

**St. John Chrysostom Albanian Orthodox Church**  
**Parish Semi-Annual Meeting**  
**October 22, 2023 (in person; recorded)**

**Roll Call**

**Parish Council Members Present:** Donna Dimitri, Sergio Georgi, Davit Jishkariani, Zach Smith, Reem Tarazi

**Parish Council Members Absent:** Christine Dardaris, Nilda Salavachi

**Clergy:** Fr. Kai

Meeting opened with prayer at 11:55am

Welcome by Chairperson Donna Dimitri and reminder of Fr. Kai's commitment to our parish and desire to connect with parishioners.

**Parish Council Election (run by Stephanie Kosta)**

All existing members agreed to serve again: Christine Dardaris, Donna Dimitri, Sergio Georgi, Davit Jishkariani, Nilda Salavachi, Zach Smith, Reem Tarazi

No one else expressed interest prior to meeting. No other nominations from the floor.

Motion to approve slate by Chris Manosis. Seconded by Linda Kosta. Motion passed. None opposed. No abstentions.

**Secretary's Report (reported by Reem Tarazi)**

Reem Tarazi presented the meeting minutes from semi-annual meeting in April 2023. No questions or concerns. Chris Manosis made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Tim Pappas. No discussion. Motion passed.

Donna recognized other tasks completed by Reem in her role as council secretary.

**Treasurer's Report (presented by Zachary Smith)**

Zach presented 2024 Budget proposal (see attached)

- Proposed budget would have us ~\$26,000 in deficit
- Notable expenses
  - o Cost of living increase and additional raise proposed for Fr. Kai (for a total of 6%)
  - o Our church's pension contribution will increase
  - o Proposed insurance premium significantly reduced
  - o ~ \$144,000 in expenses budgeted
- Notable income
  - o We have not seen increase in pledges, so budget maintains same anticipated level of income from pledges
  - o Successful return on Women's Day Dance this year and hope that will continue
  - o Amazon Smile program has ended
  - o Due to sizeable amount in checking account, do not expect to pull \$ from investment account to balance budget

- ~118,000 in income plus ~26,000 transfer from investment account = ~144,000 income budgeted
- Presented investment report and explained loss and gains

Stephanie Kosta expressed concern that we run a deficit yearly and need \$ from investment account to balance budget, and encouraged parishioners to pledge more to offset this. Linda Kosta also encouraged people to increase amount of money put in weekly collection basket.

Motion to accept report by Ilirjan Papa, seconded by Chris Manosis. Stephanie Kosta opposed. Zach abstained. Motion passed.

Iirjan Papa thanked Zach for his thoroughness and commitment. Donna recognized Zach's time and effort, especially given that he no longer lives in area. Donna reminded parishioners that we will need a new treasurer moving forward. Zach summarized role of treasurer.

### **Clergy Report (presented by Fr. Kai)**

- 1) Fr. Kai expressed that our parish has everything it needs to thrive and is doing very well.
- 2) Expressed commitment to parish and parishioners and wants to "repay the goodness you have shown to me." He encouraged parishioners to reach out to him for house blessings and anything else needed.
- 3) Has performed many baptisms this year, but also many funerals.
- 4) Fr. Kai reminded us all about our Christian values and Christian identity and the fact that our actions represent our church. One way we do this is to demonstrate commitment to our church and parish. For example, bring your children to church, as this is the future of the parish.
- 5) Fr. Kai will continue to schedule additional services (e.g., Vespers) but is seeking help for these services.

Donna thanked Fr. Kai for his leadership and commitment.

### **Vice-Chairperson Report (presented by Sergio Georgi)**

- 1) Sergio thanked parishioners in attendance.
- 2) Provided update from Albanian Archdiocese Assembly in September
  - 5 members of our parish attended
  - Nikodhim ordained as bishop
  - Archdiocese is requesting routine updates about events at each church
  - All churches made contribution to Student Fund; we donated \$1000
  - In need of full-time priests for 2 parishes
  - Is a need for discussion related to investment fund
  - Donna is treasurer and doing a wonderful job
  - Nilda elected as a trustee
- 3) Livestream continues, but need assistance to keep this going, especially with increase services. Reach out to Fr Kai or a board member if interested in helping.
- 4) Website has been updated but we need people to help update the website regularly. Reach out to Fr Kai or a board member if interested in helping.

Donna recognized Sergio's incredible work on website and livestream and his continued commitment.

### **Chairperson Report (presented by Donna Dimitri)**

- 1) At the Assembly Dinner our parish made a \$1000.00 pledge to the AOAA student fund.
- 2) Linda Croke and Donna attended Father Arthur's funeral on October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> at the Cathedral in Boston. On Friday evening there was a service with Bishop Nikodhim and about 8 priests. On Saturday the Divine Liturgy was celebrated. Father Arthur's wife, Margaret and his son Evans spoke on Friday night and thanked everyone for their love and support.
- 3) On October 11 & 12 Fr. Dennis and Donna attended the OCA Metropolitan Council meeting in Springfield Va. The meeting on October 11<sup>th</sup> involved a training session for the entire metropolitan council concerning pension funds. In the afternoon the Metropolitan Council and the OCA Pension Board met and discussed ongoing concerns in reference to the Pension Fund. A 2% increase in Parish Contributions was approved bring the Parish Contribution to 14% and the contribution by priests and lay employees remained at 6%. The Pension Board will develop a Funding Improvement Plan for presentation to the Metropolitan Council. October 12 was devoted to reports from various committees and the OCA treasurer. The \$2,361,581 budget for 2024 was approved. The Albanian Archdiocese Fair Share assessment for 2024 remains at \$22,000.00.
- 4) Windows in main church: asking for \$70,000.00 to buy and install new windows. The estimated cost breakdown is as follows: windows- \$2000.00 each, install \$3000.00 each window film \$2000.00 each
  - o Motion made by Donna for approval to take up to \$70,000 from investment account for this project. Seconded by Chris Manosis.
  - o Discussion followed including consequences or not replacing (water damage, utilities, insulation), long-term benefits, aesthetics, safety/protection from crime, alternatives, beautification vs. necessary maintenance, possible sale of old windows)
  - o Zach reminded parish we put on new roof and approved withdrawal from investment account this year but we never needed to take money from the investment account. Zach stressed that these donations do not affect what is needed to run the church and that pledges should not be affected by these donations.
  - o Reem suggested 2 votes, one for necessity of window replacement and one for addition of film. Davit agreed.
  - o Initial motion repeated. Motion passed. No objections. No abstentions
- 5) Our insurance carrier, Erie, has required we have an asbestos survey/inspection. The company will be here Thursday, Oct 26<sup>th</sup> to conduct the survey.
- 6) The church sign was vandalized, ripped from the frame and thrown on the driveway for the Sheraton Hotel. This occurred between Saturday, Oct 7 and Sunday morning October 8<sup>th</sup>. Fortunately, the sign was not stolen or damaged too much. We will purchase some touch-up paint and put the sign back in the frame.

### **Nick Naum Scholarship Report (reported by Reem Tarazi)**

This year we awarded four scholarships at \$2000 each to Gregory Dardaris, Caroline Fiss, Olivia Grabocka, and Juliana Melnik.

Unfortunately, this fund was also negatively impacted by the market and lost ~4000 in addition to what was given in scholarships. The fund currently stands at ~\$80,000

**Old Business**

No old business from the floor

**New Business**

- 1) Ilirjan Papa proposed beautification project as we move toward 100-year commemoration of our church. Proposed iconography in altar and he and Fr. Kai have asked for proposal from iconographer, who is Albanian and son of long-time parishioner. Proposal being developed and will be discussed with parish council. Ilirjan offered donation to church for painting of St. John Chrysostom and other families could make donations of specific icons. No money being requested from parish council. Anticipate this as a 5-10+ year project.
- 2) Chris Manosis encouraged regular attendance and families to bring children to church.
- 3) Linda thanked Donna for her hard work and commitment as council president.

Chris Manosis made motion to close meeting. Stephanie Kosta seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting concluded at 1:28pm.

**Respectfully submitted by Reem Tarazi**