



HOLY TRINITY-ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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FALL 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING MINUTES November 1, 2020

ATTENDANCE

Clergy: Fr. Mark Emroll, Fr. Nick Tzetzis

Parish Council Members present: Gus Lazares (Presiding), Matthew Neuendorf (Recording), Joanne Georgostathis, Bill Kanelopoulos, Gus Poneris, Andrea Siouris, Tom Tsiominas

Parish Council Members absent: Gus Koutsogiannis, Peggy Kehayes, Sylvia Rombis

Parish Staff: Eugene Nicholas, Craig Sansone

Parishioners: Due to the lack of a quorum at the prior meeting, a quorum consisted of however many members were present.

MEETING

Call to Order: Gus Lazares called the meeting to order at 12:10 PM.

Opening Prayer: Fr. Mark led the opening prayer.

Election of Chairperson: Matthew Neuendorf nominated Gus Lazares to serve as chairman. Andy Stefanopoulos seconded. Nominations closed and Gus was elected.

Minutes of 2018 Fall General Assembly Meeting:

- The minutes of the prior General Assembly were posted publicly. Andy Stefanopoulos moved to approve the March 1, 2020 minutes. Dimitri Makrozahopoulos seconded. The motion passed.

Reports:

President's Report:

- **Gus Lazares:**
 - A year ago things looked like they were going well. Now we can take courage and thank God that we have met the challenge of the pandemic well, especially Fr. Mark, Fr. Nick, Eugene Nicholas, Craig Sansone, and the members of the Parish Council for putting plans into place and implementing them effectively.
 - We got to speak with His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas a few weeks ago, who brought words of encouragement.

Clergy Report:

- **Fr Mark:**

- No one could have foreseen on March 1st what would happen just a week or so after. As a Parish family, we have responded to the pandemic in various ways. Each of us in our own ways has contributed to the wellbeing of family, friends, the world around us, and our Parish.
- There are too many things that have happened since the last assembly to mention them all, but here are a few: On September 16th, Deacon Nick was ordained to the priesthood in Metropolitan Nicholas's first con-celebratory service since his diagnosis, of which he has now recovered. We say "AXIOS" for Fr. Nick.
- On June 5th, Fr. Mark forwarded guidelines from the Metropolis for conducting worship during the pandemic.
- We were unable to host our Panegyri this year, and we weren't sure how people would react. However, the leadership in the Panegyri committee and Parish Council judged that we couldn't hold the festival as we have in the past, which was a loss for the community but also for our financial position. Fr. Mark is always humbled and amazed by the generosity of the faithful in our Parish, and after we sent an appeal out to our parishioners, because of the lack of a Panegyri, we have received over \$75,000 since July to help with covering any shortfalls.
- Eugene worked hard to apply for a PPP loan and is now in the process of submitting the paperwork to have the loan forgiven according to the intent of the program.
- The Clergy-Laity Conference was held virtually in early September. They passed a resolution allowing suspension of Parish elections in 2020 with sitting Parish Council members continuing to the next term. All current Parish Council members will continue into 2021.
- We have resumed or moved to virtual ministries, including reading groups, bible study, zoom meetings, a discord server, and are working on moving Sunday Church School and other ministries to virtual platforms.

- **Fr. Nick:**

- A thank you to Fr. Mark, Presvytera Ginny, the Parish Council, and the community, for the love and support for Fr. Nick and Presvytera Ivey, as they welcomed Thomas to the world in July and to the elevation to the priesthood in September, and, specifically, thank you for the vestments that the community gave which matches Fr. Mark's.
- The GOYAns read a book called "Icon" which is a dystopian world with Christians, especially Orthodox, under persecutions, with the GOYAns wanting to read further each time. Doing it via zoom worked really well.
- The adult reading group in spring read "The Great Divorce" by C. S. Lewis, and the Friday reading group is reading "The Philokathia," a spiritual book that will likely take a couple of years. In spring, we had "story time" with Deacon Nick" for the kids via Zoom. In the summer, we focused on services and reopening. We had a summer camp reunion, and moving into fall we began hosting fireside chats outside the church, ultimately having three: for GOYA, for the college students, and for the young adults.
- We have a discord server, which allows all the parishioners to be in one online platform. It gives us a private space for our church community to interact, talk about their lives, and coordinate ministries and things like that. We hope to use it going forward for an

asynchronous Sunday Church School ministry, allowing a rolling discussion to happen week-to-week, as well as for OCF/college students to meet and socialize.

- A lot of people are fatigued by being in front of a screen for so long, so we are trying to make sure that we get this right so that it can last for a long time in the future. We do have permission to bring altar boys back in and Fr. Mark and Fr. Nick are discussing plans for doing so. They are awaiting further guidelines.
- Consider ourselves like the rich man. The new situation has potentially given us more down time. Hopefully, we can recognize that it is a form of richness that we should share with others rather than withdrawing into ourselves. Reach out to one another and keep your connections strong.

Treasurer's Report:

- **Tom Tsiominas:**

- We have prepared a year-to-date cash flow report for the assembly. Income, especially stewardship, has surpassed our expectations by \$62,880, or 16.4%, which is due to the generous donations of the first half of the year and to the stellar response to the Panegyri appeal. We still hope to become a fully stewardship funded parish.
- Other donations were off budget by \$19,437 or 20%. Fundraising was down by \$436,143, 98%, due to no Panegyri and hall rentals, however, we are down \$190,627 in fundraising expenses, 96%, and some of those expenses went toward baklava, of which we have an ongoing sale, which should mitigate even those. The PPP loan should be fully forgiven.
- The overall cash flow is down \$307,904 or 33%, while expenses are down \$271,673 or 32%.
- In conclusion, in the first 9 months we exceeded our expectations for stewardship, which together with the PPP loan has kept us going. It is an important reminder that we need to reduce and eventually eliminate our dependence on the Panegyri and other fundraising.
- One of the directives from Metropolitan Nicholas is that we cannot have coffee hour. Rentals are similar, and after each rental we would have to have a thorough cleaning. It would not be good to have rentals but not coffee hour.
- Projecting for the rest of the year we should be in a positive situation, possibly with as much of a deficit for the year as \$16,000, but since we had a significant carry-over from last year, we should still have a positive balance going into 2021. Not one person has stopped automatic payments since the pandemic started and online giving has not only kept up with in-person but has exceeded it by 16%.

Endowment Committee Report:

- **Jim Raptis:**

- Our investments have done quite well, even after the financial market drops. Morgan Stanley has done a good job for us.
- We currently have \$52,000 available for disbursement for ministries, capital improvement, and extraordinary expenses.
- The current balance is \$1.35 million.

Stewardship report:

- **Bill Kanelopoulos:**
 - Stewardship Sunday was September 20th, marking the start of our 2021 ministry themed “Thy Will Be Done,” with beautiful packets designed by Sophia and Cassia Chryssovergis. Also, a thank you to Tom Tsiominas for his heartfelt talk.
 - So far, we have 150 families pledging over \$160,000 for next year. Throughout 2020, we have had a generous response with a new record in donations, and over \$75,000 from the Panegyri appeal. We have surpassed 95% of our goal for the year in pledges and 92% in received stewardship.
 - We continue to ask for letters and articles on stewardship in the monthly *Voice*. If you are interested, talk to Bill or Dimitri Makrozahopoulos, or email Fr. Mark.
 - Glory to God and thank you to Fr. Mark, Fr. Nick, the committee members, the Parish Council, and of course all the Parish.

Nominations:

- **Audit Committee:**
 - Four spots are available. Eugene Nicholas nominated Nick J. Sarakatsannis, Dimitri Makrozahopoulos, Patti Neuendorf, and Cathy Stavros. Carol Stefanopoulos seconded. The nominees were elected.
- **Election Committee:**
 - Due to the suspension of elections, there were no nominations for the election committee.
- **Endowment Committee:**
 - Two positions are available, a 2 year and a 1 year. Eugene Nicholas nominated Jim Gelis for 2 years and Peter Rodish for 1 year. Beryl Love seconded. The nominees were elected.
- **Parish Council:**
 - Due to the suspension of elections, there were no nominations for Parish Council.

Unfinished Business:

Clergy-Laity Conference:

- The report will be prepared prior to the Spring General Assembly.

New Business:

2021 Operating Budget:

- **Tom Tsiominas:**
 - We talked about our tremendous year-to-date stewardship and the budget, and finance committee hopes to sustain that generosity. Therefore, we budgeted \$590,000 for stewardship, which the budget and finance committees believe is a realistic figure.
 - We budgeted \$1.1 million in expenses. A lot is normally covered via fundraising revenue. There is a big gap between stewardship and total expenses. We need to be realistic about our capabilities, but we believe that \$590,000 is doable.
 - We budgeted lower for Panegyri, with the anticipation that we will hold one but that it will be scaled back, resulting in lower revenue and higher expense. Due to uncertainty in 2021, we were cautious in our budgeting for Panegyri without planning to cancel it entirely.

- We also hope that we can reopen the hall for rentals in 2021.
- Ground maintenance expenses increased due to resurfacing of the parking lot every two years. We reduced the budget for office supplies. Payroll increased for everyone except for Fr. Mark who graciously accepted not having a cost of living increase.
- One of the aspects of a non-profit is that you are supposed to spend everything that you take in. Since January 2016, we haven't had to borrow a dime to meet payroll, which was not the case in the past. Our real back-up fund is the parish itself, who have been extraordinarily generous so far this year.
- Andy Stefanopoulos moved to approve the budget. Beryl Love seconded. The budget was approved.

Adjournment

Call to adjourn: Carol Stefanopoulos moved to adjourn. Cathy Stavros seconded.

Closing prayer: Fr. Nick led the closing prayer. The meeting adjourned at 1:17 PM.

Approved as written,

Fr. Mark Emroll
Proistamenos

Gus Lazares
President

Matthew Neuendorf
Secretary