

Orthodox Christian Laity

Minutes

Spring Meeting March 29, 2019

St Peter Orthodox Mission, Bonita Springs, FL

Board members convened at St Peter Antiochian Orthodox Mission located at 24850 Old 41 Road, Bonita Springs, FL. The mission church was beautiful, and the meeting space was comfortable. The community was welcoming. In the evening more than 70 faithful people attended the Services of the Salutations and a Lenten dinner was served. Many folks stayed to hear the presentation on the organization of the first meeting of the International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA) presented by board member Dr. Gayle Woloschak.

The OCL board meeting began at 9:40 am with prayer by Fr Hans Jacobs, our host priest, and His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel. Father Hans provided us with an excellent overview of the history of his missionary parish. He will write down his thoughts and we will post them when we receive them.

Board members present were: President Argo Georgandis Pyle, George Pontikes, George Karcazes, Nicholas Karakas, Andrew Kartalis, William Caras, Gayle Woloschak and Advisory board member His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel. Guests included Harriet Pontikes, Roula Karcazes, Katherine Kartalis, Howard Pyle Pamela Collins, Naples, FL and Chris Panagos, Clearwater, FL.

Minutes of the Cleveland Meeting October 2018 were approved on a motion by George Karcazes and second by George Pontikes.

Old Business

Office Reports were a starting off point for a positive discussion on thinking about rebooting and refreshing OCL. Items discussed by all in attendance including guests and board members included: the need to continuously be looking to **recruit potential board members**. Ideally, the board needs members of all jurisdictions, different geographic areas, and more women. Board development remains our number one challenge.

On the topic of **fundraising**, it was suggested that our spring outreach include a book or icon. How do we raise major gifts to meet our goal for a one-million-dollar endowment? To date, the OCL endowment is \$246,807.63. Is there a way to measure how our message is resonating? Who is our audience? How do we broaden our audience? We must refresh and reboot OCL's efforts to educate Orthodox Christians. Branding and marketing are essential items that we need to constantly develop.

Some concrete suggestions that emerged from these discussions were:

1. OCL will look into developing a GO FUND ME Page to broaden our appeal and to attempt to develop micro-donations. The Crisis is the Disunity of Orthodox Christianity in the USA and that it is not canonical. **Bill Caras** will assist us with this effort. If you have ideas contact Bill or **George Matsoukas**. The challenge here is to word the appeal to win the minds and hearts of the faithful young adults.

2. OCL will look into developing an APP that will bring up information on our web page. Bill Caras will also assist in this development. If you have suggestions, please contact Bill or George Matsoukas.
3. In our efforts to educate the faithful two ideas emerged. How do we explore the possibility of working with some research institution to create a study focusing on the cost-effectiveness of a unified Orthodox Christian Church? This is a stewardship issue. Another education focus is to discuss with Father Frank Marangos how creating one world-class Orthodox Theological Seminary in the USA would be transformative? Is this one project a way to move ahead to unity? **George Matsoukas will contact Fr Frank.**
4. In order to assist the Assembly of Bishops, who are at an impasse, OCL should consider writing a letter to all the 14 Patriarchs that helps them understand that the Assembly of Bishops cannot function without the approval of the mother churches. The mother churches need to empower the Assembly to do its work. They need to keep the Assembly focused and stop distracting them by imposing their disputes on the American Bishops. **George Karcazes and Gayle Woloschak** will compose the letter. OCL should also reach out to Metropolitan Nicolae in Chicago who is head of the Committee on Canonical and Regional Planning.
5. OCL will continue to build relationships with other Pan-Orthodox Christian Ministries. We will feature and interact with Prison Ministry, FOCUS North America, OCMC, IOCC, Project Mexico, Zoe for Life. OCL supports and encourages these ministries and it is our mission to reach out to all our brothers and sisters in Christ. OCL should look at their board lists to see if anyone of their members might like to be on our board or be liaisons to our board. We must work with the laity to build up a grassroots movement and critical mass for unity.
6. OCL needs to revisit a strategic plan and develop measurable long term and short-term goals and objectives. George Matsoukas will look for the strategic plans developed in the past.

Financial reports were approved on a motion by Andrew Kartalis and second by Nicholas Karakas.

Web Report It was suggested that a more in-depth look at our web statistics be presented. IS there a way to put them in context? Web report was approved by the motion of William Caras and seconded by George Pontikes.

OCL Board votes to join the Romanian Episcopate in a Pilgrimage to Alaska June 2020

In the year 2020, the Orthodox Church in America is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of its Autocephaly. To commemorate this historic event and the first canonical act of canonizing St Herman of Alaska many pilgrimages are being sponsored by dioceses and hierarchs of the OCA. Board members voted to join the pilgrimage being organized by the Romanian Episcopate to be led by Archbishop Nathaniel. All board members and their families and advisory board members are invited to participate. A deadline is coming up June 2019, but one can decide even after that date. Please check out the Pilgrimage web site: for details. <https://www.culturallycreativetravel.com/pilgrimage-to-alaska-2020/>

Please let George Matsoukas know if you plan to participate.

By-Law Revisions

George Pontikes and George Karcazes are reviewing the bylaws and when completed they will be sent via e-mail to the board for consideration and approval.

New Business

Annual Meeting: Houston November 1 and 2, 2019

President Argo Georgandis Pyle is busy developing ideas and plans for the annual meeting which will take place in Houston the first weekend of November. His Eminence Metropolitan Isiah has accepted OCL's invitation to be a participant and speaker. He will also celebrate the Hierarchical Liturgy at the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Houston. Archbishop Alexander and Bishop Basil will also be invited to participate.

Argo has contacted Michael Spartalis who is an accountant by profession and an adjunct professor of ethics. He is developing a topic related to PRINCIPLES to guide the Administration of the Church. We discussed this concept at our Cleveland Meeting and Mr. Spartalis's professional experiences and background deal with these issues in the world of business. He is looking at how they could apply to church administration.

Please provide feedback for our 33rd Annual Meeting by contacting Argo Georgandis and George Matsoukas.

Lenten Meditation

As our meeting was held during the Lenten Season Archbishop Nathaniel provided us with a thought and challenge. He stated that the purpose of the Church is to help us seek salvation. We seek an unending existence. The Church here for that purpose. He proposed to the board that we set aside time for a special spiritual retreat. Board members voted to work with his Eminence to plan a spiritual retreat.

Welcome new OCL Board Member Chris Panagos and Advisory Board Member Pamela Collins

Before the meeting was to adjourn Mrs. Pamela Collins and Mr. Chris Panagos were invited to join the OCL Board. Chris was introduced to OCL by board member William Caras. He is a pharmacist and lives in Clearwater Florida. He did not expect to join the board but is committed to the mission of OCL. He is also a recent graduate of St Stephens School of Orthodox Studies and asked if he could plan the retreat with his Eminence. Chris attends Holy Trinity Orthodox Church and is a cantor. Mrs. Pamala Collins is recommended to OCL by Father Hans Jacobse and Father Paul Girgis. Mrs. Collins grew up in the Serbian Orthodox Church and was a member of the GOA for 34 years. She lives in Naples, FL. She attends St Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church Naples. By unanimous acclamation, both were elected to our Board.

Minutes prepared by George Matsoukas and George Karcazes