

THE STATUTES OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUROZH

Contents:

- Article I - The Diocese
 - Article II - The Diocesan Bishop
 - Article III - The Presbytery
 - Article IV - The Diocesan Assembly
 - Article V - The Diocesan Council
 - Article VI - Local Eucharistic Communities
 - Article VII - Monastic Communities
 - Article VIII - The Diocesan Electoral Roll
 - Article IX - Church Courts and Canonical Procedure
 - Article X - Bye-Laws and Amendments
-

ARTICLE I (Top)

The Diocese

Section 1

Definition

The Diocese of Sourozh (hereinafter called 'the Diocese') is a diocese of the Patriarchate of Moscow whose territorial limits are determined by the boundaries of Great Britain and Ireland. (Top)

Section 2

Character

The doctrine, discipline and worship of the Diocese are those of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, rooted in the Holy Tradition and taught by the Holy Scriptures, the Ecumenical and Provincial Councils and the Holy Fathers.

Section 3

Language

The two working languages of the Diocese are English and Russian. The language or languages used in parishes, local congregations and monastic communities, and in the Diocesan Council and Assembly, shall be determined by these bodies themselves.

Section 4

Membership

The members of the Diocese are those Orthodox Christians who live in Great Britain and Ireland under the authority of its Bishop, receiving communion from his clergy and abiding by the provisions of these statutes.

Section 5

The Holy Synod

All references in these Statutes to 'the Holy Synod' indicate the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

ARTICLE II (Top)

The Diocesan Bishop

Section 1

Definition

The Diocesan Bishop (hereinafter called 'the Bishop'), endowed with the full authority given to him by Tradition as a successor of the Apostles, is the head of the local Church, whose life he guides, and represents the Diocese in the episcopate of the Orthodox Church.

Section 2

Functions

- a. As president of the eucharistic community, surrounded by his clergy and his people, the Bishop shall:
 - i. offer the eucharistic sacrifice 'on behalf of all and for all';
 - ii. intercede for the Diocese and pray for its members 'that they may be one';
 - iii. supervise the worship of the Diocese;
 - iv. distribute the Holy Chrism to the priests and parishes of the Diocese;
 - v. either personally or through the presbyterate receive new members into communion with the Church;
 - vi. serve as a link between the Diocese and the rest of the Orthodox Church, representing it in any synod or council;
 - vii. lay down guidelines for the relationship of the Diocese to other Christian bodies.
- b. As teacher the Bishop shall:
 - i. proclaim the Gospel and seek to spread the Christian faith within the boundaries of the Diocese;
 - ii. expound the fullness of the Christian faith in accordance with the Tradition of the Orthodox Church and ensure that this fullness is faithfully preserved in the teaching of all who are under his authority;
 - iii. be responsible for the Christian education of the clergy and laity of the Diocese.

- c. As pastor the Bishop shall:
- i. exercise either personally or through the presbyterate the power given by Christ to the Apostles to bind and to loose;
 - ii. prepare and ordain to the priesthood candidates who have, whenever possible, been proposed by the local eucharistic community (hereinafter called 'the Community') concerned, after consultation with the Community and with the Presbytery.
 - iii. ordain members of the diaconate, sub-deacons, readers and preachers after consultation with the Community concerned;
 - iv. appoint and transfer clergy within the limits of the Diocese after consultation with the Presbytery and with the Community or the Communities concerned;
 - v. exercise pastoral discipline over clergy and laity in all cases not calling for the special procedures established for the Diocesan Court (hereinafter called 'the Court');
 - vi. regularly visit the Communities in the Diocese;
 - vii. establish Communities within the Diocese and determine the scope of their activities, after consultation with the Presbytery;
 - viii. supervise monastic life within the Diocese, establishing monastic communities and confirming in office or, where appropriate, appointing their superiors;
 - ix. consecrate churches, permanent altars and antimensia;
 - x. act as custodian, in the name of the Diocese, of any object that has been consecrated for use in the worship of the Church and retain the right to determine its disposition when it is no longer in use;
 - xi. serve as President of the Diocesan Assembly (hereinafter called 'the Assembly') and the Diocesan Council (hereinafter called 'the Council');
 - xii. serve as Chairman of the Presbytery, the Bishop's Advisory Council, and of the Court.

Section 3

Retirement

If under the (1988) Statutes of the Patriarchate of Moscow the Bishop must offer his retirement to the Holy Synod at a certain age the Bishop should advise the Assembly before so doing, and the Assembly shall thereupon act as per Article IV Section 3c.

Section 4

Vacancy

- a. In accordance with the Tradition of the Church the Bishop assumes his office for life and a vacancy will therefore normally occur only at his death.
- b. A vacancy may occur, however, if the Bishop:
 - i. resigns, in which case the resignation must first be accepted by the Assembly and then the Holy Synod in order to be valid;

- ii. retires, having offered his retirement in accordance with the (1988) Statutes of the Patriarchate of Moscow;
 - iii. is retired by the Holy Synod without having offered his retirement, on the grounds of medically certified incapacity, which must have been accepted by the Assembly under the Presidency of the most senior substitute of the Bishop for this task as set down in Article IV Section 3b;
 - iv. is transferred by the Holy Synod, who shall do so only after prior consultation with the Assembly;
 - v. is deposed by an ecclesiastical court in accordance with the accepted canonical norms for judicial procedure;
 - vi. resides, willingly or unwillingly, outside the Diocese for a period of more than one year, in which case the Assembly may petition the Holy Synod to declare the office vacant.
- c. Within seven days after the Bishop has died, or resigned or has been medically certified to be incapable of holding office, or has been transferred or deposed, the Diocesan Council shall meet to declare the episcopal office vacant and to initiate the process of selection of a successor by calling for nominations to be submitted within twenty-eight days from the date of its meeting.
- d. The President pro tempore of the Assembly and the Council during the nomination and electoral process shall be the Chairman of the Council and the Assembly. The President's task shall be to provide a link to the Holy Synod and to ensure that the procedures laid down in the Statutes of the Diocese are properly followed. The Chairman pro tempore shall be appointed by the President subject to the approval of the Council. Other functions necessary for the administration of the Diocese shall be carried out by the Vicar General.

Section 5

Nominations

- a. Nominations must be signed by fifteen individuals on the Diocesan Electoral Roll, of whom at least three must be presbyters and 6 lay members of the Assembly and sent directly to the Secretary. No individual may nominate more than one candidate.
- b. All nominations received shall be considered by the Diocesan Council to ensure that they conform to the canonical norms for the episcopate. If the Council decides that further nominations are required, it may extend the period for nomination by not more than twenty-eight days.
- c. The Council shall call an Extraordinary Meeting of the Diocesan Assembly not more than forty-two days after the closure of nominations. The sole purpose of this meeting shall be to elect a candidate whose name will be submitted to the Holy Synod for approval as the next Diocesan Bishop.
- d. The Council shall ensure that the names of the candidates and their qualifications are known in advance to all members of the Assembly any of whom may request that any candidate respond to questions and participate in deliberations before the Assembly proceeds to the vote.

Section 6

Election

- a. Voting shall take place by secret ballot using the same electoral roll under the same procedure as elections for the Assembly, except that no voting by proxy is allowed.
- b. The Diocesan Secretary shall prepare a detailed report on the process and result of the election which shall be submitted to the Holy Synod by the President pro tempore of the Assembly and the Council.

Section 7

Approval or Disapproval by the Holy Synod

The Holy Synod may approve the candidate elected by the Diocese, or if it is unwilling to do so, shall issue notice of disapproval stating the reasons on which this is based. The President pro tempore of the Assembly and Council shall communicate these to the Council, which shall call an Extraordinary Meeting of the Assembly on a Saturday or Sunday within twenty-eight days of receipt of this notice of disapproval in order to recommence the procedure described in Sections 4c and following of this article.

Section 8

Consecration

- a. If the elected candidate is not a monk at the time of his approval by the Holy Synod, he shall before his consecration be tonsured at least as a rasophore.
- b. If he is not yet in episcopal orders he shall normally be consecrated within the Diocese.

Section 9

Financial Support

The Diocese shall be responsible for housing the Bishop and for his financial support.

Section 10

Absence from the Diocese

- a. The Bishop shall not willingly reside outside the Diocese.
- b. If the Bishop leaves the Diocese for more than two weeks his non-sacramental duties shall devolve upon the Assistant Bishop nominated by him, or, in the absence of an Assistant Bishop, on the Vicar-General.

Section 11

Bishop's Advisory Council

- a. The Bishop may appoint a Bishop's Advisory Council to assist him in his pastoral, missionary and educational work, including particularly pastoral work in more remote and smaller communities.
- b. The Bishop's Advisory Council, which shall have an advisory role and will meet at least twice a year, shall be composed of:
 - i. any Assistant Bishops or presbyters chosen under Section 13 below;

- ii. the Vicar-General;
- iii. two presbyters chosen by the Bishop;
- iv. two laypeople or members of the diaconate chosen by the Bishop from among members of the Assembly.

The persons chosen by the Bishop under iii and iv shall serve for one year and cannot serve again until two further years have elapsed.

The Bishop may invite other individuals to attend particular meetings of the Bishop's Advisory Council. He shall appoint a minuting secretary, and minutes will be sent to all participants, and to the Chairman and Secretary of the Assembly.

Section 12

Assistants to the Diocesan Bishop

a. If the Bishop decides that he needs further assistance in his pastoral role he may propose to the Assembly that it provide a salary for:

- i. no more than two Assistant Bishops;
- ii. one or more presbyters;

whom he shall simultaneously nominate.

b. The Assembly must agree to the nomination of an Assistant Bishop or presbyter for this role, by a two thirds majority of those present, and if an Assistant Bishop is nominated his name will then be sent to the Holy Synod for election by it.

c. An Assistant Bishop shall have no right of succession, but may be elected the Bishop under the procedures described in this Article.

ARTICLE III (Top)

The Presbytery

Section 1

Purpose

The Presbytery is the body which brings together all the presbyters serving in the Diocese to assist the Bishop in fulfilling his role as pastor of the Diocese, to discuss common problems and to make recommendations to him, and as appropriate to the Council and the Assembly.

Section 2

Membership

- a. The Bishop and all other bishops and priests actively serving in the Diocese constitute the Presbytery and have the right to vote.
- b. All members of the diaconate actively serving in the Diocese have the right to attend meetings of the Presbytery but without the right to vote.

c. The Bishop may, with the approval of the Presbytery, invite retired clergy to attend its meetings, but without the right to vote.

Section 3

Election of Vicar-General

The Presbytery shall elect by a secret ballot for a three-year term the Vicar-General from among the Presbytery of the Diocese. The Vicar-General may not be immediately re-elected at the end of his second three-year term.

Section 4

The Vicar-General

The duties of the Vicar-General shall be:

- a. to act as Secretary of the Presbytery;
- b. to serve as an ex officio member of the Council;
- c. to serve as an ex officio member of the Bishop's Advisory Council;
- d. to acquaint himself with the parishes and local communities and their problems;
- e. to co-ordinate provision of presbyters when any presbyter appointed by the Bishop is absent.

Section 5

Meetings

The Presbytery shall meet at least twice a year on a Saturday or holiday mutually agreed by the Bishop and the Vicar-General with at least four weeks' notice of the meeting given to members. The Vicar-General must call further meetings of the Presbytery if requested by the Bishop or by one third of its voting members, always on a Saturday or holiday with four weeks' notice of the meeting.

Section 6

Procedures

- a. The Bishop shall be Chairman of the Presbytery.
- b. The Vicar-General shall act as Secretary of the Presbytery or, in the absence of the Bishop, as its Chairman.
- c. The Presbytery shall choose a minuting secretary from among its members. Minutes will be circulated to all members of the Presbytery and to the Chairman and Secretary of the Assembly.
- d. The Vicar-General shall be elected at the last meeting before the meeting of the Assembly at which the Presbytery members of the Council are to be elected.

ARTICLE IV (Top)

The Diocesan Assembly

Section 1

Purpose

The Diocesan Assembly is the body in which the Bishop, clergy and laity of the Diocese take part together in the direction of its life, 'speaking the truth in love'.

Section 2

Functions

The Assembly:

- a. discusses and takes decisions on matters of policy affecting the Diocese as a whole;
- b. initiates, discusses and approves measures to strengthen the Orthodox Christian faith, witness and mission, and the life of the Diocese;
- c. discusses ways to improve relations with other Christians within the guidelines laid down by the Bishop;
- d. discusses collaboration or exchange of information with outside bodies;
- e. discusses financial measures to achieve these aims, approves the Diocesan budget, and sets the levels of contribution from the parishes to the Diocese;
- f. authorises the Council to acquire, encumber or dispose of diocesan properties;
- g. elects those members of the Council and Court who are not ex officio members of those bodies; all the members of the Audit and Election Committees; and such members of any committee set up by a decision of the Assembly as it may determine;
- h. elects the presbyter and lay member participants from the Diocese to a local council of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

Section 3

President of the Assembly

- a. The President shall open and close meetings and with him rests the responsibility for validation of the Assembly's decisions. He shall have both a vote and a casting vote if there is a tie.
- b. The President of the Assembly shall be the Bishop, or in his absence the more senior Assistant Bishop present, or in the absence of any Assistant Bishop present, the Vicar-General.
- c. The Bishop shall not preside at the discussion following his advice to the Assembly as per Article II Section 3 that he has reached the age at which under the (1988) Statutes of the Patriarchate of Moscow he must offer his retirement to the Holy Synod, nor during any subsequent discussion by the Assembly of his retirement. All such discussions shall take place in the absence of the Bishop with the senior Assistant Bishop present or in the absence of any Assistant Bishop present the Vicar-General acting as President.
- d. Following the discussion subsequent to the Bishop's announcement of his submission of a letter of retirement under Article II Section 3 the Assembly may decide either to take no action or to petition the Holy Synod not to accept the retirement of the Bishop for the time being. If it so decides it must set a date at which a future Assembly will discuss the matter, in the absence of the

Bishop during such discussion. If on that occasion it decides again to petition the Holy Synod not to accept the retirement of the Bishop, it must set another date when a future Assembly would discuss the matter again, with the same alternatives.

e. The decision of this Assembly meeting shall be valid unless disapproved by its President. If this occurs the Assembly will be reconvened on a Saturday, Sunday or Bank Holiday within sixteen days of the first meeting. At this second meeting its President shall have no right to disapprove the Assembly's decisions.

Section 4

Membership

The Assembly shall be composed as follows:

- a. Members with the right to speak and to vote:
 - i. the President;
 - ii. any Assistant Bishop or presbyter actively serving in the Diocese;
 - iii. any abbot or abbess of a monastic community or a representative appointed by him or her;
 - iv. one or more members of the laity or of the diaconate elected by each parish or, in the absence of a member, an alternate. The number of members to be elected by a parish is never to be less than one, and is to be increased by one for every fifty votes cast in the most recent Diocesan elections, but for this purpose any number of votes below fifty or an extra fifty is to be ignored;
 - v. twenty-eight members of the laity or of the diaconate elected by the Diocese as a whole.
- b. Persons with the right to speak but not to vote:
 - i. any person invited by the Council to attend regularly or on a specific occasion or to speak on a specific subject;
 - ii. any member of the diaconate actively serving in the Diocese not elected a member of the Assembly;
 - iii. one layman from each local congregation chosen by the Bishop on the recommendation of the presiding presbyter. Such a layman may continue to represent a local congregation if elected as one of the twenty-eight members of the Assembly chosen by the Diocese as a whole.

Section 5

Qualification for Lay Members

Lay members of the Assembly must be communicant members of the Orthodox Church and on the Diocesan electoral roll (hereinafter called 'the Roll').

Section 6

Nomination, Election and Replacement of Members

- a. Members chosen by the Diocese as a whole:
 - i. seven members from the Diocese as a whole shall be chosen each year for a four year term by those on the Roll by majority vote;

- ii. nominations must be received by the Secretary of the Council not less than twenty-eight days prior to the date of the election and must be signed by the proposer and seconder. Nominations must indicate the willingness of the nominee to serve;
 - iii. voting shall take place by secret ballot after the Liturgy or, in the absence of a priest, after a prayer service on the last Sunday in October and/or the first Sunday in November. The voting shall be supervised by three persons: in a parish chosen by the parish council, in a local congregation chosen by the presiding presbyter and in a monastic community chosen by its superior;
 - iv. no person may hold more than one proxy, which must be in the form of a letter to the supervisors of the voting. No postal vote is permitted;
 - v. as soon as voting has been completed, ballot papers are to be sealed in an envelope under the signatures of the supervisors of the voting and to be posted, recorded delivery, to the Secretary of the Council. They are to be opened in the presence of the Election Committee who will supervise the count and, through the Secretary, will announce the results;
 - vi. if an elected member representing the Diocese dies or resigns, another will be elected at the next diocesan election to serve for the remainder of the original term;
 - vii. if a member elected by the Diocese as a whole has not attended the Assembly for thirty months or misses four consecutive meetings, whichever represents the shorter period, he shall automatically be considered to have resigned and a replacement will be elected at the next Diocesan election to serve for the remainder of the original term.
- b. Members chosen by a parish:
- i. New members and their alternates elected by a parish shall be chosen at a parish general meeting by those members of the parish who are on that parish's diocesan electoral list (hereinafter called 'the List');
 - ii. the names of such members and their alternates shall be communicated to the Secretary of the Council by the secretaries of the parishes concerned;
 - iii. if an elected member representing a parish dies or resigns, he will be succeeded by his alternate until the next regular or extraordinary meeting of the parish concerned.

Section 7

Requirements for Representation

A member or members elected by a parish to the Assembly, or their alternates, shall not attend its meetings until the parish has fulfilled its financial obligations to the Diocese for the last completed financial year, or has given the Council a satisfactory explanation of its failure to do so.

Section 8

Arrangements for Meetings

- a. The Assembly decides the time, place and frequency of its ordinary meetings, which are to be held not less than once and normally at least twice a year.
- b. An Extraordinary Meeting of the Assembly may be called by the Bishop or the Council, and the Council must do so within thirty days of such a meeting being requested by one third of the members of the Assembly.

- c. There shall be thirty days' notice of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Assembly.
- d. An emergency meeting of the Assembly shall be held under the provisions of Article II only in the event of a vacancy in the office of Bishop.

Section 9

Agenda

- a. Written suggestions for the agenda may be made to the Chairman or the Diocesan Secretary (hereinafter called 'the Secretary') up to twenty-one days before the date of a meeting.
- b. The Chairman and Secretary consult with the Bishop and with such other members of the Council as may be advisable, and then decide the agenda, which should be dispatched to members of the Assembly not less than ten days before the meeting.
- c. The agenda may be changed by a majority vote of the Assembly.

Section 10

Quorum

One third of the lay and one third of the presbyter members, taken separately, shall constitute a quorum.

Section 11

Chairman and Voting

- a. The Bishop shall in the appropriate year in accordance with Article V Section 4g below propose a Chairman and Vice-Chairman, from among the presbyters or the laity and members of the diaconate who are members of the Assembly in his discretion. The Assembly may accept or reject either or both of these nominations. If one is rejected the Bishop will make another nomination at the next Assembly meeting but the other of the two will chair at that meeting; if both are rejected the former Chairman or Vice-Chairman will chair the subsequent meetings until a new Chairman is elected.
- b. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be ex officio Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council but not necessarily additional members of it.
- c. The Chairman or in his or her absence the Vice-Chairman shall chair all meetings of the Assembly and Council. The Chairman's function is to serve the Assembly by pressing for the expeditious transaction of business but also encouraging a broadly-based dialogue on the major issues facing the Diocese. Being responsible for the conduct of the Assembly's business the Chairman may in his judgement limit debate.
- d. The Chairman is responsible for voting procedure. Normally he shall put a resolution that has been proposed and seconded to a show of hands, or alternatively, if he so judges or this is requested by any member, to a roll-call ballot. At the Chairman's discretion or on a resolution of the Assembly a secret ballot may be held, and the Assembly may also by resolution override the Chairman's ruling that a secret ballot be held.

Section 12

Validation

- a. No resolution of the Assembly shall be valid if the Bishop formally expresses his disapproval of it before the close of the meeting if he has been present; or within fifteen days of notification of the resolution to him if he has been absent.
- b. Should the office of the Bishop be vacant the presiding Assistant Bishop or if there is no Assistant Bishop the Vicar-General may formally disapprove resolutions of the Assembly.
- c. A new bishop after his enthronement must either confirm or withdraw any actions of formal disapproval by an Assistant Bishop or the Vicar-General while the office of Bishop was vacant.

Section 13

Secretary and Minutes

- a. The minutes of the meetings of the Assembly shall be prepared by the Secretary with the assistance of the minuting secretary. In their absence the Assembly shall appoint substitutes.
- b. The minutes shall be checked by the Chairman before distribution and shall be signed by the Chairman after their approval by the Assembly at its next meeting.
- c. Within sixty days of the Assembly's adjournment the minutes shall be mailed to each member, together with notice of any formal disapproval of a resolution by the Bishop.

Section 14

Election Committee

- a. Seven to nine members of the Election Committee of whom at least three to be members of the Assembly shall be chosen every three years by the Assembly. If there are more than nine suitable persons the choice between them shall be made by lot.
- b. In advance of each Assembly, Council and Court elections or any election to the office of Bishop or Assistant Bishop the Council shall select three persons to serve as the Election Committee for that particular election and appoint an organiser of the Election Committee from among them. No members of any particular Election committee shall be a candidate or the relative of a candidate in that election. If a member of any Election Committee withdraws after his selection the Secretary in consultation with the Chairman shall appoint a replacement from among other candidate members.
- c. The Secretary shall be an ex officio and if necessary additional member of any Election Committee except one set up to oversee any election in which the current Secretary is a candidate when the Chairman will take his place.
- d. The votes in any other secret ballot taken for the Assembly shall be counted by a minimum of two persons chosen by the Assembly by agreement or lot.

Section 15

Audit Committee

- a. The three members of the Audit Committee shall be chosen every three years by the Assembly by lot, if the members of the Assembly unanimously agree this, or by the majority vote system. The Audit Committee will be responsible for the annual audit of Diocesan accounts.
- b. Nobody may be a member of the Audit Committee who is also a member of the Council, or of any committee appointed by the Council to deal with financial questions.

Section 16

Membership of the Diocesan Court

Every three years the Assembly will choose from among its members two presbyter and two deacon or lay judges for the Court.

ARTICLE V (Top)

The Diocesan Council

Section 1

Purpose

The Diocesan Council is an executive body whose purpose is to facilitate the working of the Assembly and to implement its decisions.

Section 2

Functions

The Council shall:

- a. prepare the agenda and other arrangements for the meetings of the Assembly;
- b. prepare the budget for the Assembly's approval;
- c. prepare proposals for the Assembly;
- d. implement the decisions of the Assembly;
- e. establish and appoint members of committees to study proposals for, or to implement decisions of the Assembly;
- f. invite persons to meetings of the Assembly as observers.

Section 3

Membership

All members of the Council must be members of the Assembly.

There shall be between ten and sixteen members of the Council as follows:

- a. the Bishop as President (the President will have also a casting vote);

- b. up to two Assistant Bishops;
- c. the Vicar-General;
- d. the Chairman, who may also be a member in another capacity;
- e. the Vice-Chairman, who may also be a member in another capacity;
- f. the Secretary, who shall not be a presbyter;
- g. the Diocesan Treasurer (hereinafter called 'the Treasurer') who shall not be a presbyter;
- h. an officer for relations with other Christian bodies (hereinafter called 'the Ecumenical Officer'), who may also be a member in another capacity;
- i. an officer responsible for providing information to other bodies and individuals outside the Diocese and for relations with the media (hereinafter called 'the Information Officer'), who may also be a member in another capacity;
- j. two members of the Presbytery;
- k. four members of the laity or the diaconate.

Section 4

Elections

- a. Elections to the Council shall take place at the first meeting of the Assembly after the annual election of members from the Diocese as a whole.
- b. No voting by proxy is permitted in elections to the Council.
- c. Any candidate nominated must indicate his or her willingness to serve, either in writing or orally at an Assembly meeting prior to the election.
- d. The two presbyter members shall be elected for a three year term by majority vote at the autumn Assembly meeting after the Presbytery has elected the Vicar General.
- e. At the subsequent autumn meeting of the Assembly four members of the laity or diaconate shall be elected for a three year term by majority vote.
- f. At the subsequent autumn meeting of the Assembly the Secretary and Treasurer shall be elected for a three year term by majority vote.
- g. If after the announcement of the result of any of these three elections the Bishop believes it advisable one or two more members of the Assembly who are not members of the Council, be elected to be Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman respectively he may so propose to the Assembly under Article IV Section 11a. If his nominations are accepted by the Assembly they will serve on the Council in these capacities for three years.
- h. On the announcement of the election results in any year when there is not already an Ecumenical Officer and an Information Officer serving on the Council the Chairman shall ask the Assembly whether it believes it advisable two of the already elected members shall act as Ecumenical Officer and as Information Officer, or whether one or both of these positions should be filled by a member specially elected for this purpose for a three year term. If the Assembly prefers one or other positions to be filled by a member specially elected such election will take place

immediately. If the Assembly prefers the position to be filled by a person already on the Council such Council member must at once indicate his or her willingness to serve in the relevant capacity and if they are unwilling or unable to do this an election for the position in question will be held.

Section 5

Arrangements for Meetings

The Council is convened at the request of the Bishop, the Chairman, or four of its members by letter or telephone with ten days' notice.

Section 6

Quorum

A third of the members shall constitute a quorum.

Section 7

Procedure, Voting and Decisions

The role of the President and Chairman or Vice-Chairman shall be the same as at meetings of the Assembly.

Majority decisions of the Council become effective unless the Bishop expresses formal disapproval at the meeting or, if he is absent, within fifteen days; or alternatively if there is a vacancy, the person presiding in the Bishop's place expresses formal disapproval in the same manner.

Section 8

Secretary and Minuting Secretary

- a. At the Assembly meeting after the annual elections to the Assembly a minuting secretary will be appointed to assist the Secretary.
- b. The Secretary is responsible for sending both the agenda and minutes to members of the Council after approval by the Chairman in the same manner as for the Assembly.
- c. The Secretary shall liaise with the organiser of the Election Committee of which the Secretary shall be an additional ex officio member, to ensure that the count in every election is conducted properly.
- d. The Secretary shall be responsible for liaising with local eucharistic communities, as per the provisions of Article VIII, to ensure the Roll is properly compiled from the parish rolls and that no name appears on it twice.
- e. The Secretary shall use his or her best endeavours so that the largest possible number of members of the Diocese are on the Roll.

Section 9

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be responsible for:

- a. keeping the Diocesan accounts;
- b. executing the decisions of the Assembly with regard to fund raising and expenditure;

- c. recommending to the Council and Assembly measures for improving Diocesan finances.
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ARTICLE VI (Top)

Local Eucharistic Communities

Section 1

Definitions

The life of the one diocesan eucharistic community is manifested in a given place or area through the regular celebration of the Eucharist under the local presidency of the Bishop, an Assistant Bishop or a presbyter appointed by the Bishop.

Local eucharistic communities can be of three kinds:

- a. those established communities which have a formal structure as set down in Sections 5–10 of this Article (hereinafter called ‘parishes’);
- b. less established communities having as much of the formal structure set out below for parishes as is, in the view of the Bishop, required for the regulation of their parish life (hereinafter called ‘local congregations’);
- c. monastic communities as defined and described in Article VII.

Section 2

Function

A Community, whether constituted as a parish or as a local congregation, serves as a centre of Church life in which the members of the royal priesthood, clergy and laity:

- a. realise the fellowship of the Church in its sacramental life and prayer;
- b. proclaim the Gospel and teach the Orthodox faith;
- c. work together ‘for the building up of the body of Christ’ through pastoral concern and care, both within the Church and in the community amongst whom they live.

Section 3

Presiding Presbyter

- a. The parish or local congregation has at its head the Bishop, and Assistant Bishop or a presbyter to whom the Bishop delegates his ministry of local oversight and who by virtue of his ordination and the authority given him by the Bishop in appointing him, shall:
 - i. celebrate the Holy Mysteries and lead the Community in prayer;
 - ii. take responsibility for ensuring that the Gospel is preached and the Orthodox faith is taught;
 - iii. act as Pastor and spiritual father of his flock, treating all equally, ‘not [...] with respect of persons’;

- iv. supervise the worship of the Community and ensure that the appearance of the place of worship is suitable for liturgical use;
- b. The presiding presbyter who in the name of the Bishop blesses the activities of his Community shall be informed and consulted concerning any significant initiative in the life of the Community; and for his part shall consult with the Community, so that there may always be unity, cooperation and mutual trust.

Section 4:

Establishment and Dissolution of a Parish or Local Congregation

- a. Any group of members of the Diocese may ask to be recognised as a parish or as a local congregation by the Bishop, who shall do so only after consultation with the Presbytery and the Assembly.
- b. If the Bishop feels that a parish or a local congregation has ceased or should cease to function as such, he may, after consultation with the Presbytery and the Assembly, dissolve it, in which event its representative shall cease to attend meetings of the Assembly.

Section 5

Definition of a Parish

The parish is a Community, having at its head a presbyter, the parish priest, whose members have accepted responsibility for the maintenance and development of Church life in a particular place or area, and who have undertaken to organise themselves under elected parish officers and with a parish council in accordance with these Statutes.

Section 6

Parish Meetings

- a. Parishes should hold meetings regularly, but in any event at least once a year. All parish meetings shall be announced at any Sunday Liturgy or prayer service in the three weeks prior to the date of the meeting or, if there is no such Liturgy or service, by letter at least twenty-one days before the date of the meeting.
- b. The functions of the parish meeting shall be:
 - i. to elect for a four-year term a single voting representative and an alternate to the Assembly.
 - ii. at the intervals and according to procedure laid down by each parish's bye-laws to elect the officers of the parish and other members of the parish council;
 - iii. regularly to discuss, initiate and approve measures to strengthen the life of the parish;
 - iv. to authorise the parish council to purchase, sell or encumber property.
- c. The chairman of the parish meeting will be the parish priest or, at his request, a member of the parish, and shall have a second casting vote in the event of a tie. The parish priest, with the approval of the parish council, may invite other persons to attend and speak but without the right to vote.

d. All decisions of a parish meeting shall be communicated by its chairman to the Bishop and shall be valid unless he expresses formal disapproval within thirty days of receipt.

Section 7

Parish Officers

Among the officers of the parish shall be:

c. a churchwarden who, as senior lay officer of the parish, shall under the guidance of the parish council, be responsible for the care of parish property, the provision of supplies for church use, the preparation and presentation of the parish budget and full lay participation in all the practical aspects of parish life;

d. a secretary of the parish, who shall keep the minutes of parish and parish council meetings, be responsible for correspondence with the Council and the preparation of the community's List;

e. a treasurer, who shall not be a presbyter or in the pay of the parish council.

Section 8

The Parish Council

a. The parish council is the executive body of the parish meeting, presenting to it proposals for the furtherance of parish life and implementing its decisions. The parish council may establish committees to study proposals for and help implement decisions of the parish meeting and shall appoint the members of any such committees.

b. The members of the parish council, in addition to the parish priest and any other member of the presbyterate and diaconate serving in the parish, shall be the parish warden, treasurer and secretary, and the number of lay members fixed by the bye-laws of the parish.

c. The parish priest shall be the chairman of the parish council, and has a casting vote in the event of a tie.

d. The chairman of the parish council may, with the agreement of the parish council, invite other persons to attend a parish council meeting but without the right to vote.

e. If the parish priest disagrees with a decision of the parish council his disagreement is recorded in the minutes and the matter is referred to a parish meeting.

Section 9

Parish Bye-Laws

a. Each parish shall and each local congregation may, adopt a set of bye-laws or articles of association, and a copy of these as originally promulgated or amended from time to time shall be sent to the Bishop and shall be valid unless he expresses formal disapproval within three months of receipt. A copy shall be sent simultaneously to the Council.

b. All such bye-laws must be consistent with the current Statutes of the Diocese.

Section 10

Parish Property

Property purchased in the name of the parish shall, in the event of a dispute in the parish, remain with the Diocese or with that section of the parish that adheres to the Diocese.

ARTICLE VII (Top)

Monastic Communities

Section 1

Definition

A monastic community is, for the purpose of these Statutes, a local eucharistic community composed of monks or nuns living according to the monastic tradition of the Church under the leadership of an abbot or abbess and the supervision of the Bishop.

Section 2

Function

The primary function of a monastic community is to further the development of an intensive life of prayer and to share it with the Church at large.

Section 3

Representation in the Diocesan Assembly

A monastic community's representative in the Assembly is its Superior who has the right to vote and who may appoint a substitute from within the Community with the same right.

Section 4

Electoral List

The preparation of the List of a monastic community is the responsibility of its head, who shall be guided by the procedures laid down in Article VIII. The names of members of the Diocese who are not monks or nuns and therefore not, strictly speaking, members of the Community may be included in the List.

Section 5

Establishment and Dissolution of Monastic Communities

Monastic communities are established and dissolved by the Bishop after consultation with the Presbytery and the Assembly.

ARTICLE VIII (Top)

The Diocesan Electoral Roll

Section 1

Qualification for the Diocesan Electoral Roll ('the Roll')

Any Orthodox Christian, sixteen years of age and above, who has been resident in the area covered by the Diocese for a period of six months, has received Communion in the Diocese within the previous year and intends to remain a member of the Diocese, may obtain inclusion on the Roll by requesting that his or her name be added to the electoral list ('the List') of a particular local eucharistic community.

Section 2

Diocesan Roll and Parochial Lists

- a. A member of the Diocese may be placed on the Roll and exercise Diocesan voting rights, including the right to vote for a member of the Assembly representing a parish, in only one community.
- b. A member of the Diocese may, however, ask to be placed on another parish's electoral list for non-diocesan purposes by making written application to the parish council concerned.

Section 3

Compilation of the Roll

- a. The Secretary shall compile the Roll for the following twelve month period annually, on the basis of Lists, valid for 30th September, compiled by the persons responsible, namely:
 - i. for monastic communities, the abbot or abbess concerned;
 - ii. for the local congregations, the presiding presbyter;
 - iii. for parishes, the secretary of the parish council, under the authority of the parish priest.
- b. If no reply has been received from the responsible person by the end of September the Secretary shall at once inform the Bishop and the Chairman of the Council. If the required information has not been received by the middle of October, the Community in question may not vote in the annual elections for the Assembly, or in any other election due to take place less than two weeks after the relevant information is in fact received.

Section 4

Application for the Roll

- a. Any Orthodox Christian, sixteen years or above who has received Communion in any Community within the previous year, who has been resident in the area covered by the Diocese for at least six months, and intends to remain a member of the Diocese, may apply in writing to the person responsible under Section 3a above for inclusion on the List submitted by that Community. The letter must state whether the person concerned is or is not currently on a List submitted by another Community.
- b. Names are added to or removed from the List submitted by each Community by the person responsible under Section 3a above, and in the instance of a parish under the authority of the parish priest; if the decision is not acceptable to the person concerned appeal may be made to the Bishop, whose decision shall be final.
- c. If a Community agrees to include on its List a person who is transferring his diocesan voting rights, the person responsible under Section 3a above must at once advise the Community in

which diocesan voting rights were previously exercised. The date from which such a transfer shall be effective is the following October 1st.

- d. No name may be removed from the List as submitted by a Community unless; either
 - i. the church member involved so requests; or
 - ii. the person responsible under Section 3a in another Community has stated in writing that the name will be included in that Community's List from the following October 1st; or
 - iii. the person responsible under Section 3a and for a parish the secretary of the parish under the authority of the parish priest, has written to the church member, at his last recorded address, giving him three months' notification that his name will be deleted; such deletion only to become effective from the following October 1st; or
 - iv. the church member involved has died.

ARTICLE IX (Top)

Church Courts and Canonical Procedure

Section 1

Church Courts

Every member of the Diocese is entitled to due canonical procedure in the courts of the Church.

Section 2

The Diocesan Court

The Diocesan Court is composed of four voting members: two members of the clergy and two members of the laity, chosen by the Diocesan Assembly from among its elected members and approved by the Bishop. The Diocesan Bishop himself, or a member of the presbytery appointed by him, shall preside over the court as a non-voting member. In cases involving accusations against priests or deacons membership of the Court shall be restricted to their respective orders. When the members of the Court are chosen by the Assembly additional members of the clergy will be chosen to cover this eventuality.

Section 3

Competence of the Diocesan Court

The Diocesan Court shall act as a court of first instance in cases where the accused is a presbyter, deacon, or member of the laity. It shall be competent to judge cases involving allegations of unorthodox belief, breaches of canonical or moral discipline, marital problems, disputes involving clergy and parish officers, disputes over parish institutions, and any other matter involving the good order of the Church.

Section 4

General Procedure

- a. Accusers shall present their accusations in writing to the Bishop of the Diocese.

- b. Before examining the case, the Court shall establish the accuser's good and irreproachable character. The accuser shall agree in advance in writing that the decision of the ecclesiastical Court, whether initially or on appeal, is final and non-appealable to the civil courts. If the Court is not satisfied in these matters, or considers that the accuser, by lodging his accusation, pursues personal advantage or acts of personal animosity, the case shall be dismissed.
- c. If the Court determines that there is probable cause to come to trial, the accused shall be summoned in writing by the Court. The summons shall specify the nature of the accusation(s) and the the name(s) of the accuser(s), and the accused shall be given appropriate time to prepare his defence. If he does not answer two successive summonses, the Court shall try the case in absentia.
- d. The accused is entitled to request that a third party act as his defence. Both the accuser and the accused may request the testimony of experts and witnesses acceptable to the Court.
- e. The Diocesan Bishop, by his own judgement, is empowered to impose temporary suspension upon clerics, and temporary excommunication upon members of the laity. The accused has the right to trial in Court within thirty days of the day on which the penalty is pronounced by the Bishop.
- f. The decision of the Court shall be made by unanimous vote, which must be approved by the Diocesan Bishop and communicated to the accused in writing within thirty days. If the decision is not unanimous, upon the request of either party the Diocesan Bishop shall appoint a Court of four new members, according to the procedure in Section 2. The new Court shall make a decision by a majority vote, which must be approved by the Bishop. If the Bishop rejects the decision of the Court, upon the request of either party, the case shall be referred to the Holy Synod, in accordance with the provisions of Section 6c.
- g. Penalties imposed by the Court (against persons judged guilty after trial as well as against false accusers) are prescribed by the Canons of the oecumenical and local councils and the Holy Fathers. Their application is subject to approval by the Diocesan Bishop, who will use the pastoral discretion which belongs to his office in applying penalties.
- h. If one of the parties is not satisfied with the judgement of the Diocesan Court, he may appeal to the Holy Synod as the Court of Appeal within thirty days of receipt of said judgement.
- i. Judgements requiring the final deposition ('unfrocking') of clergy are effective only upon confirmation by the Holy Synod.
- j. Those contesting canonical penalties imposed by presbyters in the normal course of their pastoral responsibilities may appeal to the Diocesan Bishop within thirty days of the day when the penalty was pronounced. Those contesting canonical penalties imposed or confirmed by bishops in the normal course of their pastoral responsibilities may appeal to the Holy Synod within thirty days of the day when the penalty was pronounced.
- k. No one shall be brought to trial more than once for the same alleged offence.

Section 5

Special Procedure for Marital Problems

- a. Whenever the parish priest is unable, through pastoral counselling, to prevent the dissolution of a marriage and the conflict results in a civil divorce and if the interested persons

themselves seek from the Church a definition of their status as divorcees, a petition is filed with the Diocesan Court.

b. Before coming to a decision the Court will make a new attempt at reconciling the parties, appointing a mediator or mediators if necessary.

c. If the reconciliation fails, the Court shall examine the documents relevant to the case, interview the parties and come to a final decision. In issuing its opinion, the Court may recommend that penance be imposed by the Bishop upon one or more of the parties.

On the basis of the Court decision the Bishop shall issue the following statement:

‘Having heard the conclusion of the Diocesan Court concerning the judgement of divorce rendered by the..... Court of..... dissolving the marriage between..... and..... celebrated at..... on..... I, Bishop of..... hereby acknowledge the conclusion of the civil court as final.’ To which he may add if relevant: ‘Invoking God’s mercy and compassion, I allow..... to enter into a new marital union with..... and to receive the sacraments of the Church.’

Section 6

The Holy Synod as Court of Appeal

a. The Holy Synod shall act as the Diocese’s Court of Appeal.

b. If a person, clerical or lay, is dissatisfied with the judgment rendered in their case by a Diocesan Court, they may file an appeal addressed to the Diocesan Bishop.

c. The accused shall be entitled to the rights specified in Section 4d.

d. The Holy Synod shall not act as a court of first instance in cases which are within the competence of Diocesan Courts.

e. The rulings of the Holy Synod are final, except for those instances which the Canons reserve to the judgement of the universal Church.

Section 7

The Holy Synod and the Judgment of Bishops

a. Accusations against bishops are referred directly to the Holy Synod, which is the Court of First Instance empowered to pass judgement in such cases.

b. In cases of grave accusations involving the possibility of canonical deposition, the accused shall be called through a formal summons presented to him in person by three bishops.

c. If the accused refuses to appear after receiving three summonses, the Holy Synod shall suspend him from his duties and judge him in absentia.

d. Penalties against bishops judged guilty after trial, as well as against false accusers, are prescribed by the Canons of the oecumenical and local councils and the Holy Fathers.

e. A judgement of deposition or unfrocking of a bishop has final validity only when signed by at least twelve bishops.

f. The judgements of the Holy Synod are final, except for those instances which the Canons reserve to the judgement of the universal Church.

ARTICLE X (Top)

Bye-Laws and Amendments

Section 1

Bye-Laws

The Assembly shall have the power to enact bye-laws for the purpose of regulating the administration of diocesan activities, provided that these bye-laws are consistent with the Statutes as currently in effect. To be enacted such bye-laws shall require a simple majority of those present and voting.

Section 2

Amendments

a. Any proposal for the amendment to the Statutes must be communicated to the Chairman of the Council and signed by two members of the Assembly within the time limit laid down in Article IV Section 9, and the Council shall then place the proposal on the agenda for the meeting of the Assembly in question.

b. If the amendment is then passed by two-thirds majority of those present and voting it is automatically placed at the top of the agenda for the following meeting of the Assembly.

c. At this second meeting of the Assembly a quorum of one-half of the members of the presbyterate and one-half of the lay members of the Assembly taken separately, as well as a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, shall be required for final adoption of the amendment, which shall then be submitted to the Holy Synod for final approval.

Irina von Schlippe