



# Holy Myrrhbearers

## ORTHODOX MISSION

### **Annual Parish Assembly Sunday 26 January 2025**

#### **1. Opening prayer**

The meeting was opened with prayer.

#### **2. Adoption of agenda**

Fr Geoffrey Ready presented the meeting agenda.

Motion to accept the agenda: Misha Drobac

Seconded by: Joseph Clarke

The agenda was passed.

#### **3. Approval of minutes**

The minutes from the previous Parish Assembly on 28 January 2024 were presented, with no calls for amendments or changes.

Motion to accept the minutes: Irene Cassar

Seconded by: Pegor Danageuzian

The minutes were accepted.

#### **4. Rector's report (review of 2024 and looking ahead to 2025)**

Fr Geoffrey gave a report on the growth and development of the mission in 2024 and plans for 2025. He thanked the outgoing parish council and all members for their commitment and service, including across the six ministry areas of worship, hospitality, teaching, service, stewardship, and administration. The council has been particularly keen to draw more people into different activities, including with the newly-introduced quarterly appeals for volunteers and support.

In addition to seeing ongoing growth with new members joining, 2024 proved to be an important year for communal discernment concerning the

core identity and vision of our parish. We asked ourselves if we were a normal parish temporarily incubating at Trinity College until we could relocate and develop fully elsewhere, or if our identity and vocation were actually to remain a campus-based mission. The product of both months of internal reflection and external circumstances coalesced to affirm that we are a community permanently embedded within Trinity College and the University of Toronto, with a clear focus on chaplaincy, campus-based ministry, integration with Orthodox Christian Studies within the college, and wider academic projects in Orthodox theology and education.

This past year we invested significant resources both in these important academic endeavours and in a range of external ministry projects, including the Diocese of Sitka and Alaska's fund for Indigenous clergy and St Hermione's Lay Pastoral Ministers. The archdiocesan council specifically noted the generosity of our mission in addressing the needs of the Alaskan church, and St Hermione's continues to be appreciated especially for its work in supporting Ukrainian refugees including the continuing supply of refurbished laptop computers for elementary and secondary school students.

Looking ahead to the current year, Fr Geoffrey emphasised the core teaching ministry of a mission embedded within Orthodox Christian Studies at Trinity and the wider college and university. In this work, three areas of Orthodox theology come to the fore, all based around narrative theological themes central to the early church and patristic tradition: (1) inviting people into the living tradition of the church beyond the reduced modern versions of Orthodox Christianity often found today, especially online, (2) engaging theologically with Christian origins and identity within the story of God and Israel, and living that out in renewed relationship with Judaism today, and (3) encouraging the transformation of life made possible through serious commitment to the spiritual life and mystical theological tradition of the church. Through courses at Trinity College, the "Enacting the Kingdom" podcast (now with more than 200 episodes), publications, and conference presentations, Fr Geoffrey is highlighting these themes to the wider Orthodox Church, including its future clergy and lay leaders, and to the world beyond. These teaching endeavours give Holy Myrrhbearers an important global profile and influence within the wider Orthodox Church, and members of Holy Myrrhbearers can play an important part in helping to promote and share this work. A new website will be launched soon that will highlight these priorities and work.

## **5. Financial Report for 2024**

Treasurer Alexandra Nahshon presented the financial statements for 2024 (attached). Some of the key points were:

- Overall excellent year; we had a shortfall in December but we had a big influx of donations and got out of the deficit
- External giving in 2024 amounted to \$28k (mostly for the Alaskan Indigenous clergy fund and St Hermione's); we will not be planning on that again this fiscal year
- due to market volatility we are not keeping money in the market anymore
- after not being charged rent, we voluntarily paid the amount for rent to Trinity College in 2024 and will do so going forward as part of our commitment to being embedded with the college
- some travel expenses are going to be used for 2025
- almost breaking even, small surplus
- donations were up about 10% but so were expenses
- a good change over the last year: we've usually been dependent on a small number of donors giving large amounts, we have a more expansive "pool" of donors
- what you might call "mid-tier" donors

## **6. Budget for 2025**

Treasurer Alexandra Nahshon presented the budget for 2025 (attached). Some of the key points were:

- Largely based off this past year's expenses but rounded up
- Alternate between years of big growth and years of a baseline of about 4% in terms of expense increases
- the archdiocesan tithe won't be increased this year; it's really supposed to be 10% of what we take in, although Fr. has often based it on what we spend

Motion to adopt the financial reports and budget: Ioanna Karounos

Seconded by: Misha Drobac

The financial reports and budget were adopted.

## **7. Election of parish council**

Fr Geoffrey presented the following slate of officers for election.

The core administrative members of parish council (as required by the parish by-laws):

- Warden: Joseph Clarke
- Second Warden: Milena Djokic
- Treasurer: Alexandra Nahshon
- Secretary: Irene Cassar

Additional members of parish council (as allowed by the parish by-laws):

- Service Ministry: Louise Neville and Sinan İmamoğlu
- Worship Ministry: Pegor Danageuzian
- Teaching and Small Groups Ministry: Scott Harris
- Campus Ministry: John Salim
- Theology Ministry: Arjun Arulampalam
- Communications: Agnieszka Kowalska

Motion to elect the parish council: Peter Drobac  
Seconded by: Sharon Hellman  
Passed and parish council elected.

## **8. Election of 2025 auditing committee**

Father Geoffrey nominated Olga Perri and Anthony Foresheew for the committee to scrutinise the financial systems and annual preparation of financial reports.

Motion to elect the auditing committee: Irene Cassar  
Seconded by: Pegor Danageuzian  
Passed and auditing committee elected.

## **9. Plan to Protect**

Father Geoffrey reported on the archdiocese-wide implementation of Plan to Protect and how that affects the mission's use of the guidelines and procedures. In the meantime, he asked for a motion to renew the mission's commitment to maintain Plan to Protect as required by our liability insurers.

Motion to renew Plan to Protect: Joseph Clarke  
Seconded by: Pegor Danageuzian  
Passed.

## **10. Other business**

Father Geoffrey suggested that we invite Archbishop Irénée to visit for our patronal feast on 3 and 4 May. It was agreed that the invitation should be sent by the warden on behalf of parish council.

Among his speaking engagements for the coming year Father Geoffrey noted that he will be the speaker at New Skete Monastery's annual pilgrimage day on Saturday 9 August. As that weekend falls between two major feasts (Transfiguration and Dormition), he recommended that no services be planned at Holy Myrrhbearers that weekend, allowing others to go on the New Skete pilgrimage as well.

Six of seven other planned trips for conferences and speaking engagements would be only during the week—the exception being the American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Literature conference in Boston at the end of November. Additionally, Father Geoffrey will be taking one weekend for holiday (only his fourth since the foundation of the mission in 2016) on 25/26 October. Another priest will be brought in for those two weekends.

## **11. Closing prayer**

The meeting was closed with prayer.

Fr Geoffrey asked for motion to dismiss.

Motion: Olga Perri

Seconded by: Pegor Danageuzian

Motion passed and meeting adjourned.