

Comments on the current Situation

The aim of this website is to enable people to see as much background and documentation as possible in order to make their own judgements.

There are, however a number of points which are repeatedly raised as requiring clarification, either from the press coverage, or from the general background.

1. Bishop Basil's relationship with the newly arrived Russians.

The Diocese as founded by Metropolitan Anthony and continued under Bishop Basil's leadership was committed to the idea of a Church that is truly Orthodox in its belief and practice, and transcends all national and cultural differences as does the Gospel, and indeed Christ himself.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26-28).

The present policy of the Moscow Patriarchate is a step backwards from this - perhaps an inevitable one given the history of the twentieth century in Russia. This was, however a period in which the Russian Church produced thousands of martyrs, who provide inspiration for people all over the world. There is a statue of one of them, [St Elizabeth the New Martyr](#), on the new frontage of Westminster Abbey in London.

Bishop Basil welcomed all new arrivals to the Diocese from Russia after the collapse of communism, seeing in them a source of renewed life and strength - the majority have proved to be just that. The difficulties arose during the last years of Metropolitan Anthony when a small minority of new arrivals began to try to change the direction of the Diocese to what they thought of as 'truly' Russian. Further details can be found in [Bishop Basil's open letter](#) of 16 May 2006.

2. The use of the word 'liberal' in a number of press reports to describe Bishop Basil, and indeed the Diocese of Sourozh.

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 and by the OCA in North America. 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'.

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).

3. The property associated with the London parish, that is, the cathedral, and three houses and a flat used to house clergy

Bishop Basil's request to leave the Moscow Patriarchate is not to do with property, but in order to continue the life of the Diocese without interference from Moscow (see Philip Walters in The Church Times, 26 May 2006)

The trust deeds both of the Diocese of Sourozh and of the London Parish (which are public documents copies of which can be obtained from the Charity Commissioners) nowhere refer to the Moscow Patriarchate. Property has been given over the years to these independent charitable trusts. The trust deeds also include express provisions as to the procedure to be followed in the event of a doubt as to the succession in the Diocese or Parish and the trustees concerned are seeking appropriate professional advice as to their legal duties and obligations in this situation. These matters can of course only be dealt with under English law.