIKODHIM (Preston)
Bishop of Boston
Albanian Archdiocese

The Right Reverend BENEDICT (Churchill)
Bishop of Hartford
Diocese of New England

Auxiliary Bishops

The Right Reverend ANDREI (Hoarște)
Bishop of Cleveland
Romanian Episcopate

The Right Reverend GERASIM (Eliel)
Bishop of Fort Worth
Diocese of the South

Priest Delegates

Priest Nicklas Aiello
St. Basil the Great Mission
Weatherford, OK

Priest Gabe Aldridge
St. John the Wonderworker Church
Atlanta, GA

Archpriest K Michael Anderson
St. John of Damascus Church
Poway, CA

Archpriest David Arnold
St. Cyprian of Carthage Church
Midlothian, VA

Archpriest Ambrose Arrington
Holy Apostles Church
Bixby, OK

Priest Chrysostom Arthur
Archangel Gabriel Mission
Weatherford, TX

Priest Photius Avant
St. Sava Church
Allen, TX

Priest Demetrio Azocar
Catedral de la Ascención del Señor
Ciudad de México, CDMX

Archpriest John Baker
St. Mark Church
Rochester Hills, MI

Archpriest Peter Baktis
Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow Church
Princeton, NJ

Priest Alexis Baldwin
SS. George and Alexandra Mission
Fort Smith, AR

Archpriest Andrew Bartek
St. John the Baptist Church
Campbell, OH

Priest Phillip Beiner
Holy Trinity Church
New Britain, CT

Priest Herman Belt
St. Michael the Archangel Cathedral
Sitka, AK

Archpriest Basil Biberdorf
St. Anne Church
Oak Ridge, TN

Priest Gabriel Bilas
St. Mary Magdalene Church
Fenton, MI

Priest Ryan Bishop
St. Olga of Alaska Mission
Edmonton, AB

Priest John Black
St. Herman of Alaska Church
Shillington, PA

Archpriest Andreas Blom
Holy Theophany Church
Colorado Springs, CO

Archpriest Theodore Boback
St. Andrew Church
Baltimore, MD

Archpriest Mikel Bock
SS. Peter and Paul Church
Phoenix, AZ

Priest Constantine Bodien
All Saints Church
Hartford, CT

Priest David Bolick
San Germán de Alaska Mission
Guadalajara, Jalisco

Abbot Sergius (Bowyer)
St. Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery
South Canaan, PA

Priest David Bozeman
St. John of Damascus Mission
Tyler, TX

Priest James Bozeman
St. James Mission
Beaufort, SC

Priest Joel Brady
Holy Apostles Mission
Lansing, NY

Archpriest Nikolai Breckenridge
St. Nicholas Church
Bethlehem, PA

Archpriest Gary Breton
Church of the Annunciation
Brick, NJ

Priest Matthew Brown
St. Mary Magdalen Church
New York, NY

Archpriest Raymond Browne
St. Mark Church
Wrightstown, PA

Archpriest Gregory Bruner
Military Chaplain

Archpriest Theophan Buck
St. Innocent Church
Macon, GA

Archpriest Dennis Buck
St. Catherine the Great Martyr Church
Hagerstown, MD

Archpriest Marcus Burch
St. John of the Ladder Church
Greenville, SC

Priest Silouan Burns
St. Michael the Archangel Church
Wilmington, DE

Archpriest Patrick Burns
Three Saints Church
Ansonia, CT

Archpriest Michael Butler
Holy Transfiguration Church
Livonia, MI

Archpriest Alexander Cadman
Saints Mary & Michael Parish
Clearfield County, PA

Priest Josef Candelario
St. Herman of Alaska Church
Port Townsend, WA

Priest Andrew Cannon
St. Basil the Great Church
Wilmington, NC

Archpriest Joseph Chaffee
St. Catherine the Great Martyr Mission
Arlington, TX

Priest Seraphim Chang
St. Innocent Church
Pleasanton, CA

Archpriest Daniel Charles
St. Innocent Cathedral
Anchorage, AK

Archpriest Jonathan Cholcher
St. Mark Church
Bradenton, FL

Archpriest John Chudik
SS. Joachim and Anna Mission
Oxford, FL

Archpriest Jan Čižmár
St. Theodosius Cathedral
Cleveland, OH

Priest Nathan Clausson
St. Nicholas Church
Olyphant, PA

Priest Silouan Cohen
St. Paul the Apostle Mission
Denison, TX

Priest Joshua Coolman
St. Stephen the First Martyr Mission
Lima, OH

Archpriest David Cowan
Holy Trinity Church
Elmira Heights, NY

Archpriest John Cox
Holy Ascension Church
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