

41ST Annual
OCA Diocese of the South
Plenary Session: Meeting Minutes

July 23, 2018

Call to order

Fr. Marcus called to order the 41st annual meeting of the Diocese of the South at 1:10 PM on July 23, 2018 at the St. Louis Union Station Hotel, St Louis, MO. The assembly began with the singing of O Heavenly King.

Notes about the structure of the minutes:

I. Roll call and Attendance:

Fr. Marcus Burch conducted a roll call. The following persons were present: Archbishop Alexander, President, Archimandrite Gerasim, VP, Fr. Marcus Burch and Christopher Lewis (Clergy and Lay Vice Chairs), Fr. Christopher Foley, Fr. Jason Foster, Fr. Christopher Foley, and Nikolay Miletkov (Credentials), Fr. Peter Robichau and Carl Staff (Secretariat), Fr. Nicholas Roth, Fr. Patrick Pulley and Fr. Joseph Lucas (Tellers). The presidium was approved as noted here.

In Attendance:

1 Archbishop
50 Clergy
50 Lay Delegates
35 Observers

Delegates: 101
Observers: 35
Total in Attendance: 136

II. Approval of minutes from last meeting

Fr. Marcus Burch asked for minutes to be approved for 2017 DOS Assembly. Thomas Moore moved to accept the minutes with second by Burt Walther. They were accepted as posted.

III. Address of Archbishop Alexander:

- 1) Continued efforts by Abp. Alexander with the Holy Synod on appointing Abp. Gerasim as the DOS's first Vicar bishops. There are two remaining bishops who remain unconvinced. The DOS needs another bishop, and Abp. Alexander will continue to press the Holy Synod for this.
- 2) Abp. Alexander bids a sad farewell to Fr. John Parker. His Eminence wished his best to Fr. John in his new role at St Tikhon's Seminary.
- 3) A possible new church in the Diocese: There is a wealthy and devout Romanian in Humble, TX who wishes to offer a complete church with iconography. This is on private land, and will hopefully become part of our diocese.
- 4) His Eminence continues to admire the work of the DOS Clergy (deans, chancellor, administrator) – there is a constant drive to develop new missions. New mission south of Fort Worth, TX. Six seminarians right now from DOS.
- 5) His Eminence also highlighted the work of the Monastery of The Holy Archangel Michael in Canones, NM, and encouraged those gathered to visit the monastery.
- 6) There are nearly 100+ parishes and monasteries under the omophor of His Eminence, and it is a struggle for him to visit them all.

IV. Address of the Diocesan Administrator (Archimandrite Gerasim):

- 1) Growth: Most of this takes place in areas with favorable demographic (and economic) situations (e.g. Greenville, SC and Plano, TX). Decline is also taking place in areas where there is declining economic activity (these communities are, nonetheless, beacons of light). There is closure/consolidation of some parishes but also rapid growth in some parishes which is putting a strain on some priests.
- 2) Shortage of priests with many of our priests are on their way to retirement. The younger priests need to be formed by our senior priests. The diocese, deanery and parish need to work together to facilitate the support and formation of new priests who come out of seminary.
- 3) Continuing Clergy education is mandated for our own good. We often avoid this to our detriment. Priest need to take pilgrimages and a plan for ongoing personal growth.
- 4) Areas of Need in the DOS:
 - a) Administration: We must do better about keeping accurate records for our annual parish compliance reports and background checks
 - b) Retirement: We must take seriously the requirement to support and care for those in our midst who need to retire. It is often necessary to assure that retirement happens so that those with more energy can continue the work in the parish.

- c) Finances: Our goal is to strengthen the financial position of the diocese in order that we may accomplish the work that we are called to do. Also, we need a more careful examination of our loan programs and how parishes qualify for loans and grants.
- 5) Acknowledgment and welcome of guests, specifically Dr Alexi Somo from Moscow.
- 6) Thanks to unsung, unknown people who make the DOS work

V. Treasurer's Report: Noel Bush (Reference Official Treasurer Report as Presented):

- 1) Much progress has been made in a transition to a new system of accounting due, in part, to the work of M. Carissa Avant. Simplification, proactivity and reliable information are the main goals of the new system.
- 2) Economia: Bi-Monthly newsletter.
- 3) Publication of a brochure: The tithes that Bind and Build
- 4) Financial Summary Data: 2017 Giving was up 13% (due to the economy and new tax code), our operating loss in 2017 was lower than the loss of the previous year. 2018 income is also up significantly.
- 5) SEE 2017 Year End financials as well as 2018 YTD

VI. Resolution Summary (Fr Marcus Burch):

- 1) There is a concern that the OCA national leadership is trying to move back to a head-tax system (assessing a dollar figure based on what the national church would like to spend).
- 2) Fr. Marcus Burch provided some background on the concerns of the DOS, which address the need to move to a more realistic system of proportional giving – leading ultimately to 25% (or 10% ideally).
- 3) Discussion from the floor: (initiated by Fr. John Parker): How is the New England Diocese assessing their members? Are they using a tithe system? Fr. Marcus responded that the original bridge to a proportional giving system was crafted with equity and fairness in mind, while some dioceses (New England in particular) have not moved in this direction (while E. Pennsylvania and perhaps a few others have made great strides toward proportional giving). Fr. Joseph Lucas explained that the Dioceses of the South and West are basically being “penalized” for their growth, and this concern has been raised with the Metropolitan Council.
- 4) **PROPOSED INTEREST POLICY: [SEE RESOLUTION WORDING FROM PRESENTATION]:**
 - a) Motion to Accept: Fr. Joseph Lucas
 - b) Motion to Second: Fr. John Cox
 - c) DISCUSSION:

- i) Question – Are there any contractual obligations (implied or other) that would require grandfathering existing loans, and applying this to new loans only? A: Noel Bush – there are a handful of implied contractual rates where a move to this new system would be prevented. These will be handled on a case by case basis.
 - ii) Question – Is there a comfort level with the Federal Reserve’s increasing rates? Noel B. responded that he is not comfortable addressing this (not in his competency).
 - iii) Question – Does this apply to church friendly loans? A: No (Noel Bush)
 - iv) Question – Is there any impact to parishes who are keeping savings on account with an outside institution? A: No (Noel Bush)
 - v) Concern – Does this apply to loans lower than the ceiling? A: No (Noel Bush) ... we will not be raising the rate offered to those who agreed to a lower rate. Rates above the threshold (with no obligation) will simply drop.
 - vi) Question – How do we determine contractual obligation? A: Paperwork and documentation.
- d) MOVEMENT: to approve as written ...
- i) Passed unanimously with voice ascent.
- e) MOTION: to accept budget
- i) Michael Mezmar (first)
 - ii) Fr. Christopher Foley (second)
 - iii) Discussion: NONE
 - iv) MOVEMENT TO ACCEPT:
 - (1) Approved unanimously
- f) Question from the floor: “Have we considered zero based budgeting?”
- i) Noel Bush: Our approach is zero based.
 - ii) This might need to be addressed as an approach with the Metropolitan Council.

VII. Elections (Fr Marcus Burch):

- 1) Met Council Nominations:
 - a) Fr. Joseph Lucas was our representative.
 - b) Angela Parks, likewise does not wish to serve.
 - c) Two Candidates that the Diocesan Council wishes to put forth:
 - i) Clergy: Fr Joseph Ciarciaglino
 - ii) Lay: Christopher Lewis

- iii) Motion to close nominations:
 - (1) First: Fr Nicholas Roth
 - (2) Second: Fr Theophan Buck
 - (3) Motion Approved Unanimously
- 2) Deanery Meetings: need Delegate & Alternate - Diocesan Council - Name and Email of each:
 - a) Mississippi:
 - i) Delegate: Tom Rosenblatt, turlaw@hotmail.com, 601-870-9619 - Christ the Savior, McComb MS
 - ii) Alt: Mat Mary Roth, rothmc0@gmail.com, 912-492-8061- Ss. George & Alexandra, Ft Smith AR
 - b) Carolinas:
 - i) Delegate: Stephen Iltis, steveniltis@gmail.com 336-701-7232 - Holy Cross, High Point NC
 - ii) Alt: Patricia Yoder, yodergirl58@gmail.com, 864-982-4193, St John Greenville SC
 - c) Appalachian:
 - i) Delegate: Bert Walther, bert.walther@gmail.com, 859-553-5915 - St Anthanasios, Nicholasville KY
 - ii) Alt: Dean Arnold, deanarnold@icloud.com, 423-595-3621 - St Tikhon of Moscow, Chattanooga TN
 - d) South FL:
 - i) Delegate: Gary Popovich, bookstoregary@aol.com, 954-483-6010 - Christ the Savior, Miami FL
 - ii) Alt: Sue Robinson, sjrobinson@juno.com, 772-763-5018 - St James, Port Saint Lucie FL
 - e) Central FL:
 - i) Delegate: Paul Besserman, rdogpooh@comcast.net, 352-751-6290 - St Stephens, Orlando FL
 - ii) Alt: Mrs. Bertina Busch, bertina@buschandcompany.com, 407-291-3589, St Raphael, Inverness FL
 - f) Southeastern:
 - i) Delegate: James Gordan, jmgordan1969@att.net, 205-201-6909 - St Symeon, Birmingham AL
 - ii) Alt: Mary Croft, mcroft92385@gmail.com, 478-461-8114 - St Innocent, Macon GA

g) South Central:

i) Delegate: Elizabeth Perdomo (re-elected), mateliza@aol.com, 956-358-1362
– St George the Great Martyr, Pharr TX

ii) Alt: Stephen Bodnarchuk, stephenjean@att.net, 682-224-5142 - St Barbara,
Ft Worth TX

3) Nominations for Internal Audit Committee:

a) Christopher Naughton (Lexington, KY)

b) Fr. Paul Coats (Rock Hill, SC)

c) Motion to accept

i) First: Fr. Theophan Buck

ii) Second: Fr. David Wooten 2nd

iii) Motion Approved Unanimously

VIII. Reports (Chris Lewis)

1) Monasteries

2) Deaneries

3) Met Council - Fr Joseph

4) Discussed and accepted

IX. Upcoming Meetings (Fr Marcus Burch)

1) Pastoral Conference: we will 17-23rd of February, 2019 with a special guest from Mt. Athos.

2) DOS ASSEMBLY: 22nd-26th of July, 2019 (Most likely in Dallas)

X. Adjournment

Fr. Marcus adjourned the meeting at the movement of Fr. Benedict Churchill and the unanimous approval of those assembled @ 4:22 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Carl Staff, St John of Chicago, Rogers, Arkansas

Minutes approved by: