

## Metropolitan Council reviews All-American Council, finances, unanimously adopts 2006 budget and pension plan amendment

Article posted: 11/17/2005 10:01 AM

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### SYOSSET, NY [OCA Communications]

— Members of the [Metropolitan Council](#) of The Orthodox Church in America reviewed in detail the [14th All-American Council](#) held in Toronto, ON, Canada in July 2005 during their meeting at the OCA Chancery here Wednesday, November 9, 2005.

The All-American Council addressed a number of issues facing the Church, with particular emphasis on evangelization and mission efforts, ongoing educational opportunities for parish clergy, and finances.

The decision of the Holy Synod of Bishops to change the periodicity for convening All-American Councils from three to five years was also reported. Hence, the 15th All-American Council will be held in 2010. It was hoped that pastoral life, parish life, and youth and young adult conferences will be scheduled in the intervening years.

Metropolitan Council members also reviewed the financial status of the Church in depth.

In his report to the Metropolitan Council, the Very Rev. Paul Kucynda, acting treasurer, expressed his hope that the executive director of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards, the Very Rev. Eugene Vansuch, and the newly-appointed director of development, the Very Rev. John Dresko, will be effective in their work and will meet with a generous response.

Father Kucynda added that it is imperative for the Church to follow sound financial practices to avoid questions concerning accountability.

Father Dresko, rector of Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT and long-time chairman of the OCA Department of Stewardship, will begin his duties as director of development on January 1, 2006. He stated that he looks forward to beginning his responsibilities and accepting the challenges his new duties will bring. He added that the Metropolitan Council is essential in successful fundraising and encouraged its members to exercise leadership in this important area of Church life.

Father Vansuch updated council members on his recent parish visits and ongoing efforts in expanding the work of the [Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards](#). He noted that 156 parishes presently support FOS at various levels. Mr. David Lucs, assistant to the chancellor for communications and special appeals, reported on the response to the 2005 [special appeals](#).

The proposed 2006 budget, previously approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops, was presented to the Metropolitan Council members and, upon Father Kondratik's suggestion, was reviewed line-by-line. The Very Rev. Stavros Strikis, OCA comptroller, responded to several questions, noting that the budget as presented had been revised four times and had been reviewed by five different bodies, including the Office of the Treasurer, the Administrative Committee, a working group comprised of Metropolitan Council members that met on September 12, 2005, the Holy Synod of Bishops, and the Metropolitan Council.

After a thorough review, Metropolitan Council members unanimously adopted the [2006 budget](#).



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**On Wednesday, November 9, 2005, members of the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America met at St. Sergius Chapel at the OCA Chancery for their fall meeting.**

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, addressed numerous concerns that arose in response to information and statements circulated in recent weeks, primarily on the internet. Emphasizing that all financial matters are his responsibility, Metropolitan Herman informed council members that he plans to order independent audits by an outside CPA firm licensed within the State of New York. He further reported that the results of the independent audits will be made available to the Church at large.

"Our love and concern must be for the Church," Metropolitan Herman stated, adding that recent allegations, especially those circulated on the internet, are 'not for the good of the Church.'

In response to questions about earmarked donations, Father Strikis noted that such contributions are used as specified by the donors.

With regard to the indebtedness reported by the V. Rev. Dimitri Oselinsky, former OCA treasurer, at the 14th All-American Council, Metropolitan Herman stated that the correct process in this regard is to assume a loan that will eliminate the entire debt, thereby consolidating payments. Affirming that he and the members of the Holy Synod take this matter "very seriously," he assured Metropolitan Council members that the issue is being addressed in a responsible manner.

Costs associated with the printing, production, and mailing of "The Orthodox Church" newspaper were also reviewed, and it was reported that less expensive printing options were being explored, especially in light of increasing printing costs and the anticipated increased postal rates due to go into effect in January 2006. Two issues of TOC – August/September/October and November/December – are being distributed on the OCA web site during this period of review.

Questions were also fielded concerning expenses related to [Saint Catherine Representation Church](#) in Moscow, the [Department of Christian Education](#), the [Department of Liturgical Music and Translations](#), the Seminarian Internship program, and other budgeted items. An open and fruitful discussion concerning the financial needs of parishes, dioceses, and the central Church administration ensued.

Before moving on to other matters, Metropolitan Council members unanimously affirmed the following statement issued by Metropolitan Herman.

"The Fourteenth All-American Council had an impact on us in a variety of ways," Metropolitan Herman began. "I appreciate the clarity with which those gathered for the Council identified specific issues, concerns, and priorities. Theological education, on-going clergy formation, religious education of adults and children, addressing the issue of parish health in all parishes and missions of the Church, are just a few worthy of note.

"Today's treasurer's report included the fact that we presently face a significant indebtedness that cannot be ignored," Metropolitan Herman continued. "This matter was also discussed at the recent meeting of the Holy Synod. In acknowledging that this issue must be addressed forthrightly and accountably and, with the full consensus and support of the Metropolitan Council, I have asked Father Paul Kucynda, as acting treasurer, to arrange for a full and complete independent audit of our financial records. Also, beginning January 1, 2006, the Chancery of The Orthodox Church in America will employ 'Best Practices' for non-profit organizations. I believe that this decision will serve us well in both the present and the future."

Metropolitan Council members also adopted a resolution calling for a means of consolidating all debts under the direction of the Office of the Treasurer, and considered a variety of other matters, including:

- [The Church Planting Grant program](#). Council members reviewed the list of missions participating in the Planting Grant program. It was reported that, if the 2006 Missions Appeal raises more than \$120,000.00, a sixth mission will receive a grant.
- [Pension Benefits](#). The Very Rev. Michael Westerberg and Mrs. Elizabeth Kondratich presented a report on the proposal to amend the provisions of the pension plan. This proposal adds to the benefits, with some increased expense to parishes and participants. Father Westerberg noted that this represents a modest increase in cost, but a large increase in benefits.

Simply stated, the pension plan would be amended to allow housing allowance to be included in the monthly pension fund contributions, thereby increasing pension benefits. Council members voted to accept the new benefit plan as presented. Further information concerning the new provisions will be sent to all participants in the pension plan and to all clergy and parishes in the near future.

Chaired by the Primate of the Church, the Metropolitan Council is composed of clergy and lay representatives elected by each of the OCA's dioceses, as well as representatives at large elected by the All-American Council.

Members of the central Church administration are also members of the Council.

In addition to Metropolitan Herman and others mentioned above, those participating in the meeting included the Very Rev. David Brum, recording secretary; Archimandrite Isidore [Brittain]; the Very Revs. Vladimir Berzonsky, Theodore Boback, Sergei Bouteneff, George Hasenecz, John Onofrey, Philip Reese, Gregory Safchuk, Matthew Tate, John Tkachuk, Michael Westerberg, and Constantine White; and Daniel Crosby, Prof. John Erickson, Robert Kornafel, Dorothy Nowik, Gary Popovich, Richard Schneider, Dr. John Schultz, Dr. Faith Skordinski; Dr. Richard West, and Dr. Alice Woog.

Click [here](#) for photos of the Metropolitan Council fall session.

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