

Metropolitan Council Report for 2009

Fr. Philip Reese * DOS MP Representative

Your Beatitude, Rev. Fathers, Delegates, and Observers,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Since our last Assembly in 2008, the Metropolitan Council, (MC) has met three times: September and November 2008, and February 2009.

1. September 2008 (Fall Session) MC Meeting

The Fall meeting in September at the East Norwich Inn, included sessions together with the Holy Synod (HS), centered around two urgent issues: the presentation and discussion of the Special Investigative Committee (SIC) report, and planning for the upcoming All American Council (AAC) in Pittsburgh. There is no need to review the SIC report here, unless you have any specific questions. The report itself remains on the OCA website.

For my part, having served on the SIC and having to interview some 45 people, some two or three times, and having read volumes of pages of previous interviews and documents, I can share with you that it was a baptism into what has been the “dark side” of Church life. The broken humanity of the clergy was starkly revealed. It was a painful lesson of what can happen when we as clergy and church leaders loose focus of the One whom we serve and the faithful entrusted to our care. We are all at risk in having the busyness of our work overcome our spiritual bearing, allowing compromise and hypocrisy to have their way with us.

It was during this same time when Metropolitan Herman resigned, Archbishop Dmitri was made the locum tenets of the Metropolitan See, and various penalties were brought forth for those implicated in the report. The recommendations of the SIC report were also approved.

The discussions for the AAC revealed that the process was still in flux and plenty of suggestions were offered.

2. November 2008 MC Meeting

The November meeting took place immediately after the Pittsburgh AAC that elected Bishop Jonah as our new Metropolitan. This meeting was primarily concerned with the budget. Even though the per capita assessment remained status quo at \$105, the budget would be run according to a \$90 assessment, allowing cushion for legal fees and Metropolitan’s travel and enthronement.

It was a lunch meeting with HS members present, allowing Metropolitan Jonah and the MC to meet, as well as to welcome new MC members.

3. February 2009 (Spring Session) MC Meeting

This meeting was held at the East Norwich Inn, and also had present HS members who were present at the chancery for the Lesser Synod meeting.

Vespers on the evening prior to our meeting was at St. Sergius Chapel, led by Metropolitan Jonah. He then offered a retreat that evolved into a frank and open discussion about OCA troubles and issues of leadership.

A. Metropolitan's Vision:

The meeting began with a prepared text on the Metropolitan's vision of the OCA. Central to this presentation was the issue of conciliarity on all levels of our Church, as well as an ecclesiology which sees the diocese as the central unit of the Church.

B. MC Committees:

All MC members were on at least one committee. Episcopal moderators and chancery staff members are to be involved on a non-voting basis to further communication. The committees: charity, ethics, finance & investment, legal, SIC implementation, crisis, strategic vision, internal audit, and council development.

C. Legal Matters:

Discussed at different times were the following cases: Kondratick, Koumentakos (in Maryland), Sidebottom (Alaska/EEOC suit)

D. Revision of Sexual Harassment Policies:

The settlement of the Sidebottom case rests upon the OCA's revision of its sexual harassment policies and procedures within a six month window. The Church is in the initial phases of doing this. A committee is being formed with qualified individuals to help with this process. Psychological testing for seminarians and candidates for ordination will also begin to take place.

E. St. Tikhon's Monastery:

Bishop Tikhon gave a report in executive session about the financial difficulties and confusion over property titles at St. Tikhon's Monastery/Seminary. The investigation is ongoing.

F. Finances:

Fr. Matthew Tate, the chair of the Finance Committee, gave a report describing the 2008 numbers as being a "failure." There was an overage of about \$200,000 due to legal expenses and staff not following budget. It was noted that the chancery staff are taking cuts to their compensation packages.

G. Strategic Plan:

A well prepared presentation about this issue was delivered by Dr. Dmitri Solodow, Protodeacon Peter Danilchick, and Deacon John Zarras. It centered around changes in our Church in order to refine and better state our vision while allowing a process of

communication where all levels of our Church are allowed to “buy-in” and become stake holders. This work is ongoing.

This will be my last report to you regarding the MC. I have been able to have a front seat in seeing the end of the Syosset old era with all its drama and difficulties, as well as the beginning of the new. I was proud to serve, and I humbly thank you for the opportunity. May God continue to guide and bless our Church, and may He guide and bless our new diocesan MC representative.