

Parish Council Meeting

January 8, 2025

Present: Donna Dimitri, Sergio Giorgi, Zachary Smith 8PM, Christine Dardaris, Anila Vero, Peter Ghicondey, Steve Coraluzzi, Linda Notskas, Linda Croke

Absent: Father Kai (on vacation in Georgia) Reem Tarazi, Davit Jiskariani

Secretary's Report: Reem was not able to join the meeting this evening. The minutes from the December 4, 2024 meeting were distributed and reviewed. No changes or corrections. Motion to accept the minutes by Sergio, second by Anila. Minutes from the December 2024 meeting approved.

Treasurers discussed by Donna Dimitri. See attached report from Zach Smith

There were significant donations and pledges for the month of December. Pledges are still down from previous years, however. Our pledge budget of \$60,000.00 for 2024 was not met.

The archdioceses dues have increased to \$14,000.00 per year. This is about a 1/3 increase for 2025. Of note, there was no increase since 2014 and during three years of COVID there was a 40% decrease. A new methodology for this calculation has been implemented in the archdiocesan Fair Share Program.

Donations came in to cover the cost of all but two of the windows of the window project.

\$15,000.00 will be transferred from the checking account into the investment account.

Motion to accept the Treasurers report made by Anila Vero, seconded by Christine Dardaris and unanimously accepted by Council.

Chairpersons report given by Donna Dimitri

The Gospel covers Father Kai picked out on Etsy. Cloth in Red, Blue, Green and Purple. Have been delivered. They are very nice.

Bishop Nikodhim to visit our parish, Saturday February 1 and Sunday February 2, 2025. What do we want to do? Dinner, something at the church?

The boiler (heater) was serviced in December. We had to call Phoenix Home Services out to check the boiler again. Up and running now.

Group discussion regarding Bishop Nikodhim's upcoming visit to St John's. If possible, dinner for the bishop and Parish Council will take place in the church hall following vespers and will be catered by Le Sera Italian Restaurant. Donna will contact the restaurant.

Church exterior doors will be painted to match the color of the Church sign in the spring.

The outside stonework that formally held the church name sign will be removed. Anila and Donna will check on a section there to see if it needs repair

The boiler was serviced again because the boiler did not come on as programmed. The problem appears to be corrected.

We have noticed that some new families have started attending church. This is encouraging.

Required background checks will be conducted under the direction of John Fedak, Trustee on the Archdiocesan Council. The OCA is using a company called Protect My Ministry for background checks. The OCA will pay for the background checks. Every parish in the archdiocese is required to conduct these checks each year.

Sunday School Report

Sunday School report from Ilirjan Papa

- Attendance has been inconsistent throughout December due to the holiday season.
- The Christmas Play was a great success! The kids had a wonderful time, and a special thank you goes to Donna Dimitri, Sandy Fiss, and Paula Bendo for their invaluable help.
- I ordered several Orthodox books tailored to different age groups and shared them with the children. The idea is for the kids to take these books home and read them on their own during the week. My goal is to provide opportunities for the kids to deepen their understanding of our faith while encouraging greater parental involvement in Sunday School.

Donna praised Ilirjan for his hard work and dedication to the Sunday School and he is building the Sunday school program. He is very committed to getting families to return to church and has purchased materials and snacks for the Sunday school. The Christmas pageant was wonderful. Paula Bendo and Sandi Fiss did great job. The Children were adorable.

Vice Chair Report Sergio Georgi

Sergio is currently working on the 2024 archival project. He is archiving the Parish Council meeting minutes and the Weekly Messengers for 2024. Our Pledge cards are being reviewed for update.

Sergio is working on a flyer for the International Woman's Day Dance with Donna and Anila. They will meet following the conclusion of this Parish Council meeting. Tickets prices are expected to cost \$85.00-\$90.00 per adult and the menu will also be discussed. The event is open to women, men and families.

There are 257 subscribers for our Livestream. . It has been noted that the sound quality is also very professional and impressive.

Old Business

Soup-er bowl Sunday is February 9, 2025. Linda Croke reported that we may need take out containers, crackers and rolls. She will coordinate the event. We will need assistance with set up, heating the soups that arrive on Sunday morning and serving. We will also need help with the soup list sign, electrical power cords, a strategic way to keep the usage of the power strip cords from blowing fuses, ladles, large pots to heat soup up with on the stove, large glass bowls to heat soup in the microwave.

New Business

Great Lent begins on March 3, 2025. It was noted that Pascha is early this year and on the same Sunday as Western Easter. Steve will order palms. When Fr Kai returns, we will get from him a list of the times and dates of services.

Bishop visit

Bishop Nikodhim will visit our Parish on February 1 and 2, 2025. He will stay at nearby 1900 JFK Blvd in the hospitality suite apartment during his upcoming visit. The cost is \$100.00 per night and is a fully furnished one bedroom apartment.

Goals 2025

As discussed, two major goals are to involve families in activities that bring the parish together as a church family and to improve on the numbers and amounts of pledges if possible.

Some successful parish activities from the past have included painting classes, ethnic cooking classes as noted by Chris Dardaris. People like to eat! Chris remembers a class where she learned to make Baklava from Pandora Bendo and Jane O'Leary. Steve Coraluzzi suggested a fall golf tournament and Pete Ghicondey agreed that these were successful in the past. Some of the activities may help build the brand of the church and bring people back to church. Linda Notskas suggested Saturday afternoons might work for family events. Linda Notskas and Pete Ghicondey discussed that some of these activities were lost recently due to the restrictions on events following COVID. Steve recalled a chocolate making class that he and Diane learned about and thought something like this might be fun to attend as well. Donna will mention the idea of having family events in the announcements after Liturgy next week. We will revisit this at the next meeting as well.

Next meeting- February 5, 2025, at 7:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Croke