

## **ARCHDIOCESAN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – June 22, 2023**

A regular meeting of the Archdiocesan Council was held on June 22, 2023, at the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Allison Park. (Fr. John Parker graciously volunteered to become Acting Council Secretary due to the absence of Fr. Michael Senyo, Secretary.)

The meeting began with prayer and was called to order by Archbishop Melchisedek at 6:30 pm.

**Present:** Archbishop Melchisedek

**Clergy:** Fr. William Evansky (Chancellor), Frs. Mark Meholick, Stephan Gresh, Thomas Soroka, John Mikita, Andrew Nelko, John Parker.

**Laity:** Alexis Parshook (Treasurer), Matushka Kira Meholick (Also - Guest Observer: Dn. Mark Solomon)

**Absent:** Fr. Michael Senyo, Dn. Nicholas York, Rebecca Danchenko, Ray Steeb, & Mike Eckhardt

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** Minutes were distributed prior to the meeting electronically, copy filed. There were no changes or corrections.

**Report of the Hierarchy:** There were several recent ordinations to the Diaconate, with one more upcoming (Christopher Meholick); working on additional priests as well. His Eminence is slowly but surely getting back to “normal” travel and parish visitation, with upcoming trips to Dallas as part of an ecumenical meeting to witness to Anglicans, and an international conference in Italy in the fall. Now over 60 catechumens in the archdiocese; His Eminence encourages keeping channels open to inquirers from various backgrounds. Fr. Soroka inquired regarding the issue of the formation of a Greek-Slavic Vicariate by the Greek Archdiocese—is this a cause for concern and would strong action be taken to condemn such a move? His Eminence says the assembly of bishops has reached a “moribund” state, having only half the attendance at the previous meeting; has been practically no discussion on this subject within the OCA Synod, will depend on how it actually plays out.

**Report of the Secretary:** Fr. Senyo could not be present; both sets of previous meeting minutes were distributed electronically prior to this meeting, accepted without change. Additionally, we received a letter of thanks from Bishop Alexei of Alaska for a \$22,000 check sent.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Ignore “closure” typo; sold Ellwood City Holy Trinity Church Cemetery (in Wampum, PA) to an adjacent sportsmen’s club (at the club’s initiation) to perpetually care for the cemetery (as they have already been doing for years) – appropriate safeguards were part of the sale; savings and checking accounts at Northwest closed in February; \$64,354 is combination of the accounts, & \$20,000 of which was sent to OCA Diocese of Alaska, additional \$40,000 pledged over next two years to support their clergy, \$20,000 was deposited into our F&B investment account to earn interest, the rest deposited into BPU investment account for same reason. After 3 years of dealing with the state and department of unclaimed property, finally able to prove the diocese was the de facto owner of a \$35,000 checking account from the closed Holy Trinity Parish in Erie.

Also noted that we’ve switched our electric and gas suppliers from third party supplier to directly from two utility companies. As of today, our unrestricted balance with F&B investments is

roughly 1.39 million dollars, BPU unrestricted balance is roughly 1.45 million. Sum in both balances restricted for the Archbishop Benjamin Seminarian Scholarship Fund is \$144,000. Monessen: additional (to the report) expenses for Monessen roughly \$2,000 more a month since assuming control for the buildings in March; extrapolated cost over a year to be between ten and \$12,000. Fr. Parker raised the question if there is any plan or motion in place to close, sell or fill the Monessen Church and properties like it, given that it is a major cost on the diocese. His Eminence said ideally, we would sell it or give it to someone who would use it for worship, problem is not only church decline, but total population decline in the area; nobody there to use it. He is open to suggestions for how to best make use of it, while also making sure it doesn't get sold for a bad purpose use. Fr. Evansky added to the discussion by stating we have a stark choice in front of us: either letting it default or bearing the costs; he also warned that there are other parishes in a similar state. At some point there needs to be an endgame, can't go on indefinitely. Increased costs of this kind over time will also reduce overall diocesan budget to do other things towards growth (i.e., LPAP program, capital improvement loans for "viable" parishes, etc.) since we must maintain our "self-discipline" and never touch the principal on our investments. Down the road we will have additional challenges with closing parishes (liturgical items, iconostasis, wall murals, etc.); needs to be on the radar as a diocese, both financially and spiritually. Fr. Soroka said it wouldn't hurt to put the building on the market, given the proximity of other strong parishes (Belle Vernon).

External audit: was distributed beforehand. Fr. Nelko made a motion to accept the audit; Fr. Gresh seconded; motion was so moved.

**Report of the Chancellor:** Concelebrated at two diaconate ordinations with His Eminence, plan to participate in Meholick ordination; Fr. Zahirsky has been transferred out of diocesan boundaries to Midwest by his request; Fr. Bill has been meeting with parish council development program subcommittee and Joe Kormos on other parish development topics; Fr. Cadman & Fr. Sochka seem to be hitting a wall finding a lay person to chair the Youth Committee for the Archdiocese; currently doing a piecemeal thing, working on a December Teen/ Young adult retreat for the Diocese, working with National OCF and Fr. Bill. Fr. Bill attended Sunday of Orthodoxy Pan Orthodox Vespers during Lent at St. George Antiochian Cathedral; attended Christian Associates meeting in Zelenople with His Eminence; met with two prospective seminarians who will be attending St. Vladimir's and St. Tikhon's this fall, (partial scholarships of \$2,000 each per semester also to be added to the budget). Fr. Bill attended two meetings with new principal of St. Constantine School; helped His Eminence with Holy Synod report; had Deans' Council in-person meeting plus numerous calls/emails; met with various clergy experiencing issues; three hospital visits to hospitalized clergy; teleconference with investment bankers; was part of a teleconference with Fr. John Parker (STS) and other chancellors, looking at a new Lily Grant initiative; enjoyed a wonderful diocesan clergy gathering at the Allison Park cathedral with Fr. Stephen Vernak; Fr. David Vernak and Fr. Bill are exploring speakers for future gatherings; suggestions welcome. Barry Migyanko has retired from OCA chancery, volunteered to upgrade our communications, starting with the web site (along with Kristie Mertz, our current web master) and the diocesan Facebook page; upcoming things include: parish development forum in July, in Parma, Ohio, cosponsored by our diocese; national OCA priests/bishops retreat in October; Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> is our assembly with the location at Alexander

Nevsky's; working on a diocesan retreat, likely after assembly; working with the deans to schedule dinner meetings with individual deaneries for the bishop and chancellor.

**Deanery Reports:** From Fr. Meholick: Fr. Andrew Matychak, injured in a fall at home, was sent to rehab, doing better. Planning to retire soon. Celebrating his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on August 19<sup>th</sup> in Altoona; Fr. Elijah Bremer is recovering from heart surgery – back to servicing Central City parish on “light duty;” some new visitors from nearby Catholic Churches closing in DuBois. **Fr. Nelko:** 6 vacancies, possible two retirements in a year's time. **Fr. Bill/Fr. Tom:** Fr. Poshyvajlo not able to serve, Curtisville parish a real concern, communications from the diocese to the parish are a real challenge – clergy and laity leaders alike.

**Department Reports:**

- Building and Grounds – Backup generator finally being installed, however internal issue with our lines because of old meter, so now parts need to be order for connection to be made. Trouble with AC unit on one side because of vegetation, being cleared. Need help finding contractors to mount the Theotokos Mosaic on the property – Frs. Soroka and Gresh offered to help via their parish members
- Metropolitan Council—nothing to report
- LPAP—No new information, other than several recent Chrismations/ members; everything coming along smoothly
- Parish development: Joe Kormos report sent out previously
- Youth: already discussed by Fr. Bill

**Unfinished Business:**

- Ad hoc diocesan committee with John Thompson and Katya Hill, ball is in their court for future development; no action thus far.
- Diocesan boundaries discussion between West & Eastern PA has essentially died
- Fr. Gresh presented the material thus far developed for the Parish Council effectiveness training, undergoing development in a subcommittee for eventual diocesan rollout. Some feedback was offered, and more was encouraged, to be electronically submitted to Fr. Gresh or Fr. Parker.

The next meeting of the Council will be on August 21, 2023, again at St. Alexander Nevsky's Cathedral in Allison Park. The meeting closed with prayer and the singing of “It is Truly Meet.”

Respectfully Submitted,

Priest John Parker  
*Acting Archdiocesan Council Secretary*

Archbishop MELCHISEDEK  
*Diocesan Hierarch*

Archpriest William J. Evansky  
*Diocesan Chancellor*