

ACT OF CANONICAL COMMUNION

We, the humble Alexy II, by God's mercy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, jointly with the Eminent Members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, having gathered at a meeting of the Holy Synod (date) in the God-preserved city of Moscow; and the humble Laurus, Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, jointly with the Eminent Bishops, members of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, having gathered (time, place);

Being guided by the effort towards reestablishing blessed peace, Divinely-decreed love, and brotherly unity in the common work in the harvest-fields of God within the Fullness of the Russian Orthodox Church and her faithful in the Fatherland and abroad, taking into consideration the ecclesiastical life of the Russian diaspora outside the canonical borders of the Moscow Patriarchate, as dictated by history;

Taking into account that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia performs its service on the territories of many nations;

By this Act declare:

1. That the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, conducting its salvific service in the dioceses, parishes, monasteries, brotherhoods, and other ecclesiastical bodies that were formed through history, remains an indissoluble part of the Local Russian Orthodox Church.
2. That the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is independent in pastoral, educational, administrative, management, property, and civil matters, existing at the same time in canonical unity with the Fullness of the Russian Orthodox Church.
3. The supreme ecclesiastical, legislative, administrative, judicial and controlling authority in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is her Council of Bishops, convened by her Primate (First Hierarch), in accordance with the Regulations [Polozheniye] of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.
4. The First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is elected by her Council of Bishops. This election is confirmed, in accordance with the norms of Canon Law, by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.
5. The name of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and the name of the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are commemorated during

divine services in all churches of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia before the name of the ruling bishop in the prescribed order.

6. Decisions on the establishment or liquidation of dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are made by her Council of Bishops in agreement with the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

7. The bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are elected by her Council of Bishops or, in cases foreseen by the Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, by the Synod of Bishops. Such elections are confirmed in accordance with canonical norms by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

8. The bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are members of the Local Council [Pomestny Sobor] and Council of Bishops [Arkhieireiskij Sobor] of the Russian Orthodox Church and also participate in the meetings of the Holy Synod in the prescribed order. Representatives of the clergy and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia participate in the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in the established manner.

9. The supreme instances of ecclesiastical authority for the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are the Local Council and the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church.

10. Decisions of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church extend to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with consideration of the particularities described by the present Act, by the Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and by the legislation of the nations in which she performs her ministry.

11. Appeals on decisions of the supreme ecclesiastical court of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are directed to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

12. Amendments to the Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia by her supreme legislative authority are subject to the confirmation of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in such case as these changes bear a canonical character.

13. The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia receives her holy myrrh from the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

By this Act, canonical communion within the Local Russian Orthodox Church is hereby restored.

Acts issued previously which preclude the fullness of canonical communion are hereby deemed invalid or obsolete.

The reestablishment of canonical communion will serve, God willing, towards the strengthening of the unity of the Church of Christ, of her witness in the contemporary world, promoting the fulfillment of the will of the Lord to “gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:52).

Let us bring thanks to All-Merciful God, Who through His omnipotent hand directed us to the path of healing the wounds of division and led us to the desired unity of the Russian Church in the homeland and abroad, to the glory of His Holy Name and to the good of His Holy Church and Her faithful flock. Through the prayers of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, may the Lord grant His blessing to the One Russian Church and Her flock both in the fatherland and in the diaspora.

Addendum to the Act of Canonical Communion

The Act of Canonical Communion goes into effect upon its confirmation by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, on the basis of the decision of the Holy Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church “On the Relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia” (Moscow, October 3-8, 2004); and by decision of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, on the basis of the resolution “Regarding the Act on Canonical Communion” of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (San Francisco, May 15-19, 2006).

1. In accordance with the Act on Canonical Communion, certain addenda and amendments are to be made to Chapter 8 of the Regulations [Ustav] of the Russian Orthodox Church (“Self-governing Churches”) and to the Regulations [Polozhenie] of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.
2. Acting in the spirit of ecclesiastical oikonomia, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia envision a five-year transition period for the full regularization of the status of former parishes of the Russian Church Abroad on the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate, through their entering into the jurisdiction of the local ruling bishops. Before this period elapses, such parishes which are not on the territory of Self-governing Churches have the opportunity to be under the protection of a Vicar to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, who, with the blessing of the Patriarch, may participate in the work of the Council of Bishops and Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia by invitation of her First Hierarchy.

3. In the countries of the diaspora where parallel church structures exist, including the Holy Land, both sides will, with proper pastoral discretion, apply every effort to resolve problems hindering successful cooperation and joint witness.