

05/06

New FAQs, 25 May 2006

Are the dismissorial letters provided to the clergy of the Diocese of Sourozh by Bishop Basil valid?

Both Archbishop Gabriel of Comana and Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia are of the opinion that they are valid, and of course they have been accepted as such by Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira when presented to him.

Kallistos asked that his name be removed, 2 days later it was!

What property belongs to the London cathedral parish?

Property associated with the cathedral parish is owned by a charitable trust. It includes the cathedral itself, a Grade II* listed building, and three houses and a flat used to house clergy. These are worth about £1.5 - £2 million all together. There is no accurate way to assess the value of the cathedral itself. There is a covenant which means that it can only be used as a church.

When was the property purchased?

The first house, 34 Upper Addison Gardens, was bought in around 1945, when the parish was still under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This house was sold in 1988 and part of the proceeds used to purchase houses for the clergy. The cathedral was purchased from the Anglican Church in 1979, largely through the efforts of the English-speaking members of the congregation, helped by their non-Orthodox friends. The hall and offices of the cathedral were built in 1993-4, using money remaining from the sale of 34 Upper Addison Gardens.

Why are there arguments over the cathedral?

For both groups, the cathedral is a symbol. For those who have been part of the Diocese of Sourozh from the early days, it has a strong association with the growth of the Diocese and its development into a body increasingly at home in Britain. For the other group it is a symbol of the Russian Church. For both groups, these considerations are almost certainly more important than any financial value.

Why is Bishop Basil described as 'liberal'?

Bishop Basil does not insist that women wear headscarves in church, and he permits them to wear trousers. He does not insist on a one-to-one correlation between confession and the receiving of communion, nor does he forbid parishioners to include the names of non-Orthodox on the prayer slips they send into the sanctuary at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy. He is also open to ecumenical contact with other Christians (for the past four years he has been the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate on the International Commission of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue).

What has been 'liberal' about the Diocese of Sourozh under Metropolitan Anthony and Bishop Basil?

The word 'liberal' in this context carries a different meaning from when it is applied in Western Churches. Metropolitan Anthony consciously sought to implement in Britain the provisions of the Moscow Council of 1917-18, which for the first time integrated the laity into the administration of the Russian Church. The same programme was carried out in the Archdiocese of Parishes of Russian Tradition ('rue Daru') on the continent. The Diocese of Sourozh, however, was unique in attempting to carry out such a programme while remaining with the Moscow Patriarchate. Metropolitan Anthony's emphasis throughout was on the whole people of God, while at the same time he was a resolute opponent of what he called 'churchianity'.

Is Bishop Basil against the 'new' Russians?

From the beginning, Bishop Basil welcomed the new arrivals and saw in them a source of renewed life and strength for the Diocese. He still believes this to be the case, not least because of his experience with many new arrivals who have made an enormous contribution to the Diocese. Difficulties arose for both Metropolitan Anthony and Bishop Basil when a small minority of the new arrivals began to seek to change the direction of the Diocese and to conform it to what they thought of as 'truly' Russian. As he explained in his open letter of 16 May 2006, this minority was quietly supported in Britain by Archbishop Anatoly of Kerch, and in Moscow by the Department of External Church Relations. This support effectively undermined his ability to administer the Diocese.

What are Bishop Basil and his supporters seeking?

They are seeking to free themselves from interference by Moscow by placing themselves under the Ecumenical Patriarchate in a position similar to the one enjoyed by the Archdiocese of Parishes of Russian Tradition based in Paris. The Archdiocese has existed for more than seventy-five years, and gave birth to the famous 'Paris school' of Russian theology which has had decisive influence on the development of Orthodox theology as a whole.

Why did Bishop Basil suspend six members of the London Parish Council?

Because they were no longer fulfilling their role as council members. A minority of the Parish Council, no more than six, refused to accept the discipline of council membership. When they disagreed with the decisions of the council they waged a public campaign against the leadership of the parish. In Britain, when a cabinet minister cannot accept a Cabinet ruling, he or she resigns before disagreeing in public. The same is true in Russia. As trustees of the parish, parish council members are required to work together with the other trustees for the good of the parish.

Is this an argument between English-speakers and Russian-speakers?

Not at all! There are people of both nationalities in both groups. The disagreements are over what kind of communities we want our parishes to be. Many members of the cathedral parish are quite happy to accept the Russian Church as it has developed over the years in Britain. They love the mixture of languages in services, and just want to come to church to pray. What Metropolitan Anthony did over the years has many supporters among the Russian community in Britain and in Russia itself.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

New FAQs, 22 May 2006

Why did Bishop Basil not tell His Holiness Patriarch Alexis about his approach to the Ecumenical Patriarchate?

Bishop Basil assumed in his letter of 24 April 2006 that His Holiness Patriarch Alexis would understand that an informal approach had already been made to the Ecumenical Patriarchate through Archbishop Gabriel of Comana. Any other course of action would have been inconceivable. The formal approach to the Ecumenical Patriarch was made on 2 May, one week later. The letter to His Holiness Patriarch Alexis was received and signed for in the Moscow Patriarchate at 17.48 (local time) on Friday 28 April.

Why is no reason given for the retirement of Bishop Basil?

This certainly requires clarification.

*disobedience to his Patriarch!
& breaking his oath as a bishop.*

Is Bishop Basil 'fragmenting' the Russian Church?

The Russian Church is already fragmented and the suggested move only readjusts the boundaries somewhat between its parts. The Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe (EP) has existed since 1931, and is closest in spirit and experience to the Diocese of Sourozh as it has developed under Metropolitan Anthony since 1962.

in UK 2 Russian jurisdictions ok. - how 3!

Why did Bishop Basil apparently change his position so suddenly?

From the time of his appointment by the Holy Synod as Administrator of the Diocese of Sourozh, Bishop Basil has done his best to work within the Moscow Patriarchate, visiting Russia on many occasions, acquiring fluency in the Russian language, and deepening his contacts in the Russian Church. Sadly, this did not affect in any way the campaign waged against him (with episcopal support in London and Moscow) in the London cathedral. Until the point at which he actually made his request for release he was pursuing any solution which might bring peace in London. His request was made when it became clear that there was no longer any hope of holding things together.

*11th
commitment
- Basil must not be criticised*

How does Bishop Basil answer the charge of phyletism?

Following Metropolitan Anthony, he wishes the diocese to be open to all Orthodox Christians. He believes the current policy and activity of the Moscow Patriarchate to be in contradiction with this.

Is Bishop Basil abandoning the Russians?

Not at all. He and his clergy and laity will continue to serve the new arrivals to the best of their ability, as he said in his letter of 24 April to Patriarch Alexis.

Implications of the Patriarch's decree for Bishop Basil

What are the implications of the fact that Bishop Basil has been released from his duties as Administrator and sent into retirement?

He is still a bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate). His removal as Administrator is a sign of displeasure. Being sent into retirement in itself involves no disgrace, but means he is no longer an active bishop. He can still celebrate the Liturgy and other sacraments.

→ 2 months after this not allowed.

The appeal to the Ecumenical Patriarchate

If Bishop Basil joins the Ecumenical Patriarchate and we follow him, will we be 'going under the Greeks'?

A Russian diocese has existed within the Ecumenical Patriarchate since 1931 and has always enjoyed autonomy. This was forced on the Russian exiles after the communist revolution, when the Church in Russia was effectively controlled by the State for its own purposes. [Click here](#) for a description of this diocese, 'The Archdiocese of Russian Parishes in Western Europe' (Русская версия). Today it brings together some sixty parishes throughout Western Europe, many of which, though of Russian origin, now worship in their own local language.

How can he enter the Ecumenical Patriarchate if he has not been released by Moscow?

This something the two Patriarchates will have to settle between themselves. → not his problem!

Might there be a schism?

Only if Moscow insists on it.

If we are to follow our Bishop under Constantinople, will it mean that all traces of Church Slavonic will be eliminated from the services and only English will be used?

Certainly not. As has always been the case in the Diocese of Sourozh, individual parishes and communities will be free to adapt the balance of languages to the pastoral need locally. Similarly parishes will, as in the past, be free to follow either the 'old' or the 'new' calendar.

Calendar

Implications re clergy, parishes, property

What happens to the money I give to the Diocese / Cathedral Parish by standing order?

Any money given to the Diocese of Sourozh has to be paid into the Diocesan bank account. As the Diocese is a registered charity, the legal authority to control the bank account is vested in the Diocesan Assembly, which appoints the Diocesan Treasurer, sets the annual budget, and approves the accounts. The members of the Diocesan Assembly are charity trustees and are bound by onerous legal obligations imposed on them by the Charities Act 1993. They are not at liberty simply to hand over assets to any third party. The same principles apply to the assets and bank accounts of the Cathedral Parish, as they apply equally to the assets of all the other parishes

What happens to the clergy?

They remain within the Diocese under new leadership, but all have been provided with dismissorial letters releasing them from the Diocese and allowing them to ask to be received elsewhere, when the situation becomes clearer.

What will happen with our university chaplains?

Their appointment requires the approval of the bishop, and their future will be determined by Archbishop Innokentii.

What happens to the cathedral and the houses of the London clergy?

The Deed of Trust of the London parish was drawn up in 1944 with the possibility of a situation like this in mind. It is a complex document and the resolution of the conflict between the Parish Council and the Patriarchate would have to be settled by negotiation or through the courts.

What about other parishes and their property?

This will be determined by the relevant Deeds of Trust and the wishes of the parishioners.

Have the locks on the London Cathedral been changed?

Not as far as we know, but rumours abound.

Implications for Diocesan activities and publishing

What will happen about the Diocesan Conference?

This is now the responsibility of Archbishop Innokentii.

What will happen to SOUROZH, the Diocesan journal?

This is now the responsibility of Archbishop Innokentii.

What will happen to St Stephen's Press?
All activity is suspended until the situation becomes clearer.

Will the website continue to function?
The website sourozh.org was removed from Bishop Basil's control, without any notification, on 13 May 2006..

Will the summer camps still take place?

This is now the responsibility of Archbishop Innokentii.

What about the charities supported by the Diocese - The Saint Gregory's Foundation and the Russian Orthodox Drug Rehabilitation Project?

These are independent entities and will continue to operate as in the past.