

Orthodox NewsSM

Monday Jan 3, 2000

Orthodox Christian News Service, Inc.

Volume 2 Number 1

[U.S. News](#) [World News](#) [Features](#) [Editorials](#) [Letters](#) [Announcements](#) [Links](#) [Hierarchs](#) [Spirituality](#) [Archive](#) [Contact Us](#) [Home](#)

Unaudited OCA contributions top \$2 million

By Stephen P. Angelides
Orthodox News

January 3, 2000 (OCNS) -- The Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) Foundation and the Andreas Foundation together contributed over \$2 million to the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), according to returns filed with the Internal Revenue Service and obtained by Orthodox News.

The returns show that the ADM Foundation contributed \$250,000 in fiscal 1995; \$500,000 in fiscal 1996; and \$250,000 in fiscal 1997. The Andreas Foundation contributed \$25,000 in fiscal 1992; \$500,000 in fiscal 1996; and \$500,000 in fiscal 1997.

Knowledgeable sources within the OCA have linked those contributions to the unaudited Metropolitans' Discretionary Account. That account "is not on the Church accounting records," according to a letter written by the OCA's outside auditor, Robert A. Taylor of Lambrides, Lamos, Moulthorp & Co.

The ADM Foundation made its payments to the "Russian Orthodox Church in America," and the Andreas Foundation made its payments to the "Russian Orthodox Church of North America," according to the returns. The OCA gained its independence from the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate in Moscow in 1970 and thereafter changed its name to the Orthodox Church in America, but many people still refer to it colloquially as the "Russian" Orthodox Church.

The "off the books" account came to Taylor's attention during his audit of the OCA's books for 1998. He has been unable to complete that audit because that account has yet to be audited.

The entire annual "on the books" budget of the OCA is currently \$2.63 million, according to the OCA's official newspaper, *The Orthodox Church*. At their height in fiscal 1996 the contributions linked to the "off the books" account amounted to \$1 million, almost half again as much as the OCA's entire "on the books" budget at the time.

According to a statement issued by the OCA's Metropolitan Council on November 18, 1999, "the Primate's discretionary fund" is "composed exclusively of donations designated for discretionary use by the Primate, and not related in any way to the Church's operating budget." The statement asserts that "the discretionary fund has been used and is intended to be used to assist worthy charitable, medical, and missionary causes without being bound by the limited financial resources of the Church's operating budget."

According to that statement, the OCA's Acting Treasurer, Archbishop Herman, told the

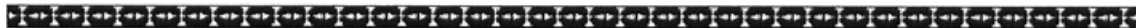
Metropolitan Council that the Church's legal counsel, Jonathan Russin, of Russin & Vecchi, L.L.P., had "engaged an independent CPA firm" to conduct a "summary review" of the discretionary account.

The OCA's previous treasurer, Protodeacon Eric Wheeler, was removed on September 21 or 22, 1999, after the then-chairman of the OCA's internal audit committee, John Kozey, III, wrote to the OCA's Primate, Metropolitan Theodosius, requesting information regarding various accounts, including the discretionary account. Wheeler has refused to comment about the situation, stating that he is "under an ecclesiastical gag order."

Kozey was removed as chairman of the audit committee on October 18, 1999, after he wrote several letters to the members of the Metropolitan Council about the discretionary account. Kozey was replaced as chairman by Archpriest Paul Suda. Kozey said it appeared to him that the central Church was "trying to control or tighten the circle of control to people whom they can control -- people whose lives or livelihoods are tied to the Church."

Before the Metropolitan Council meeting last November, only the fiscal 1997 contributions of \$750,000, which have stalled the OCA's 1998 audit, had been publicly reported. These new revelations could affect the OCA's books for several previous years.

When asked about the total of over \$2 million in contributions to the OCA from the ADM Foundation and the Andreas Foundation, Fr. Robert Kondratick, the OCA's Chancellor, declined to comment.



The views expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of Orthodox Christian News Service, Inc.