

Holy Taxiarchai and St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, Niles, Illinois

Parish Council Meeting for Wednesday, December 21, 2016

Commencement of Meeting: The Parish Council meeting began at 7:39 p.m. with Father Dean leading us in prayer who was present for the duration of the meeting, as was Father George. President Perry Giannopoulos presided over the meeting, for its duration, and Katerina Apithis, as assistant recording secretary, recorded the matters addressed.

Parish Council Members in Attendance:

Present: P Giannopoulos, R Kozlowski, E Kiriazopoulos, L Konstantellos, N Andrews, A Rizos, T Kanelos, D Loomos, K Ioannou, N Gianaris, C Agalliu, D Houpis, W Bozikis, M Pontikes, T Karabatsos and K Apithis.

Absent: T Sikoral, T Bournias, A Demeros, J Aliferis, and A Koutsikos.

President's Remarks: All members in attendance were greeted by President Giannopoulos who then congratulated those who were re-elected and a new member who was elected but absent from tonight's meeting. He then addressed the agenda matters as followed:

Minutes: President Giannopoulos asked for a motion to table last month's meeting minutes.

Motion: To table the minutes from November 2016 made by 1st T Kanelos/2nd R Kozlowski

Vote: 12-0-0

Correspondence:

1. Thank you letter from Metropolitan Athenagoras, tray collected \$1337.
2. Thank you letter from Greater Chicago Broadcast Ministries
3. Thank you letter from Mercy Home for Boys & Girls
4. Thank you letter from Pan-Hellenic Scholarship Foundation
5. Thank you letter from Doctors without Borders
6. IOCC: already gave for this year
7. Crossroads at Hellenic College of Holy Cross

Motion: To donate \$100.00 made by 1st T Kanelos/2nd E Kiriazopoulos

Vote: 14-0-0

8. Lions Club of Niles

Motion: To donate \$250.00 made by 1st T Kanelos/2nd R Kozlowski

Vote: 14-0-0

9. Minnesota Archive Fund to table till next year to be address in January with new budget.

Treasurer's Report: Financial report of November 30th, 2016 was reviewed and discussed highlighting any variances.

Motion: To accept the Financial Statement as presented made by 1st E Kiriazopoulos/2nd L Konstantellos.

Vote: 13-0-0

Committee Reports:

- A. **2016 Men's Event Report**: A Demeros absent to report, however those that attended stated that it was a great night, approximately 130 in attendance. We will get additional information in January from the chairperson of the event.
- B. **Anniversary Luncheon**: Scheduled for February 12th, 2017, after church services at the Allgauer's, Northbrook is still in the planning phases.
- C. **Phase III**: Received a little bit of a response from the potential sub-contractor who's going to help drive the process hopefully and start moving again towards the main goal. We'll be meeting with Bill Kokalias by the end of the year and that contractor to discuss this process and also we'll be setting up a meeting with the construction committee by 1st or 2nd week of January to get started again. Hopefully this will work out as they said they really want to help out. Hopefully we can get the process going again.
- D. **Outreach Committee**: J Pierce absent from meeting, however T Kanelos was able to provide details about Thanksgiving Luncheon. Thanksgiving was nice, we had about 58 people here and 15-18 meals that went out to shut-ins. We had a bus that went to the Leaning Tower to pick up people but then the bus just sat in our parking lot which could have gone out to other locations for pick-ups. Committee was afraid to expand to other locations, but we are heading in the right direction. We had left over meals that we provided to Bessie's Table which was being held next. Meals on Wheels is going well, and our Coat Drive went very well too. The last Outreach Committee Meeting we had about seven or eight new people. This committee is something to be proud off here at St. Haralambos. We are feeding a lot of people and building a comradery in reaching out to people who are alone or even those who may not need money they do need company. It's a great program and John is doing a good job with the whole committee.
- E. **School Board**: No-one present from the school board; nothing much has changed. D Houpis brought up the fact that on November 21st there was a school board meeting and wanted to know if anything new had come up in that meeting that the parish council should be aware of and discussing at this time. P. Giannopoulos brought up two reports: first, their usual reports about what's going on and looking into ways of spending some of their discretionary funds. Parish Council had asked them for a report of evaluating their classrooms, some kind of an assessment of each on the schools on an annual basis to see the quality of education the kids are getting. The second thing that was discussed was the potential for what their tuition needs to be. Last year they chose not to do an increase on tuition at all. So this year they are looking into what the tuitions are in relations to the other schools in the area. D Houpis suggested that we should study the Athena & the St. John's the Baptist school to get some input of what's happening with these programs and their tuitions from someone from our school board. T Kanelos brought up the fact that as long as the school board has the money to spend it on TV's or iPads, they don't have to bring it to the parish council for approval.

- F. **Stewardship:** As of December 21st, 2016 there are currently 682 families have committed \$348,497. About this time last year there were 685 families that had committed \$342,320. We also received a little bit of a boost today that is not calculated.
- G. **2017 Stewardship Campaign:** L Konstantellos discussed a little bit of what the stewardship committee is all about. Stewardship is way beyond of just giving your money; it involves giving your time, giving to the church what you're good at and offering something in return and what it creates is engagement. When you have people that are engaged you have people who see that they are a part of something, and that is something the stewardship committee is trying to accomplish. There are currently eight members in addition to Fr. George who are trying to come up with some great ideas. They are also getting some ideas from Mr. Bill Marianos, which he talks about how to engage with people. The stewardship committee has put together a survey which has fifteen questions, which was handed out at the meeting, where the survey asks a little about themselves, which will make the committee understand, a little about their parishioners and what they are thinking and feeling. Fr. George also mentioned that the committee is in the process of creating a handbook for the parish; something that will be used eventually down the road as a promotional feel of the church. This handbook will have a mission for each ministry along with a mission leader along with some colorful pictures. Eventually we will have a number of ambassadors from the parish that would be trained to have a 1:1 or 1:3 approach to go to people's homes and inform them of what's going on. This will be a more of a personal approach to stewardship and letting people know that "We care about your soul more than anything else." This process will take time but eventually we will see the benefits in the end. L Konstantellos also passed their minutes from their last meeting who wanted to keep the parish council informed of what is being discussed. Fr. Dean suggested we should ask the parishioners if their kids are attending the St. Haralambos Greek School or Sunday school. This survey available on paper and on-line. P Giannopoulos also gave some feedback on the ACS System which we currently spend about \$75/mo which is used primarily to enter all the donations that come in, issue letters etc. We are currently not bound to this system, however the Archdioceses system depending what modules we used could cost us \$30/mo or anywhere from \$21-\$49/mo if we get the accounting module along with the stewardship module. P Giannopoulos asked the Stewardship committee into looking into any online tools.
- H. **Buildings & Grounds:**
- a.) **Garage:** P Giannopoulos stated that the garage has been cleaned up and we received the settlement check. We presented a big number into the insurance, but our settlement overall was probably \$41,000; we received \$17,000 to reconstruct the new garage of which \$4,000 they hold back until we decide to build. There's also about \$24,000 covering all the other items that were in there. Our overall claim was over \$80,000. Most of the items in the garage were very old, so the depreciation was almost 50%. We didn't have replacement value under the insurance, so that's why we didn't receive a higher amount. N Gianaris will collect information of different insurance quotes & coverages.
- b.) **Classrooms Ceilings:** R Kozlowski stated that when it snows/rains the water comes down and overwhelms it; everything is being eating away with it. This was a bad design of the roof or the drains are undersized. Koz has taken responsibility for gathering all the quotes. Most classrooms have windows that are open and it's very cold. The church also needs to be repaired at all four

corners. Church doors need to be refinished as well. Mr. Houpis brought up the point that we have been dealing with this issue for over six months. It's now winter and we are still in need to fix the classrooms, the church ceilings and doors. Also we are still in need of a maintenance man, someone who can fix all the little things. Mr. Houpis said he is willing to take this job on with a little direction. He will need to get together with Fr. Dean and discuss the needs of the church/school grounds.

For the Good of the Parish: R Kozlowski stated that he would like to have the minutes of the Parish Council posted on line so all parishioners could read. T Kanelos also stated that we are required to post all of the minutes and quarterly or annually financials. Mr. Houpis said that we need some education on the rolls of the Parish Council. T Kanelos stated that there are materials available, via DVD or a speaker etc. All members should have copies of the Parish Bylaws, Regulations and the Archdiocese regulations. We have scheduled our next meeting for February 15, 2017 at 7pm. That month will have a shorter agenda and we should be able to table some items to make more time for this presentation. We also need to review our Bylaws and do a little housekeeping. Maybe we can have a couple of members that can go through the Bylaws and notify us if anything needs to be changed. Any Bylaw changes should be passed via a General Assembly.

Priest Remarks: Fr. Dean stated that we need to get a time-clock for our custodians. There is an app that synchronizes with your smartphone which tracks your movements/location via GPS. That normally costs \$5/person a month.

Fr. Dean asked us if we had read the Christmas letter that was sent out. He stated that he has a concern of how we all have become numb to Christmas. That celebrating Christmas and celebrating the Birth of Christ are not the same thing. It supposed to be the same thing but it isn't. Christmas became this icon of its own; no place like home for Christmas and so on, spending Christmas holidays, the Spirit of Christmas, the shopping and all of that, but is almost a divorce of the real event that supposed to be celebrated.

Celebrating the Birth of Christ is not just commemorating that it happened; we all know that Christmas is the day that we honor that Jesus was born, but the Celebration of Christmas means we should be *joyful* of the Birth of Christ. To be *amazed* of the Birth of Christ, and I think we have lost that. In the first years after Christ was born it was very real, certainly was real to the shepherds, to the Magi and Christians who were in hiding, for sure it was real to them... and then something good and awful happened at the same time. Constantine, lead Christianity to exist, we had a great outburst, explosion of Christian thought and development and so on, the Golden Age, John Chrysostom, St Basil and so on, but at the same time it became trendy, it became establishment, it became part of the empire, and between then and now I feel we are just numb: That we don't celebrate Christmas.

The sense of Awe, Amazement, Fear, Joy that we're supposed to feel.... It's just another holiday that we get together, we celebrate with family, and we celebrate Christmas trees, Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the Reindeer. And we know that it's the ***Birth of Christ***, but it's just another historical fact like George Washington, and that has to be ***more*** than that. It has to be really sensing, like the Angels ***trembled*** when they understood that God became Man. The *Angels* were ***so amazed*** and ***afraid*** they said "What's going on here?" It doesn't make sense to us: *How can God become Man?*" This is Huge and we are not amazed by that. How can we not be amazed by that? How can we celebrate Christmas without thinking of going to church? If we do celebrate the Birth of Christ, Celebrate and Rejoice. Holy

Communion makes sense! It has meaning. Otherwise it's just another thing that we do. Seeing the image of God into each other becomes real. We have been seduced with this poor sweet little baby Jesus in the manger; that we forgot the He is GOD! Always sees the Humanity of it, and we don't have the sense of Awe that needs to go with it.

So we have Christmas on Sunday and I hope we have ushers. We will try to make it meaningful to people. Saturday there will be liturgy morning also, however, not at 6 am like we usually do. We will need ushers as well that morning, so I need your help and I need your *example*, I need you to spread the Awe and the Amazement for the Birth of Our Lord! That's what this is all about. Everything else we are talking about is important but somehow if it's not based in Awe of when God became Man, which explains there's a church on Earth and not in Heaven, and we are custodians of that church. We have Awe! Amazement! That God became Man. If we can be good examples, if we can be friendly and welcoming in the church show people around. We are in strict Fasting till Christmas day; After Christmas till Epiphany there's no fasting, except for January 4th/January 5th the eve of Epiphany and to Rejoice with family and friends for the right reasons. If you listen to the old Christmas carols they have lyrics which is the real meaning of Christmas. "Little Town of Bethlehem", "Joy to the World" that is the real Christmas Spirit that is really beautifully captured in the English Christmas carols, that some don't even listen to anymore. Kids don't know these Christmas carols. T Kanelos & K Apithis suggested that we should sing them in church Saturday and Sunday to bring that Christmas Spirit to all.

Fr. George mentioned that there's a family that he and Fr. Dean have been counseling that come to our parish and they are on the verge of being homeless. They are currently renting someone's basement apartment and they are basically sleeping on an air mattress. They recently asked if we knew of anyone who could spare, simple used furniture to furnish their apartment. Maybe a kitchen table with 2 chairs, bed or sofa. This would be a really nice Christmas gift to someone who really needs it.

If we could get an email passed to us in needs such as this to assist would be a great start to help anyone in need. We under utilize our email services. This could be something we can start communicating amongst ourselves and we can help our community in need.

Between Ted Karabatsos, Richard Kozlwoski and Tom Kanelos we were able to provide a bed, kitchen table and chairs, blankets all before Christmas.

Motion to adjourn made by 1st, Richard Kozlowski and 2nd by Eleni Kiriazopoulos. Motion was unanimous!

Meeting adjourned with prayer at 10:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Katerina Apithis,
Assistant Recording Secretary