



St. Luke Serbian Orthodox Church

10660 River Road, Potomac, MD 20854

Tel: 301.299.2704 Fax: 301.576.5664

www.svluka.org

Annual Assembly Minutes January 14, 2018

The annual meeting, originally scheduled for December 10 but postponed due to a medical emergency, was called to order with a prayer at 12:35 pm in our church hall. Approximately 85 people were in attendance.

Opening Remarks. Trusteeship President Mark Rasevic opened the meeting, welcoming those in attendance. Copies of the agenda and all reports (see attached) were made available on-line and also distributed at the meeting.

Summary of Previous Year's Minutes. The Trusteeship Secretary presented a summary of the minutes from last year's annual meeting.

Priest's Report. This year the Priest's Report contained two components—a report from Father Aleksa covering the time period January-November that he was here with us, and a welcome message from Father Vasilije who arrived in December. Father Aleksa's report provided a brief history of our parish and thanked parishioners for the love and support shown to him and his family over their years with us. Father Vasilije spoke about his future vision for our parish, with focus on three major areas: 1) Liturgical life as the foundation of parish life; 2) Community building and fellowship; and 3) Educational and cultural aspects of parish life. Father also discussed the importance of improving communications with our parishioners and community, and offered some potential ideas for new programs and fundraising initiatives.

President's Report. Mark Rasevic summarized highlights from the President's Report. He began by thanking Father Aleksa on behalf of the parish and the trusteeship, and welcoming Father Vasilije and his family and, on behalf of the parish, presenting them with a gift of an icon. Mark described key accomplishments over the year, including commemoration of major Orthodox feast days, work of our parish auxiliary groups, our most successful Serbian Food & Cultural Festival yet, improvement of parish communications, and continued use of approved policies and procedures. Mark also discussed the continuing financial struggles our parish faces and why we must all work together over the coming year to do everything possible to significantly improve our financial health or face the stark reality of having to sell the property. He reviewed key dates and milestones on this year's calendar, and closed by reviewing the 2018 Stewardship Pledge Form and explaining the need for each parishioner to complete and submit one.



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The floor was opened and Mark and Father Vasilije fielded questions and comments, some of which were contentious. Issues raised included: 1) The need to develop a plan for expanding our base and reaching those who rarely or never come to church and contribute to parish life; 2) The need to continue talking and working together so that in the future we can have one, unified St. Sava celebration; 3) The need to address and "fix" our financial crisis within the next 6 months so that we better position ourselves to obtain loan re-financing; 4) How much longer the parish will continue under trusteeship; and 5) How the parish would go about transitioning back to self-governance under an elected board.

The floor was then closed so that we could proceed ahead to the remaining items on the agenda and complete the assembly. Father Vasilije stated that all of these issues are complex and will require time to address, but that we first must get the church back on solid footing financially otherwise we risk losing everything.

Treasurer's Report. Peter Bizic presented the Treasurer's Report, including reviewing the fiscal year-to-date balance sheet, income and expense summary, and anticipated 2018 income versus proposed expenditures. As reflected in the financial data, we currently have less than \$7,000 in our checking/savings accounts and less than \$1,000 in our Fidelity investment account. Peter summarized our current situation by stating that cash flow is very tight, we are struggling month-to-month to pay our bills, and we haven't been able to build up any reserve savings. Our monthly bills average about \$27K, and we are basically just breaking even right now. Peter pointed out that about 60% of our monthly obligations are represented by payments for the mortgage and for our priest's salary and benefits. Those are our top two priorities each month. Our largest utility cost each month is the electric bill, and we are currently exploring options to find a suitable but less expensive plan for telephone/television/internet for our priest and his family, and to reduce mailing envelope costs. Though we may be able to generate some savings in those areas, our budget is pretty lean and doesn't include "extras" for things that aren't really needed. The bottom line is this: we need more families to donate on a recurring basis each month to enable the parish to pay its bills, stabilize our financial outlook, and strengthen the financial health of our parish by the time we need to begin working on loan refinancing paperwork with the bank.

Other Reports. Next, reports were presented or submitted by the leads of the following parish auxiliary organizations—Sunday School (Desanka Elwell), Choir (Colleen Bizic), Circle of Serbian Sisters (Natalie Visnick), Serbian School (Marija Eremic), and Audit Board (Miodrag Lazarevich).



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New Business. Several parishioners commented on the following: 1) The regular emails that Father Vasilije has been sending out since his arrival are appreciated and helpful; 2) That we find the right balance on language since our parish community is mixed and includes adults and children who speak primarily English, primarily Serbian, or both languages; 3) The re-design of our parish website must include better identification of who we are (a Serbian Orthodox parish of the Diocese of Eastern America under the omophorion of His Grace Bishop Irinej) and that we welcome everyone to join us; and 4) The limited number of paved parking spaces we currently have is insufficient.

We closed the annual meeting with a prayer at 4:00 pm.