

Pre All-American Council Report Fair Share Resolution

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HISTORY

At the 12th All-American Council held in Pittsburgh in July 1999, a resolution regarding the financing of the operating budget of the Orthodox Church in America was passed and subsequently approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops. The resolution basically dealt with four issues:

- 1) Establishing an interim system of financing for the triennium (1999-2002);
- 2) Establishing a standard financial reporting form for parishes to send to the Chancery;
- 3) Direction that all parishes and dioceses be incorporated into the support system for the operating budget, and;
- 4) A “fair share” system of support be developed and proposed at the 13th All-American Council.

In the spring of 2000, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius appointed Fr. John Dresko to assume the responsibility of implementing those portions of the resolution needing immediate attention and to develop the proposal for the 13th All-American Council.

THE INTERIM

The resolution passed in Pittsburgh mandated that the per capita rate for 2000 be set at \$60 (raised by the CPI each subsequent year). It also mandated that a “Minimum Financial Support” figure be established for each parish each year. This “Minimum Financial Support” clause directed that assessment figures be the *greater* of the 1999 reported parish membership or the reported membership of each subsequent year. This mandate established, for the first time, a baseline of support that would drop no lower than the amounts calculated in 1999. It also was an attempt to make parishes think in terms of a general “figure” or proportional amount of support rather than a “per capita” sum. “Minimum Financial Support” was never intended to be permanent and ends with the implementation of any fair share resolution that is passed at the 13th All-American Council.

STANDARD FINANCIAL REPORTING

The second measure of the Pittsburgh resolution established a “standard financial reporting form” for parishes. This form was meant to accomplish two things. First, it was an attempt to standardize parish budgeting to educate parishes in the art of Christian budgeting. Second, the reporting was to give the Office of the Treasurer the necessary data to calculate what portion of parish budgets would be needed to support the operating budget of the OCA should a proportional system be proposed at the 13th All-American Council. In January of 2001, a proposed Standard Parish Budget Reporting Form was sent to each parish of the Orthodox

Church in America. Of 641 sent, approximately 100 were returned, despite the mandate of the 12th All-American Council. The return was insufficient for serious data analysis to propose a proportional system of giving.

TOTAL PARTICIPATION

The third measure of the Pittsburgh resolution required that *all* parishes of the Orthodox Church in America be incorporated into a single financial support system by the year 2008. In the process of working on this resolution over the past triennium, the Holy Synod of Bishops has determined that any changes in the financial agreements made with the non-territorial dioceses is solely within the competence of the Holy Synod. Any work in the area of the integration of the non-territorial dioceses into full participation in the assessment system will occur within the competency of the Holy Synod of Bishops.

FAIR SHARE

During the past triennium, the Diocesan Assembly of each territorial diocese of the Orthodox Church in America has been visited at least once. There were discussions with diocesan treasurers, parish treasurers and individuals concerned with financial matters. It was discovered that there is a wide range of diocesan and parish practices regarding the funding of operating budgets. There are areas where a simple per capita system remains in place, areas with movement towards proportional support of operating budgets, areas with movement towards tithing, and areas with almost no system at all.

It became obvious that an approach to funding the operation of the Church should be two-dimensional. First, there is a need to reinvigorate the teaching of Christian stewardship principles at all levels of Church life. But this cannot be imposed from “on high.” Grass roots efforts must be the catalyst of this education process. Second, any “fair share” system must provide for the responsible funding of the current work of the Church (and, one might add, allow for its *growth*), and must be flexible enough to address local concerns and needs in the growth of Christian stewardship.

After three years of visitations, study, discussion, work and review by the Diocesan Assemblies, Metropolitan Council and Holy Synod of Bishops, the following will be presented to the floor of the 13th All-American Council in fulfillment of the mandate of the 12th All-American Council.

PROPOSAL

Upon adoption by the Metropolitan Council of the operating budget of the Orthodox Church in America, the Office of the Treasurer shall:

- 1) Apply the estimated income from the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards, planned gifts, endowment funds, miscellaneous contributions, and those dioceses not fully participating in the assessment system (i.e., all income other than the fair share support) to the adopted expenditure side of the budget.

2) Take the remainder of the income budgeted and divide it by the number of actual reported adult membership (as of September 1st of each year) from all the territorial diocesan and stavropighial parishes of the OCA to determine a per capita basis.

3) The Office of the Treasurer shall then forward to each territorial diocese of the Orthodox Church in America, with the exception of the Diocese of Alaska and the Diocese of Canada, their fair share amount of expected budget support. The fair share shall be equal to that portion of total OCA membership the diocesan reported membership represents. *For example, if a specific diocese comprises 17% of reported OCA adult membership, the "fair share" for that diocese would be 17% of the budgeted income excluding other applied income sources described in paragraph 1. Likewise, if a diocese were 8% of membership, or 12% of membership, etc.*

4) Each diocesan council and diocesan bishop shall then decide on which method of collection used in their individual dioceses would meet local needs and education levels.

5) The financial support as apportioned by the diocese is to be established as a line item in the annual operating budget of the parish, and each parish shall remit one-twelfth of their fair share support to the diocesan office by the 15th of every month.

6) The diocese has the responsibility of forwarding, from the diocesan treasury, one-twelfth of the total diocesan fair share to the central administration by the last day of the month. The diocese remains responsible for collecting the current and delinquent fair share support from the individual parishes within its jurisdiction.

7) The Metropolitan Council is authorized to make such additional regulations regarding the computation and reporting of the fair share support, on the recommendation of the Central Church Administration, as may be necessary for the efficient collection of the funds due, and for the solvency and financial stability of the Orthodox Church in America.

8) The Metropolitan Council shall report annually to each parish on the operating budget of the Orthodox Church in America, highlighting the expenditures and income of the Church. This may be done through *The Orthodox Church* newspaper.

9) All efforts are to be made to increase the voluntary financial support of the Orthodox Church in America, to educate the local faithful and parishes in matters of stewardship and biblical giving.

CONCLUSION

The proposal on Fair Share Giving should be seen as an interim, although very important, step in the growth of Christian stewardship in the Orthodox Church in America. The growth of the Church at all levels can only happen with adequate funding. Adequate funding can only be possible at all levels of the Church through continued prayer and effort for the development of tithing and proportional giving.