



Diocese of Sitka and Alaska

The Orthodox Church in America

The Right Reverend BENJAMIN
Bishop of San Francisco and the West
Administrator of the Diocese of Sitka and Alaska

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY 2009
October 20 – 21, 2009

A hierarchical Divine Liturgy and Molieben for the opening of a Church Council were celebrated October 20th at St Innocent Cathedral. The first plenary session began at 11:00apm with the singing of “O Heavenly King” at St Innocent Cathedral.

PLENARY SESSION I

His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, Administrator of the Diocese of Sitka and Alaska, introduced the following guests: Igumen Gerasim of in California.

There were no corrections or additions to the Assembly minutes of October 20-22, 2008. There were no additions or changes to the Agenda as presented.

HIERARCH’S ADDRESS (see archived copy for details)

His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN is the Locum Tenens of our Diocese and will be for as long as is necessary. He holds the Diocese of Alaska, its clergy and its faithful firm in his heart and will do all in his power to lead us faithfully.

The tithes of the parishes to the Diocese should be able to pay for the operation of the Diocese. Other fundraisings should be used for other things. Ten percent of your operating monies should be sent to Matushka Diane as your Diocesan responsibility.

CREDENTIALS REPORT

There are 33 registered Clergy delegates with 36 in attendance, 19 Lay delegates with 19 present and 2 registered Observers, with 6 present. Those who are present but have not completed their registration should do so. There is a total attendance of 62 faithful at this session.

CHANCELLOR’S REPORT (see archived copy for details)

TREASURER’S REPORT (see archived copy for details)

Matushka Diane reviewed the Budget to Actuals for the year, from October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009. Matushka Diane stressed the need to begin, continue or reinstate the parish tithes to the Diocese. The Treasurer’s report was received without question.

DEANERY REPORTS (see archived copies for details)

Fr David Askoak stated that he has received the \$25,000 loan for the completion of their new Church. Fr Sergie Active informed us of the consecration of the new church in Cordova on October 24th and 25th and planned visit of Bishop BENJAMIN and Fr Michael Oleksa to Nanwalek next week. Fr Innocent Dresdow said that next year will be the 40th anniversary of the consecration of St Herman and a great pilgrimage is being planned. Fr Maxim Isaac made his first trip to Unalaska in September for the laying of a gravestone in memory of Fr Peter Bourdukofsky and the Holy Ascension Cathedral in Unalaska has restarted fundraising for work on the Bishop's House there. Fr Stephan Heckman announced that His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN will be in Marshall on October 31st and November 1st for the consecration for their new Church. Fr John Zabinko had nothing to add to his report.

DIOCESAN INSTITUTIONAL REPORTS (see archived copies for details)

Fr John Dunlop remarked that there are 11 students at St Herman Seminary and the Seminary is doing well financially. RALS had an ending balance of \$825 as of September 30, 2009 and by direction of His Grace, the business was closed at the end of September. There is approximately \$2,400 inventory remaining and it is on display and for sale at the back of the room.

ROMI previously encompassed the A Street Museum in Anchorage, the Eklutna Gift Shop and the Sitka Shop. The A Street Museum has been closed and the Eklutna business now operates solely on their own for the benefit of St Nicholas parish in Eklutna. Delegates who know or think that articles have been taken from their parish and may be in the A Street Museum will have the opportunity at the close of the Assembly tomorrow to go to the Museum to identify what is theirs. If items are to be returned to a parish, the delegate will have to make those arrangements tomorrow or very soon thereafter before leaving Anchorage. The Diocese will not be able to take care of packing or shipping anything. Vladyko suggested that some articles may be well served by being loaned to another Museum where it is assured that the articles will be appropriately cared for.

EPISCOPAL SEARCH

Questions were asked and discussed regarding the timeline and selection of a Bishop for a Diocese. There are not a lot of candidates possible to fill a hierarchical position, as there are specific requirements for such candidates. Bishop BENJAMIN assured us that we are not locked in to any one candidate, and that he would not present someone to us if he did not feel the man would be a good Bishop for Alaska. The Diocese is not being rushed to fill the position of Diocesan Bishop, but Vladyko wanted us to understand that all candidates could be considered to fill a vacancy in any diocese.

Igumen Gerasim gave us a short biographical synopsis of his life and reflected on his time in Alaska. He offered us a glimpse of his thoughts on the nature of Orthodoxy, especially in Alaska.

RECESS 11:45 am

RECONVENE 2:00 pm

PLENARY SESSION II

This session was dedicated to the pastoral problem of suicide, a very sensitive and important issue. As a Church, we need to unify our focus and model of care for those in crisis. Two speakers from the Alaska Children's Services, Eric Boyer and Cody Chip, facilitated a presentation and discussion on this topic. This is an Alaskan problem, one which the Church can better understand and learn how to interact with children at risk for suicide. The Gatekeeper's program is being developed throughout our State to help people mentor at-risk individuals and some schools have developed the Natural Helpers program for school children to learn how to help their classmates. The greatest single thing to support and turn the tide in a suicide situation is the relationships that we can form with our youth and to listen to them.

Bishop BENJAMIN offered advice on what to do after suicide has happened. First, we must reach out to the family, listen to them and comfort their grief. Then, the clergy should call Vladyko so that he can help direct your next steps. No one needs God's mercy and our prayers more than one who has taken his or her own life, and the Church must provide this mercy and prayer.

CREDENTIALS REPORT

There are 38 registered Clergy delegates with 36 in attendance, 23 Lay delegates with 23 present and 7 registered Observers with 7 present, for a total attendance of 65 faithful.

RECESS 4:20 pm until Oct 21st at 9:00 am

PLENARY SESSION III

Plenary session III began at 9:05 am on Wednesday, October 21st with the singing of "O Heavenly King."

BUDGET

A budget of \$184,148.00 was endorsed by the Diocesan Council and presented to the Assembly. Vladyko stated that as of December 1, 2009, the Dean's Stipend should be distributed in the amount of \$500 to each of the eight regional deans. There was further discussion regarding the parish tithe and Matushka Diane was asked to provide a letter to parishes explaining how to calculate the tithe and the importance of tithing for the operation of the Diocese. She was also asked to prepare a simple parish budget, as many of our villages do not have that knowledge.

His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, made a motion, seconded by Fr Christopher Stanton, to rename the budge line item "printing and postage" to "Communications."

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Fr Innocent Dresdow made a motion, seconded by Fr Alexie Askoak, to accept the Budget as presented.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

CREDENTIALS REPORT

There are 38 registered Clergy delegates with 35 in attendance, 23 Lay delegates with 20 present and 7 registered Observers with 6 present, for a total attendance of 61 faithful.

NOMINATIONS

The nominating committee presented the names of Fr Thomas Andrew and Fr Innocent Dresdow for the clergy delegate to the Diocesan Council. There were no nominations from the floor. The clergy delegate to the Diocesan Council, with a term from 2009 to 2012 is Fr Thomas Andrew.

The nominating committee presented the name of Matushka Tatianna Active for the lay delegate to the Diocesan Council. Nominations from the floor included Greg Encelewski and Art Heckman. The lay delegate to the Diocesan Council, with a term from 2009 to 2012 is Greg Encelewski.

NEW BUSINESS

Bishop BENJAMIN introduced two new priests in our Diocese, Fr Gregory Parker, a recent graduate of St Herman Seminary and Fr Isaac Farha, who transferred to the Diocese of Alaska from the Antiochian Archdiocese of America. Fr Gregory serves Three Saints parish in Old Harbor and Fr Isaac serves St Herman Church in Fairbanks. We welcome them and their families.

Although the next All American Council (AAC) is not until the year 2011, it is not too early to begin planning on attending this event. The Metropolitan Council and Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America have instructed the AAC Planning Committee to set this venue in Seattle, Washington in the fall of 2011. With this locale, it is hoped that delegates from the Diocese of Alaska will have a strong showing at the Council. His Grace, as the host hierarch of that Council, would like it to have a different atmosphere and style than what has been in the past. He would like services and music to reflect the multi-lingual nature of Orthodoxy, including Native languages, Spanish and the variety of Slavic languages.

Fr Michael Oleksa made a motion, seconded by Matushka Helen Larson, that the Assembly of the Diocese of Alaska adopt Resolution 2010-01, Calling on the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America to Glorify Matushka Olga Michael as the Patron Saint of Neglected, Abused and Traumatized Women. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Fr Michael Oleksa made a motion, seconded by Fr Elia Larson, that the Assembly of the Diocese of Alaska adopt Resolution 2010-02, Concerning the Sanctity of the Earth and the Responsibility all Alaskan Native People Serve as its Guardians and Protectors. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Fr Max Isaac informed the Assembly that the St Nicholas parish in Sand Point desires to have another priestly assignment. It has been vacant since Fr Andrew Kashevarof was transferred to Unalaska.

Airfare specials can be expected in October of each year, both from the PFD and the AFN Convention. The wish of the Assembly was to plan the 2010 Assembly around AFN, preferably on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday prior to the Youth and Elders Conference. This will limit the conflicts that some of our delegates experience with obligations both to the Church and to the Corporate Convention.

A motion was made by Patrick Pletnikoff, seconded by Archpriest Alexie Askoak, to adjourn the meeting at 11:15 am. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

We sang "It Is Truly Meet."

Submitted by:

Matushka Anna Andrew, Diocesan Secretary

+ The Right Reverend Benjamin,
Administrator of the Diocese of Sitka and Alaska