

MINUTES OF THE 2021 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

VIRTUAL CONVENTION OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

CONVENED VIA ZOOM

Friday, July 23, 2021 – 3:00 PM Eastern

I. Opening Prayer

His Eminence the Most Rev. Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate, opened the Virtual Archdiocese Convention with prayer and welcoming remarks. Deacon Adam Roberts provided technical direction.

There were four presentations on Friday evening prior to the official start of the Virtual General Assembly. Metropolitan JOSEPH presided at all four presentations which were open to all registered attendees on the following topics:

- A. From 3:00 PM until 5:00 PM, Mr. Roger David, National Chair of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, provided a comprehensive review of the activities of the Order for the past two years. He led the assembled participants in a full discussion of the agenda. An edited version of the gathering is available on the archdiocesan website.
- B. From 5:00 PM until 7:30 PM, Kh. Suzanne Murphy, President, North American Board of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America, convened a meeting and discussion of the Antiochian Women. His Grace, Rt. Rev. Bishop John, Spiritual Advisor of the Antiochian Women, joined Metropolitan JOSEPH. An edited version of the gathering is available on the archdiocesan website.
- C. From 9:00 PM until 10:30 PM, Fr. Philip Rogers, Spiritual Advisor of the North American Council of SOYO, and Ms. Erin Ghata, Lay Advisor, presided at a Teen SOYO Virtual Gathering. His Grace, Rt. Rev. Bishop Thomas, Episcopal Overseer, joined Metropolitan JOSEPH. An edited version of the gathering is available on the archdiocesan website.
- D. From 9:00 PM until 10:30 PM, Fr. Nicholas Belcher and Ms. Leila Qutami, coordinated a Young Adults virtual event. Fr. Nicholas offered an introductory meditation, and a period of questions and answers followed. An edited version of the gathering is available on the archdiocesan website.

Saturday, July 24, 2021

II. Breakout Rooms

From 10:00 AM until 11:00 AM there were four breakout rooms where participants could choose to join particular topics related to current parish matters. Metropolitan JOSEPH

- A. Mr. Salim Abboud, CFO and Treasurer, Fr. Michael Tassos, Comptroller, and Dr. Elias Hebeka, Chair of the Investment Committee, conducted an overview of current

archdiocesan finances, especially in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were invited to submit questions.

- B. Fr. Nicholas Belcher outlined current initiatives in the Departments of Christian Education, Youth Ministry, Camping, and Young Adult Ministry. Fr. Belcher indicated that the Archdiocese will develop an integrated and coherent plan through its programming.
- C. Mr. William Morrison, Archdiocese Board of Trustees member, conducted a workshop on “Stewardship” at the parish level.
- D. Dr. Badie Alnemr and Dr. James Rossetti offered a presentation on the causes, course, and response to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

III. Guest Speaker

From 11:00 AM until 11:45 AM, the featured speaker, Fr. Joseph Huneycutt, Co-Chair of the Department of Missions and Evangelism, addressed the Virtual Convention on the topic of “The Lord did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world.” Questions and answers followed.

From 11:45 AM until 12:30 PM the Virtual Convention adjourned for a lunch break.

- IV. At 12:30 PM Metropolitan JOSEPH opened the Virtual General Assembly with prayer and welcoming comments. He then appointed the Vicar General, Very Rev. Fr. Thomas Zain, to conduct the proceedings on the agenda. All proceedings were electronically recorded.

A. Resolution of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees

Rev. Archdeacon Emile Paul Sayegh, Esq., Chancellor of the Archdiocese, stated for the record that given the current pandemic conditions and the inability to assemble in person, the Archdiocese Board of Trustees had adopted the following resolution concerning the conduct of the Virtual General Assembly which was necessary for the operation of the Antiochian Archdiocese:

THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America (the “Archdiocese”) was scheduled to celebrate its biennial General Convention, hosted by St. George Cathedral, in the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in July, 2021, (the “Convention”);

WHEREAS, as a direct result of the 2020-2021 Pandemic and the mandatory government ordered “shut downs”, in January, 2021, the Convention Committee recommended to cancel the 2021 Archdiocesan Convention in light of the substantial contractual obligations faced by the Host Parish and the serious reservations for a successful Convention;

WHEREAS, Metropolitan Archbishop JOSEPH (the “Metropolitan”) of the Archdiocese determined there is a need to host a limited Convention in order to present its financials, including among other items, the approval of the Archdiocese annual budget for year ending 2022 before all authorized delegates, constituting the General Assembly, (the “General Assembly”);

WHEREAS, as a direct result of the 2020-2021 Pandemic and its debilitating effects as witnessed by the entire world, the Metropolitan, recognizing the very challenging and insurmountable difficulties to hold any elections to fill vacancies on the Board of Trustees, (the “Board”) as provided for in the Archdiocese Constitution (the “Constitution”), has declared “exigent circumstances” exist which justify his decision to extend all board of trustees member terms, which are set to expire in 2021, until the next biennial convention to be held in the year 2023 and hosted by St. George, Phoenix, Arizona;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Article V of the Archdiocese Constitution, both the Metropolitan and the Board have deemed the current Pandemic situation a special circumstance which justifies a change in the place of holding the General Assembly of the Convention, by teleconference, pursuant to procedures to be drafted by the Department of Legal Affairs, which upon the substantiation of a quorum shall be deemed an official meeting of its delegates;

WHEREAS, it is necessary that certain legal formalities be complied with including the adoption of an agreement for the holding of the General Assembly by teleconference and the extension of terms of those serving on the Board;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS

RESOLVED, a General Assembly of all delegates shall be held on Saturday, July 24, 2021, or at such other time as may be decided by the Metropolitan, for the purpose of conducting business, according to an agenda, to be presented by the Metropolitan, to include, among other items, the presentation for approval of the Annual Budget for year ending 2022.

RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of all delegates shall be facilitated by teleconference utilizing a platform conducive to the needs of the Archdiocese, as determined by the respective departments under the guidance of the Metropolitan.

RESOLVED, all expiring terms of both elected and appointed members to the Archdiocese Board of Trustees shall be extended until the biennial Convention to be held in July, 2023 and hosted by St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Phoenix, Arizona.

RESOLVED, this resolution will be inserted in full in the minutes of the General Assembly.

Mary Winstanley O’Connor (signature on file) _____

Secretary of the Board of Trustees

- B. From 12:30 PM until 1:30 PM His Eminence, Most Reverend Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate, addressed the Virtual General Assembly. The text of his presentation will appear in the September edition of The WORD Magazine, the official publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

- C. Mr. Salim Abboud, CFO and Chairman of the Department of Finance, presented the Financial Report for the year ending December 31, 2020. The report had been previously sent to all parishes and Board of Trustees members and is on file. In accordance with the conditions of the Virtual General Assembly, no motion to receive the report was necessary.
- D. Fr. Michael Tassos, Comptroller, provided an overview of the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Years 2021. The report had been previously sent to all parishes and Board of Trustees members and is on file. Parishes and delegates were instructed to vote their approval or disapproval of the budget within eight days.
- E. Mr. Abboud introduced other members of the finance team to make presentation in their areas of competence:
1. Dr. Elias Hebeka, Investment Committee
 2. Ms. Anne Thomas, Charitable Outreach
 3. Mr. George Thomas, Financial Strategic Planning and Budgeting
 4. Mary Winstanley-O'Connor, Planned Giving
 5. Mr. Dan Braun, Capital Improvements Committee
 6. Fr. Michael Tassos, Internal Audit
 7. Mr. Fawaz El Khoury, Vice Chairman, Board of Trustees, Chanceries Committee
- F. Fr. Nicholas Belcher outlined current initiatives in the Departments of Christian Education, Youth Ministry, Camping, and Young Adult Ministry. Fr. Belcher indicated that the Archdiocese will develop an integrated and coherent plan through its programming.
- V. Report on the 2023 Archdiocese Convention – St. George Cathedral, Phoenix, AZ
- The Virtual General Assembly viewed a video presentation by St. George Church, Phoenix, AZ, in anticipation of the 2023 Archdiocese Convention.
- VI. Adjournment and Closing Prayer

His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH announced that His Grace, Rt. Rev. Bishop Basil, has written to His Beatitude, our Patriarch, requesting retirement from active ministry by the end of this calendar year. His Beatitude has placed the matter on the Holy Synod's agenda for its meeting this October. His Eminence extended much gratitude to Bishop Basil for his ministry over many years and wished him many more healthy years and blessings. He invited His Grace to offer the closing prayer at 3:05 PM, following which the Virtual General Assembly adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

V. Rev. Fr. Michael Ellias, Secretary
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America