



CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY MINUTES

***April 16 – 17, 2021
Online Meeting Via Zoom***

Theme: “There is still time for endurance, time for patience, time for healing, time for change.” – Saint Basil the Great

Day One - Friday, April 16

Convening of the Assembly

The 2021 Clergy-Laity Assembly for the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos. His Eminence welcomed the faithful and briefly commented on the theme of the Assembly. He then welcomed and introduced His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Opening Prayer and Archpastoral Message - Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros greeted the Assembly with great love and heartfelt best wishes for a successful Assembly, stating that it is always a joy for him to communicate with the Metropolis of San Francisco, which he has probably visited more than any other area of the Archdiocese. He then congratulated the Assembly for the selection of the theme by St. Basil the Great, and for the Metropolis' perseverance during the pandemic. His Eminence recalled it was just a year earlier when he attended the Metropolis Folk Dance Festival, just before the pandemic began. Recalling the pride felt by the youth at FDF, His Eminence is moved that 2021 is the 200-year anniversary of the Greek Revolution. His Eminence stated that we can look to the heroes of the Greek Revolution for their strength, courage and zeal as we face the challenges of the pandemic, and that the theme of the Assembly is a very hopeful message as the pandemic still affects our daily lives. His Eminence's personal take-away from the theme is the optimism it bears. Even when we feel that we have run out of endurance and passion that we always have reserves that God has stored up for us. His Eminence stated that even with the rollout of the vaccines, that life will probably not go back to what it was because there has been too much loss of life. And as we move into a future clouded by doubt, St. Basil reminds us that there is still time to renew, to be made whole, to love and to be loved. The year of the Grace of the Lord means that every moment of the year is a possibility to receive God's grace. Our time on earth is a gift to perfect our work with him. How we spend our time is a mirror of the condition of our souls. As Plato said, "Time is the moving icon of eternity". His Eminence prayed the Assembly's time together will be blessed, as well as everyone's journey to Pascha!

Assembly Moderator – Justin Bosl

Justin provided some housekeeping information as this was the first virtual Clergy-Laity Assembly the Metropolis is conducting. He then introduced the guest speaker, Fr. Barnabas Powell from Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene Greek Orthodox Church in Cumming, GA.

Guest Speaker – Rev. Fr. Barnabas Powell

Theme: “Moving Beyond the Pandemic and Returning to Worship”

Fr. Barnabas began by posing the question, if we are not going back to church and worship as we know it, then what are we going back to? Fr. Barnabas believes we need to “go back” to understanding what Jesus has called us to practice as Orthodox Christians, quoting John 17:20-23. In short, that we are to be one as the Father and Son are one. Father emphasized that we are meant to be together, in communion, with one another, like the Father and Son are one, and believes that the People of God need to comprehend this in order return to Church.

Fr. Barnabas showed a recent Gallup poll that Church membership in the United States is for the first time below 50%, and this affects the Orthodox Church as well. Father said he is often asked the question, “How do we keep our kids in church?” Father pointed out even well-known Protestant Christians are leaving Christianity. Fr. Barnabas believes some are leaving because their theologies may not help them in dealing with the realities of the world, but believes Orthodox theology is.

Father believes pandemic caused us to broaden our horizons through the use of technology, as a means of outreach and an opportunity to grow our faith, and this is a tool we need to embrace. But now is the time for our people to re-engage in worship as a congregation. Another reason why church attendance has been decreasing since the 1970s is because this is because of youth sports. Now people also have the option of a virtual liturgy.

Fr. Barnabas stated the pandemic has uncovered some profound wounds in our society. We have learned our faithful have not been educated enough to understand our theology and worship. So what do we do? Father believes that we need to start with WHY? We need to answer the questions, “Why do we go to Church? Why do we gather for the Eucharist? Why should we be together face to face?” Father said we need to understand “why” we do church and why Orthodox worship is the perfect way to shape a human being. Why does the Church preserve this liturgical work of the church for centuries? It is so man can become by grace what Christ is by nature. Liturgical formation is not optional. We need to get closer to one another to get closer to God. We need to be an icon of God. Church is the place where we get to know each other better to get to know God better. We are a congregation, not an audience. Church is the Body of Christ, gathered. Attending church fights one’s individualistic pride. Individualism is not how our children are going to keep our church alive. Gathering is not an option. One can only know oneself in relation to the other.

Father concluded by posing the question, “Who are we and what do we really want?” He stated that some Christian churches will stay online but we cannot do this as Orthodox. We need to get back to gathering and in person worship. We need to be “Orthodox on Purpose” as Fr. Barnabas often says. Fr. Barnabas will be praying for all our parishes to regain a deeper understanding of WHY we need to come to church!

Annual Missions and Evangelism Survey Presentation – Thomaïda Hudanish

Metropolis Missions and Evangelism Ministry director Thomaïda Hudanish presented the results of an annual parish 12-question survey which included questions such as: the number of households supporting a parish, average number of Sunday livestream views, total parish income, parish outreach ministries, and the number of adults received into the parish through baptism or chrismation, among others all reflecting data for 2020.

Day Two - Saturday, April 17

The Assembly reconvened the following day at 10:00 am.

Opening Prayer Service – His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos

His Eminence reconvened the Assembly with the Opening Prayer Service, assisted by the Rev. Fr. Peter Salmas and the Rev. Fr. Dino Pappademos.

Keynote Address – His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos

His Eminence thanked everyone for attending this virtual Clergy-Laity Assembly and was grateful for the excellent representation. He also expressed his appreciation that His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros was able to join the Assembly the day before and offer his pastoral message. Metropolitan Gerasimos praised the Archbishop for the many things he has accomplished his first couple of years as Archbishop; for leading the Archdiocese through the pandemic, for voicing his opinion in the social arena, and for tackling a couple of large challenges of the Archdiocese.

His Eminence commented that Fr. Barnabas addressed one of the most important problems facing all religions, and that is the people that are “de-churching” and stated this is a wake-up call for all of us and must inspire us to think about how we will share the Gospel and our faith with those around us with the hope of adding to our flock.

His Eminence commented that we are holding the Assembly during lent, and feels that this year will be an “extra sweet” celebration. We are living with many varied pandemic guidelines and the size of our Metropolis does not allow for just one guideline for our churches, so our communities must follow local guidelines. His Eminence referenced the theme of the Assembly, stating, “As we go forward, we must find time for healing, to mourn those who have fallen asleep, to begin to recover emotionally and spiritually from the stress and disruptions of the pandemic, and to work to assist those who have lost so much over the past year.” It has been a traumatic time. Our clergy are having a challenging time to serve our faithful during the pandemic and we need to support them and pray for them.

His Eminence continued by saying there have been many changes to our lives and in our Church life. We need to evaluate what we have learned about how we do things. There have been positive and negative changes. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Metropolis tried to respond as quickly as possible. We are now forced to look at the growth of the Church, including younger generations, in a new way, and in the face of the downtrend of church attendance.

He continued to reflect, “The pandemic forced us to change. Like anything, these changes have created opportunities and challenges. However, we have learned a great deal and we should take time to discuss as a Metropolis, indeed as an Archdiocese, about what we have learned so that

we can move forward into a post-pandemic church, facing this new reality, but working in concert with one another across our Archdiocese and Metropolis to respond as one Church.”

His Eminence pointed out that over the past year we made a move to online worship, as well as our youth work, religious education, and meetings. He then commented that whatever the future holds, we must discern what will be necessary and continue to adapt!

His Eminence also pointed out the financial ramifications of the pandemic on our parishes, extending to our community festivals. But thankfully to the hard work of many dedicated individuals, at the Metropolis level and in our parishes, our communities have survived the economic challenges placed on them by the pandemic.

His Eminence added, “We are still a unified Metropolis family. We are still a unified Archdiocese. In fact, because of how we responded to the pandemic, we may be more unified than we were a year or two ago. The strength of our Metropolis and Archdiocese, indeed of the Church itself, is the strength of our people’s involvement with the life of the Church and their parish. “In reality, our electronic connections during this time have made the desire to be in-person that much stronger. We have accepted the necessity of working virtually, but we know that being the Body of Christ, the people of God, necessitates that we come together in unity and fellowship in person.

His Eminence stated that we will hear from our Ministries, who have become very creative in finding ways to keep their programs going under very difficult circumstances. He also expressed his appreciation for the generosity they have received through our Faith Forward campaign.

His Eminence reviewed how the pandemic brought changes to our liturgical, spiritual, and ministerial lives as a Metropolis and ended by posing a few questions. First, what, if any, from these temporary adaptations do we see becoming permanent in the life of our Church? Second, how might we continue the level of engagement between the Metropolis and your parish? Third, will the changes that we implemented in our Church life be enough to re-engage our people and reach out to those who are not members of the Church?

His Eminence thanked everyone for their presence and commitment to the work of our Metropolis, as their dedication and stewardship is essential to building up the Body of Christ.

Appointment of Presiding Officer

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos appointed Mr. Justin Bosl as the Presiding Officer.

Ministry Spotlight – A Year in Review

A new video highlighting the ministries of the Metropolis was presented to the delegates, which provided a comprehensive and engaging opportunity to learn more about the vast array of ministries offered that provide spiritual, emotional, educational and cultural enrichment for our faithful.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the 2020 Clergy-Laity Assembly was made by Judge Steve Counelis. The motion was seconded by Philippos Athanasiades. Motion carried unanimously.

Metropolis Financial Report: Year End 2020

Finance Committee Chair George Psfteas presented the 2020 Year End financial reports. George stated that the Metropolis Finance Committee has been working very hard over this past year to convert the statements to a not-for-profit format, so they look a little different than in the past. These financials represent the core operations of the Metropolis. Moving forward financials will include the Ranch and FDF per the recommendations of the Review Engagement. The Metropolis has also engaged the services of an independent CPA who are presently performing a Review Engagement on our financial statements, as required by the Archdiocese. The financial position of the Metropolis at the end of 2020 was strong, due in large part to the fulfillment of the Archdiocese Total Commitment by our parishes, as well as a strong fundraising effort through our Metropolis Faith Forward stewardship program.

Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) – Cash reserves increased \$180,000 due in large part to the excellent performance of our parishes regarding Total Commitment and the funds raised for the Bridge to a Brighter Tomorrow Relief Fund. We had a reduction of fixed assets by \$1.5 million because the Metropolis House was removed from the balance sheet, for accounting purposes, as it has not yet been deeded to the Metropolis. Once the house is deeded the house will be added back to fixed assets. There is an amount for accounts payable to the Archdiocese of almost \$18,000 but this will be covered by funds coming back to the Metropolis from Total Commitment funding. There is a note payable to the Ranglas family for \$130,000 as they generously loaned the Ranch these funds to cover some construction costs of the two houses at the Ranch and will be paid back with the donations as they come in over time. So there was a decrease of total assets of \$1.3 million but this was largely due to the removal of the Metropolis House from the balance sheet for the time being.

Statement of Financial Activity (Income Statement) – One column is "with donor restrictions", one column is "without donor restrictions" and one column is the total. With respect to Revenue/Income, the largest portion of our income comes from the Archdiocese, just over \$1 million, from Total Commitment, which we received in the form of coverage for payroll and benefits for employees and our allotted portion of insurance coverage. The next largest source of income is from Faith Forward. Then there are several other revenue sources from our ministries and other sources. In 2020, because of the pandemic, most ministry income and expenses were low. A new line is "Strategic Plan Metropolis Ministries Released from Restriction." These are funds that are used from our Gala funds and other dedicated accounts that are raised and used specifically for Strategic Plan ministry initiatives.

With respect to expenses, payroll and benefits remain the largest expense for the Metropolis staff and specific Ministry leaders. We have other large gifts and honoraria, some to the Patriarchate and the Assembly of Bishops. We have expenses for our ministries. If we look at core operations, restricted income and non-restricted income and expenses for the Metropolis, we had a net book loss of \$5,000 so we essentially broke even. Then when we add in sources of revenue, like the Relief Fund, and the funding for the new Youth Pastor Office, we had a change of net assets of approximately \$415,000 total.

We started the year with approximately \$2.3 million cash balance and ended with approximately \$2.5 million.

Remarks from Archon Fanis Economidis

Metropolis Council Vice President Fanis Economidis presented a report which included comments on the budget which was being presented to the Assembly later, where he stated, “We take our fiduciary responsibilities very seriously, and we do not arrive at either the income or expense numbers arbitrarily. Rather, we look at past trends, explore opportunities for growth, areas for reduction, and other circumstances that we must take into consideration for every line item in the budget.” He continued on to offer that the Metropolis Council is “doing our very best to support you, and we will continue to provide opportunities for dialogue, as well as resources, programs and ministries that will help grow your parishes and continue to engage people in the Greek Orthodox Church.”

Lunch Break

Metropolis Financial Presentation 2021

Total Commitment – Philippos Athanasiades

Philippos conveyed his gratitude to the parishes for collectively achieving 102% of our Metropolis goal for 2020, especially given the challenges of this past year, this was an exceptional achievement. The TC amounts for 2021 have remained the same as 2021. In 2022 we will face a small increase of 2% so we will learn the actual amount for our Metropolis soon. This year parishes will receive the name of someone on the Allocations Committee that can assist the parish with any questions they may have when submitting parish financials online. There is a new process for benefits funding that is similar to the total commitment formula and also looks at how many clergy are serving in a parish.

2021 Metropolis Budget – George Psfteas

George began by commenting that the 2021 budget has also has a new format compared previous years as the Metropolis continues to improve its financial processes. We are trying to set up the budget format like what the Archdiocese and other Metropolises do. The total operation budget for 2021 is a balanced budget and is a zero based budget for the upcoming year. Meaning, we look at the needs of the upcoming year then we look at our known revenue sources and look to see if we have a shortfall which becomes our fundraising goal for the year. A \$2.5 million budget seems large for a Metropolis so we try to show what it takes to actually operate the Metropolis and then we show the passthrough entities. The net operating budget of the Metropolis is about \$1.4 million, slightly up from 2020, due to enhancements. It is still less than our 2020 actuals. 75% of the budget is funding by our funding from the Archdiocese. 25% is funded by the direct efforts of the Metropolis and fundraising. The total 2021 budget for the Metropolis, approved by the Assembly, is nearly \$2.5 million, of which approximately \$1.1 million is for pass-through ministries that are self-funded or funded by targeted donations.

2021 Revenue - Archdiocese Allotment is \$880,000. This is net \$35,000 the Metropolis also receives for a youth director. 2021 Archdiocese TC bonus is \$180,000 but subtract the \$17,000 we owe the Archdiocese so we will receive \$163,000. We look to raise \$350,000 from Faith Forward and approximately \$8,000 from the registry.

2021 Expenses – The largest expense is always payroll and benefits. The second largest is insurance and property liability which is increasing every year. The rest of the yearly expenses are in line. One budgeted expense is for the hopeful visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch to the United States and the Metropolis will need to provide some financial assistance and a gift for this. Another “new” expense is for the Financial Review Engagement of \$30,000. There is a new

expense to increase professional bookkeeping services. The Metropolis eliminated the quarterly parish ministries assessment to the Metropolis for the first two quarters of 2021 so revenue there is half compared to 2020. We are projecting to summer camp and young adult conference revenue and expenses. The revenue source for the Strategic Plan ministry initiatives is the Gala revenue. The 2021 over budget is balanced.

A motion to approve the budget was made by Philippos Athanasiades, with a second by Bill Copadis from Anchorage, Alaska. Motion approved unanimously.

Audit Committee

Audit Committee - Election of two new members

In accordance with the Uniform Metropolis Regulations, two members of the Assembly were nominated to serve on the Metropolis Audit Committee, which is presently chaired by Rev. Father Thomas Zaferes (Ascension Cathedral – Oakland, CA). The nominations were: Chris Kalabokes (Nativity of Christ – Novato, CA), and John Karas (Saint John the Baptist – Las Vegas, NV). Both Mr. Kalabokes and Mr. Karas introduced themselves to the Assembly.

A motion to accept these two nominations was made by Rev. Father Tom Zaferes, seconded by Philippos Athanasiades. The motion carried.

New Business - Q & A

Nick Rotas, Annunciation, Sacramento, CA, asked if someone could give an update to the Benefits Funding program and how it will affect the parishes? Philippos Athanasiades replied that our parishes have been paying \$700.00 per month for many years now. The APC looked at the situation and believed some parishes could probably pay more than this. It was decided that an approach similar to the Total Commitment would be adopted. The idea is that healthier parishes could pay a little more than smaller parishes. Another factor is how many clergy serve at a parish. The Metropolis received a number from the Archdiocese and the Metropolis determines the amount to each parish. Some of our parishes pay less, others the same, others more. This is funding the pension on a go forward basis. The past shortfall liability is being funded separately.

Judge Steve Counelis asked what is the Archdiocese plan to fund the pension shortfall? George Psfteas replied that a commitment has been made by the Archdiocese to find separate means of fundraising but a specific plan has not been presented yet.

His Eminence confirmed that a plan is being constructed, that the parishes should not be utilized for this fundraising effort, and that a plan should be presented soon.

Fr. John Beal commented on the work Alexei Krindatch conducted that charts the demographics of Oriental and Orthodox Churches. Father Beal believes the challenges of the Orthodox churches are different than most Christian Churches in the country and we should talk a look at Alexei's work which may help us.

Judge Counelis commented that if you read all of the reports in the packet for the Assembly that it should be recognized that a lot of work being done in the Metropolis of San Francisco. His Eminence replied that we have something special as we are a family of clergy and faithful. But the Gallup Poll poses some very serious challenges. We need to have a vision. We need to learn how are we going to spread the Gospel beyond our comfort zones. We have a lot of work to do!

Philipos Athanasiades made a motion to adjourn the assembly, seconded by John Karas. Motion approved.

Closing Remarks – Benediction – Metropolitan Gerasimos

His Eminence thanked everyone for their participation. He commented we had some good presentations showing our faith in God that were a small example of what our parishes have enabled the Archdiocese and Metropolis to do. Since the parishes are the organic Church. It is our parishes that make up the Body of Christ. Anything you do in your parishes is sacramental as you are helping build up the Body of Christ. His Eminence is grateful for everyone's participation in such a Christian manner. Let us go forward with respect and understanding. The Gallop Poll numbers tell us something. It is up to us how we interpret them. The pandemic shook us up. Our challenges must be our work from now on. We are human and we fall. The point is how are we going to get up and feed our next generations, so they are invested in the Orthodox Church. This is the challenge that all of us need to work on. It is my responsibility that you become a participant on a daily basis in your parishes and by connection in the Metropolis and Archdiocese and to the Mother Church. A saint said, we don't get saved one at a time, but together. We are the Body of Christ. We can't leave anyone behind. We have to be engaged with faith, love, mercy and unity. The work of our ministries is the work of your hands. You make this possible.

His Eminence thanked Metropolis Council Vice President Archon Fanis Economidis for his leadership and service for the Metropolis, commenting, that he is a shining example of how we should live our lives. He has been a trusted friend, mentor and advisor and His Eminence looks forward to many more years of collaboration with him.

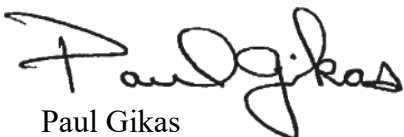
His Eminence reminded everyone the Metropolis is their home and encouraged everyone to take full advantage of everything it has to offer. He encouraged everyone to read the ministry and committee reports and apply everything in their parishes. The Metropolis wishes to be collaborators so all of our parishes can achieve greatness for the Glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos offered the closing prayer.

Adjournment

With their being no further business to discuss, the 2021 Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Paul Gikas
Director of Ministries and Administration