

# STATUTE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

*ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS IN 2000, AMENDED BY THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS IN  
2008 AND 2011 AND ADOPTED AS AMENDED BY THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS IN 2013.*

## **I. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. The Russian Orthodox Church is a multinational Local Autocephalous Church in doctrinal unity and devotional and canonical communion with other Local Orthodox Churches.
2. The Autonomous and Self-governing Churches, Exarchates, metropolitan areas, metropolias, dioceses, vicariates, synodal departments, deaneries, parishes, monasteries, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, theological educational institutions, missions, representations and metochions (hereinafter called 'canonical units'), which constitute the Russian Orthodox Church, canonically comprise the Moscow Patriarchate.
3. The jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church shall include persons of Orthodox confession living on the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Republic of Belarus, Moldova, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Kirghizia, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenia, the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Republic of Estonia, Japan and also Orthodox Christians living in other countries.
4. The Russian Orthodox Church carries out its work with respect for and adherence to the acting laws in each state on the basis of the following:
  - a) Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition;
  - b) the canons and rules of the Holy Apostles, Holy Ecumenical and Local Councils and Holy Fathers;
  - c) the decisions of its Local and Bishops' Councils and the Holy Synod and the Decrees of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia;
  - d) the present Statute.
5. The Russian Orthodox Church is registered in the Russian Federation as a legal entity and centralized religious organization.

The Moscow Patriarchate and other canonical units of the Russian Orthodox Church on the territory of the Russian Federation are registered as legal entities and religious organizations.

The canonical units of the Russian Orthodox Church on the territory of other states can be registered as legal entities in accordance with the laws of these states.

6. The Russian Orthodox Church has a hierarchical structure of governance.
7. The supreme bodies of the church authority and governance shall be the Local Council, the Bishops' Council and the Holy Synod headed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

There shall be a Supreme Church Council as executive body acting under the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.

There shall be an Inter-Council Presence as an advisory body assisting the supreme church authority of the Russian Orthodox Church in preparing decisions concerning the most important issues in the internal life and external work of the Russian Orthodox Church.

8. In the Russian Orthodox Church there shall be an ecclesiastical court acting at the following three instances:

a) the diocesan court;

b) the general church court;

c) the court of the Bishops' Council;

9. The officials and staff of the canonical units, as well as clergymen and laymen, cannot apply to the bodies of state power and to the civil court on matters pertaining to internal church life, including canonical governance, church order, and liturgical and pastoral activities.

10. The canonical units of the Russian Orthodox Church shall not engage in political activities and shall not rent their premises for political events.

## II. THE LOCAL COUNCIL

1. The supreme power in the Russian Orthodox Church pertaining to the election of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and his retirement, the granting of autocephaly, autonomy or self-governance to parts of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the consideration of subjects listed in this Statute, shall belong to the Local Council.

2. The Local Council shall be convened if necessary by the Bishops' Council. In exceptional cases the Local Council may be convened by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens) and by the Holy Synod.

3. The Local Council consists of the bishops, representatives of the clergy, monastics and lay people included in its membership either ex officio or elected in accordance with the Provision for the Membership of the Local Council.

The provision for the membership of the Local Council as well as amendments and additions to it shall be adopted by the Bishops' Council.

4. The responsibility for the preparation of the Local Council shall be borne by the Bishops' Council, which shall set the programme, agenda, rules of procedure of the sessions and the structure of the Council and give its preliminary assent to them and submit them to the Local Council for approval and shall also take other decisions pertaining to the holding of the Local Council.

In the event that the Local Council is convened by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens) and the Holy Synod, the proposals on the programme, agenda, rules of procedure of the sessions and the structure of the Local Council shall be approved by the Bishops' Council sitting in mandatory session prior to the Local Council.

5. The Local Council shall:

a) serve as the expression of the doctrinal and canonical unity of the Russian Orthodox Church and have as its primary task to preserve it;

b) make decisions pertaining to the granting of autocephaly, autonomy or self-governance to parts of the Russian Orthodox Church;

c) elect the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in accordance with the Provision for the Election of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and make the decision concerning his retirement;

The Provision for the Election of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, as well as amendments and additions to it, shall be approved by the Bishops' Council;

d) elaborate, on the proposal of the Bishops' Council, the Church's position on major issues concerning internal church life, relations with other Local Churches, non-Orthodox confessions and non-Christian religious communities, church-state and church-society relations in the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church;

e) propose to the Bishops' Council, if need be, to revisit its earlier decisions on doctrine and canonical order, considering the opinions expressed by a majority of the Local Council members;

- f) Initiate the consideration of significant issues by the Inter-Council Presence;
- g) Concern itself with the purity of the Orthodox faith, Christian morals and piety;
- h) Approve, change, annul and explain its resolutions.

6. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall preside over the Council, and the Locum Tenens shall preside over it in the absence of the Patriarch.

7. The quorum of the Council shall be 2/3 of the Council members, including 2/3 of bishops out of the total number of the Council member bishops.

8. The Council shall approve the agenda, the programme, the rules of sessional procedure and the structure and elect the Presidium and Secretariat by simple majority of those present members of the Council and shall form the necessary working bodies.

9. The Presidium of the Council shall consist of the Chairman (the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia or the Locum Tenens) and twelve members of the Council in the rank of bishop. The Presidium shall guide the sessions of the Council.

10. The Secretariat of the Council shall consist of the Secretary in the rank of bishop and two assistants – a clergyman and a layman. The Secretariat shall be responsible for providing the Council members with all the necessary working materials and for keeping minutes of the sessions. The minutes shall be signed by the Secretary and approved by the Chairman.

11. The Council shall elect the chairmen (in the rank of bishop), the members and the secretaries of the working bodies established by the Council by simple majority.

12. The Presidium, the Secretary and the chairmen of the working bodies shall comprise the Board of the Council.

The Board shall be the governing body of the Council. Its terms of reference shall include the following tasks:

- a) to consider emerging questions on the agenda and submit proposals on the order in which the Council shall consider them;
- b) to coordinate the entire activities of the Council;
- c) to consider matters of procedure and protocol;
- d) to provide administrative and logistic support for the normal work of the Council.

13. All member bishops of the Council shall comprise the Bishops' Conference. The Conference shall be convened by the Chairman of the Council on his initiative, by the decision of the Board of the Council or on the proposal of no less than 1/3 of the bishops. The task of the Conference shall be to consider the decisions of the Council which are of special importance and which cause doubt as to their conformity with the Holy Scriptures, Holy Tradition, dogmas and canons, and to maintain church peace and unity.

In the event that a certain decision of the Council or its part is rejected by the majority of the bishops present, it shall be put forward for another consideration by the Council. If after that the majority of the bishops present at the Council reject it, it shall lose its force as a Council's decision.

14. The opening of the Local Council and its daily sessions shall be preceded by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy or any other appropriate divine service in accordance with the rubrics.

15. The sessions of the Council shall be chaired by the Chairman, or, on his proposal, by one of the members of the Presidium of the Council.

16. The open sessions of the Local Council may be attended, along with its members, by invited theologians, experts, observers and guests. The extent of their participation shall be determined by the rules of procedure, but in any case they shall have no right to vote. The members of the Council shall have the right to propose a closed session.

17. The decisions of the Local Council shall be taken by the majority of votes, except special cases stipulated by the rules of procedure adopted by the Council. In the event of a tie in an open vote, the Chairman shall cast the deciding vote. In the event of a tie in a secret vote, another vote shall be held.

18. The actions of the Local Council in the form of decisions and decrees shall be signed by the Chairman and the members of the Presidium. Other documents approved by the decision (resolution) of the Council shall be initialed by the Secretary of the Council.

19. All official documents of the Local Council shall be signed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens), the members of the Presidium and the Secretary.

20. The decisions of the Council shall take effect immediately after their adoption.

### III. THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

1. The Bishops' Council shall be the supreme body of the Russian Orthodox Church in doctrinal, canonical, liturgical, pastoral, administrative and other matters concerning both the internal and external life of the Church and in maintaining fraternal relations with other Orthodox Churches and defining the character of relations with non-Orthodox confessions and non-Christian religious communities and the state and secular society.

3. The Bishops' Council shall be convened by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens) and the Holy Synod no less than once in four years and prior to a Local Council, as well as in exceptional cases stipulated, in particular, by Article V.20 of the present Statute.

At the suggestion of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod or 1/3 of the Bishops' Council members, an extraordinary Bishop's Council may be convened to be held no later than within six months after the respective decision of the Synod is made or the request of the group of bishops is submitted to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.

4. The Holy Synod shall be responsible for the preparation of the Bishops' Council.

5. The responsibilities of the Bishops' Council shall be as follows:

a) to preserve the purity and integrity of the Orthodox doctrine and norms of Christian morals and to interpret this doctrine on the bases of Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition while preserving doctrinal and canonical unity with the pleroma of Universal Orthodoxy;

b) to safeguard the dogmatic and canonical unity of the Russian Orthodox Church;

c) to adopt the Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church and introduce alterations and amendments to it;

d) to resolve fundamental theological, canonical, liturgical and pastoral issues pertaining to internal and external activities of the Church;

e) to canonize saints;

f) to provide competent interpretation of holy canons and other church statutes;

g) to express pastoral concern for problems of modern times;

h) to determine the nature of relations with state bodies;

i) to submit to the Local Council proposals for establishing, re-organizing and dissolving Autonomous and Self-Governing Churches;

j) to approve the Holy Synod decision on the establishment, re-organization and dissolution of Exarchates, metropolitan areas, metropolias, and dioceses, to define their boundaries and designations and to approve the decisions made by the Synods of Self-governing Churches on the establishment, re-organization and dissolution of metropolias and dioceses;

m) to approve the Holy Synod decisions on the establishment, re-organization and dissolution of synodal institutions and other church governance bodies;

- n) to submit, prior to a Local Council, proposals on its procedure, program, agenda and structure;
- o) to monitor the implementation of the decisions of Local and Bishops' Councils;
- p) to assess the work of the Holy Synod, the Supreme Church Council and the Synodal institutions;
- q) to approve, annul and amend the legislative acts of the Holy Synod;
- r) to establish a procedure for all the church courts;
- s) to consider financial reports submitted by the Holy Synod and to approve the principles of planning the expected general church incomes and expenditures;
- t) to approve new general church awards.

6. The Bishops' Council shall be the ecclesiastical court of final appeal. As such it shall consider and make decisions on the following:

– as part of the Local Council: at the first and last instance – on dogmatic and canonical deviations in the work of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia;

– at the last instance – on the following:

- a) disagreements between two or more bishops;
- b) canonical misdemeanours of bishops and heads of synodal institutions;
- c) all cases referred to it by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.

7. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia or the Locum Tenens shall be Chairman of the Bishops' Council.

8. The Holy Synod shall be the Presidium of the Bishops' Council. The Presidium shall be responsible for the holding and guidance of the Council. The Presidium shall propose the agenda, programme and rules of procedure of the Bishops' Council, submit proposals on the order in which the Council will consider emerging problems and on points of procedure and protocol.

9. The Secretary of the Bishops' Council shall be elected from among the members of the Holy Synod. The Secretary shall be responsible for providing the Council with necessary working materials and for keeping the minutes. The minutes shall be signed by the Secretary and approved by the Chairman of the Council.

10. The opening of the Council and its daily sessions shall be preceded by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy or other appropriate divine service according to the rubrics.

11. The sessions of the Bishops' Council shall be chaired by the Chairman or, at his proposal, by a member of the Holy Synod.

12. Theologians, experts, observers and guests may be invited to certain sessions of the Council without voting rights. The extent of their participation in the work of the Council shall be determined by the rules of procedure.

13. The decisions of the Bishops' Council shall be taken by simple majority in an open or secret vote, except in the cases specially stipulated by the rules of procedure adopted by the Council. In the event of a tie in an open vote, the Chairman shall cast the deciding vote. In the event of a tie in secret vote, the vote shall be held again.

14. The actions of the Bishops' Council in the form of decisions and resolutions shall be signed by the Chairman and the Council's Presidium members. Other documents approved by the resolutions of the Council shall be initialled by the Secretary.

15. None of the member bishops of the Bishops' Council can refuse to attend it except for illness or on any other serious reason that the Council considers valid.

16. The quorum of the Bishops' Council shall be  $\frac{2}{3}$  of its member bishops.

17. The decisions of the Bishops' Council shall take effect immediately after their adoption.

#### IV – THE PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

1. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church shall have the title of 'His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia'.
2. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall have primacy in honour among the episcopate of the Russian Orthodox Church and shall be accountable to the Local and Bishops' Councils.
3. The name of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia is to be commemorated at divine services in all churches of the Russian Orthodox Church with the following wording: 'For our Great Lord and Father (name), His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia'.
4. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall concern himself with the internal and external welfare of the Russian Orthodox Church and shall govern it together with the Holy Synod as its chairman.
5. The relations between the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod shall be determined by Canon 34 of the Holy Apostles and Canon 9 of the Council of Antioch in accordance with the common Orthodox tradition.
6. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia together with the Holy Synod shall convene Bishops' Councils and in exceptional cases Local Councils and shall preside at them. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall also convene the sessions of the Holy Synod.
7. In exercising his canonical authority, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall have their following prerogatives:
  - a) to be responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the Councils and the Holy Synod;
  - b) to submit to the Councils reports on the situation in the Russian Orthodox Church for the period between the Councils;
  - c) to uphold the unity of the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church;
  - d) to convene the Supreme Church Council and chair its sessions;
  - e) to submit the names of the Inter-Council Presence members to the Holy Synod for approval;
  - f) to exercise authoritative supervision over all Synodal departments;
  - g) to address the Pleroma of the Russian Orthodox Church with pastoral messages;
  - h) to sign the general church documents after their appropriate approval by the Holy Synod;
  - i) to exercise the executive and instructive authority in governing the Moscow Patriarchate;
  - j) to communicate with the Primates of the Orthodox Churches in compliance with the decisions of the Councils or the Holy Synod, as well as on his own behalf;
  - k) to represent the Russian Orthodox Church in its relations with the highest bodies of state authorities and administration;

- l) to have the duty of petitioning and interceding before the bodies of the state authorities both inside and outside the canonical territory;
- m) to approve the statutes of the Self-governing Churches, Exarchates, metropolitan areas and Dioceses;
- n) to receive appeals from diocesan bishops of Self-governing Churches;
- o) to approve the rulings of the Church Court in cases provided by the Provision for the Church Court;
- p) to issue decrees on the election and appointment of diocesan bishops, heads of Synodal departments, vicar bishops, rectors of theological schools and other officials appointed by the Holy Synod, except for rectors of theological schools as well as abbots and abbesses of monasteries under diocesan authority;
- q) to take care for the timely replacement of episcopal sees;
- r) to entrust bishops with the temporal administration of dioceses in case of the diocesan bishop's prolonged illness, death or standing on trial in the ecclesiastical court;
- s) to supervise the exercising by bishops of their archpastoral duty to take pastoral care of their dioceses;
- t) to have the right to visit in necessary cases all dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church (Canon 34 of the Holy Apostles; Canon 9 of the Council of Antioch, Council of Carthage 52 (63));
- u) to approve the annual reports of the diocesan bishops;
- v) to give fraternal advice to bishops with regard to both their personal life and the exercise of their archpastoral duty. In the event that they do not heed his advice, he shall propose that the Holy Synod make an appropriate decision;
- w) to consider cases of misunderstandings between bishops who appeal to him for mediation without a formal legal procedure. In these cases, the Patriarch's decisions shall be obligatory for the matters pertaining to disagreements among bishops who voluntarily ask for his mediation without formal legal proceedings. The decision of the Patriarch in such cases shall be binding for the both parties;
- x) to receive complaints against bishops and set them in appropriate motion;
- y) to allow bishops to go on leave for more than 14 days;
- z) to award bishops with established titles and high church distinctions;
- z1) to award clergy and laity with church decorations;
- z2) to approve the establishment of new chairs in theological schools at the proposal of the Education Committee;

z3) to take care for the timely production and consecration of the holy myrrh for general church needs;

8. The insignia of the Patriarchal dignity shall be a white koukoulion, a green mantle, two panagias, a great paraman and a cross carried before him in procession.

9. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall be the diocesan bishop of the Moscow diocese, which includes Moscow and the Moscow region.

The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall be assisted in administering the Moscow diocese by the Patriarchal Vicar with the right of diocesan bishop with the title of Metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna.

The territorial boundaries of the governance exercised by the Patriarchal Vicar with the right of diocesan bishop shall be determined by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

10. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall be the Holy Archimandrite of the Lavra of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius and a number of other monasteries of special historical significance and shall govern all the stauropegic monasteries.

Stauropegic monasteries and church representations in the Moscow diocese shall be established by decrees of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Stauropegions in other dioceses shall be established with the consent of the diocesan bishop by the decision of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.

11. The rank of Patriarch shall be for life.

12. The right of consideration on the retirement of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall belong to the Local Council. The right of trial of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall belong to the Bishops' Council acting as part of the Local Council. The ruling of the Bishops' Council takes effect after its approval by 2/3 of votes of the Local Council members.

13. In the event of the demise of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, his retirement, his standing trial by an ecclesiastical court or on any other reason which makes the execution of his Patriarchal office impossible, the Holy Synod, chaired by the eldest by consecration permanent member of the Holy Synod, shall immediately elect the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal throne from among its permanent members.

The procedure of the election of the Locum Tenens shall be established by the Holy Synod.

14. The church property at the disposal of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, in virtue of his position and office, shall be the property of the Russian Orthodox Church. The personal property of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall be inherited in accordance with the law.

15. In the period between the Patriarchal tenures:

a) the Russian Orthodox Church shall be governed by the Holy Synod chaired by the Locum Tenens;

b) the name of the Locum Tenens shall be mentioned at divine services in all churches of the Russian Orthodox Church;

c) the Locum Tenens shall discharge the duties of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia as stipulated in Article IV.7 of the present Statute, except u) and v);

d) the Metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna shall come into independent governance of the Moscow diocese.

16. No later than six months after the Patriarchal throne becomes vacant, the Locum Tenens and the Holy Synod in the order prescribed by Article II. 2 of the present Statute shall convene a Local Council to elect a new Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

17. A candidate to the Patriarchal office must meet the following requirements:

a) to be a bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church;

b) to have a higher theological education and sufficient experience in diocesan administration and to be distinguished by his adherence to canon law and order;

c) to enjoy a good reputation and confidence among the bishops, clergy and the people;

d) 'to be well thought of by outsiders' (1 Tim.3:7);

e) to be not younger than 40 years old.

## V – THE HOLY SYNOD

1. The Holy Synod, headed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens), shall be the governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church in the period between Bishops' Councils.
2. The Holy Synod shall be responsible to the Bishops' Council and through the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall submit to it reports on its activities in the period between the Councils.
3. The Holy Synod shall consist of the Chairman – the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens), nine permanent members and five temporary members summoned from among the diocesan bishops.
4. The permanent members of the Holy Synod shall be as follows: Metropolitans of Kiev and All Ukraine; of St. Petersburg and Ladoga; of Krutitsy and Kolomna; of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch of All Byelorussia; of Kishinev and All Moldova; of Astana and Kazakhstan, head of the Metropolia of the Republic of Kazakhstan; of Tashkent and Uzbekistan, head of the Metropolia of Central Asia; and the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations and the chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate ex officio.
5. The temporary members shall be summoned to attend one session according to the seniority of episcopal consecration, one from each group into which the dioceses are divided. A bishop cannot be summoned to the Holy Synod before two years of his administration of the diocese have passed.
6. The synodal year is divided into two sessions: the summer session (March-August) and the winter session (September-February).
7. Diocesan bishops, heads of the synodal departments and rectors of theological academies may attend the Holy Synod sessions in an advisory capacity in the consideration of matters pertaining to the dioceses, institutions and schools under their administration or to the authority vested on them by the Church.
8. The participation of the permanent and temporary members of the Holy Synod in its sessions shall be their canonical duty. The Synod members absent without valid reasons shall be subjected to brotherly admonishment.
9. In exceptional cases the quorum of the Synod shall be 2/3 of its membership.
10. The sessions of the Holy Synod shall be convened by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens). In the event of the death of the Patriarch, the Patriarchal Vicar – the Metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna shall convene the Holy Synod within three days after the death for the election of a Locum Tenens.
11. As a rule, the Holy Synod shall sit in closed sessions. The Holy Synod members shall be seated according to the protocol adopted in the Russian Orthodox Church.
12. The Synod shall work on the basis of the agenda presented by the Chairman and approved by the Holy Synod in the beginning of the first session. The items requiring a preliminary examination shall be sent out to the Holy Synod members by the Chairman in advance. The Holy Synod members may

submit proposals on the agenda and raise questions provided the Chairman is notified of them beforehand.

13. The Chairman shall guide the sessions in accordance with the adopted rules of procedure.

14. In the event that the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia cannot temporarily execute his duties of chairing the Synod for some reason, the duties of the Chairman shall be executed by the permanent member of the Synod who is senior by consecration. The temporary chairman of the Holy Synod shall not be the canonical Locum Tenens.

15. The Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate shall be the Secretary of the Holy Synod. The Secretary shall be responsible for the preparation of the necessary materials for the Synod and for keeping the minutes of the sessions.

16. The Holy Synod shall deal with its matters by consensus of all members participating in the session or by the majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chairman shall cast the deciding vote.

17. None of those present in the Holy Synod can abstain from voting.

18. Each member of the Synod in case of disagreement with an adopted decision can voice his dissenting opinion and argue his point and submit it in writing within three days after the session. Dissenting opinions shall be attached to the minutes on the matter without impeding the decision on it.

19. The Chairman shall not be eligible to withdraw the matters proposed for the agenda by his own authority or prevent the decision-making on them or suspend the implementation of such decisions.

20. In the event that the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia considers an adopted decision to be unbeneficial for the Church, he shall raise an objection. The objection shall be made at the same session and then set forth in writing within seven days. On the expiry of this term the Holy Synod shall revisit the matter. In the event that the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia does not find it possible to agree with a new decision, it shall be suspended and referred to the Bishops' Council. If it is impossible to postpone the matter and a decision must be made immediately, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall use his own discretion. The decision thus taken shall be referred to the extraordinary Bishops' Council on which the final solution of the matter shall depend.

21. When the Holy Synod considers a matter of complaint lodged against members of the Holy Synod, the person concerned can be present at the session and give explanations, but the accused member of the Holy Synod must leave the meeting hall when a decision is being taken. When a complaint lodged against the Chairman is considered, he shall delegate the chairmanship to the bishop senior by consecration from among the permanent members of the Synod.

22. All minutes and decisions of the Holy Synod shall be signed first by the Chairman and then by all members present at the session, even if some of them have not agreed with the adopted decision and have submitted their dissenting opinion.

23. The decisions of the Holy Synod shall become effective upon their signing and are not liable to reconsideration, except the cases where new data have been presented essentially changing the matter.

24. The Chairman of the Holy Synod shall exercise the supreme supervision over the precise implementation of the decisions taken.

25. The Holy Synod shall have the following duties:

a) to take care of the sound preservation and interpretation of the Orthodox faith and the norms of Christian morals and piety;

b) to minister to the internal unity of the Russian Orthodox Church;

c) to maintain unity with other Orthodox Churches;

d) to organize the internal and external activity of the Church and to settle problems of church-wide importance arising in this connection;

e) to interpret canonical decisions and to resolve difficulties involved in their application;

f) to regulate liturgical matters;

g) to issue disciplinary regulations concerning the clergy, monastics and church workers;

h) to evaluate major events in the inter-church, inter-confessional and interreligious relations;

i) to maintain inter-confessional and interreligious relations both inside and outside the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate;

j) to coordinate the actions of the Pleroma of the Russian Orthodox Church in its efforts to reach peace and justice;

k) to express pastoral concern for social problems;

l) to address special messages to all the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church;

m) to maintain proper relations between the Church and the state in compliance with the present Statute and the current legislation;

n) to approve the Statutes of the Self-governing Churches and Exarchates and Metropolises;

o) to adopt the civil statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church and its canonical units and introduce alterations and additions to them;

p) to consider the minutes of the Synods of the Exarchates and Metropolises;

q) to deal with matters pertaining to the establishment or dissolution of the Russian Orthodox Church's canonical units accountable to the Holy Synod with their subsequent approval at the Bishops' Council;

r) to establish the order of ownership, use and disposal of the buildings and property of the Russian Orthodox Church;

s) to approve the decisions of the General Ecclesiastical Court in cases provided by the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court;

26. The Holy Synod shall have the following obligations:

a) to elect and appoint bishops and in exceptional cases to transfer bishops and to discharge them on retirement;

b) to summon bishops to the sessions of the Synod;

c) to consider bishops' reports on the situation in their dioceses if need be and at the proposal of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to take decisions on them;

d) to inspect through its members the activity of bishops every time when it considers it necessary;

e) to determine the salary of the bishops.

27. The Holy Synod shall make the following appointments:

a) the heads of the synodal institutions and, at the their proposal, their deputies;

b) the rectors of the Theological Academies and Seminaries, father superiors (mother superiors) and abbots of the monasteries;

c) the bishops, clergymen and lay persons for important service in the countries of the far abroad;

d) at the proposal of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, the members of the Supreme Church Council from among leaders of synodal or other church-wide institutions and the Moscow Patriarchate units;

e) at the proposal of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, the members of the Inter-Council Presence;

28. The Holy Synod can set up commissions or other working bodies for the following concerns:

a) the resolution of major theological problems pertaining to the internal and external activity of the Church;

b) the preservation of the text of the Holy Scriptures, its translation and publication;

c) the preservation of the texts of liturgical books, as well as amending, editing and publishing them;

d) the canonization of saints;

e) the publication of collected holy canons, textbooks and educational aids for theological schools, as well as theological literature, official periodicals and other needful literature;

f) the advanced theological, spiritual and ethical training of the clergy and work of the theological schools;

- g) mission, catechization and religious education;
- h) the state of religious education;
- i) the affairs of monasteries and monastics;
- j) works of charity and social service;
- k) the proper state of affairs in the field of church architecture, icon-painting, singing and applied arts;
- l) church monuments and antiquities owned by of the Russian Orthodox Church;
- m) production of church utilities, candles, vestments and all other necessary items for maintaining the liturgical tradition, beauty and good order in churches;
- n) pensions for the clergy and church workers;
- o) solution of economic problems;

29. In its guidance of the synodal institutions the Holy Synod shall have the following duties:

- a) to approve the regulations (statutes) of their activity;
- b) to approve the annual work plans of the synodal institutions and to receive their reports;
- c) to take decisions on major aspects of the current work of synodal institutions;
- d) to make inspection of these institutions, if necessary.

30. The Holy Synod shall approve the Church's plan of expenditures and, if necessary, consider the estimates of the synodal institutions, theological schools and respective financial reports.

31. In its concern for the dioceses, monasteries and theological schools, the Holy Synod shall fulfil the following duties:

- a) to establish and dissolve Exarchates, Metropolias, metropolitanates and dioceses and to define (change) their boundaries and designations to be approved by the Bishops' Council;
- b) to adopt model provisions for the diocesan institutions;
- c) to approve the statutes of monasteries and to exercise general supervision over monastic life;
- d) to establish stauropegic monasteries;
- e) at the proposal of the Education Committee, to approve the model statutes and curricula of theological educational institutions, as well as model programs of theological seminaries;
- f) to see to it that the actions of all bodies of church authority in dioceses, deaneries and parishes should be carried out in conformity with legal regulations;
- g) to carry out inspections, if necessary;

32. The Holy Synod shall make judgments on issues arising in the interpretation of the present Statute.

## VI – THE SUPREME CHURCH COUNCIL

1. The Supreme Church Council shall be an executive body of the Russian Orthodox Church functioning under the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod. In the period between Patriarchal tenures, the Supreme Church Council shall function under the Locum Tenens and the Holy Synod.
2. The Supreme Church Council shall be subordinate and accountable to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens) and the Holy Synod.
3. The Supreme Church Council shall consider the following matters:
  - a) theological education, enlightenment, mission, church social service, informational work of the canonical units of the Russian Orthodox Church and the church mass media;
  - b) the Church's relations with the state, society, Local Orthodox Churches, non-Orthodox confessions and non-Christians religions;
  - c) church governance and economic management;
  - d) other matters referred to the Supreme Church Council by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens).
4. The Supreme Church Council shall have the following tasks:
  - a) to coordinate the work of synodal and other church-wide institutions;
  - b) to consider the current problems of church life that require concerted actions by synodal and other church-wide institutions;
  - c) to take measures for the implementation of decisions made by Local and Bishops' Councils, decisions and resolutions of the Holy Synod, and decrees and instructions of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens);
5. The Supreme Church Council shall have the following duties:
  - a) to hear the reports of heads or representatives of synodal and other church-wide institutions on their work;
  - b) to give instructions within its competence to synodal institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church and to control their implementation;
6. The Supreme Church Council shall consist of the chairman – the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens), members of the Supreme Church Council ex officio as well as members appointed by the Holy Synod in accordance with the procedure established by the Provision for the Supreme Church Council.
7. The heads of the synodal institutions listed in Article VIII, 6 of the present Statute shall be members of the Supreme Church Council ex officio. In the event of leaving their post, they shall cease to be members of the Supreme Church Council.

8. The Holy Synod, on the proposal of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, may appoint members of the Supreme Church Council from among the heads of the Moscow Patriarchate unites and synodal or other church-wide institutions. The Supreme Church Council members appointed by the Holy Synod may be removed from the Supreme Church Council by the decision of the Holy Synod on the proposal of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (or the Locum Tenens).

9. The rule of procedure for the Supreme Church Council shall be defined by the Provision for the Supreme Church Council approved by the Holy Synod.

## VII – THE INTER-COUNCIL PRESENCE

1. There shall be an Inter-Council Presence for preparing decisions pertaining to major issues of the internal and external work of the Russian Orthodox Church.
2. The Inter-Council Presence shall have the tasks to make preliminary examination of the issues considered by a Local Council, to prepare draft decisions on these issues and, at the instruction of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia or the Holy Synod, to prepare the decisions of a Bishops' Council and the Holy Synod.
3. The members of the Inter-Council Presence shall be elected by the Holy Synod from among the bishops, clergy, monastics and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church.
4. The membership of the Inter-Council Presence shall be reviewed on the proposal of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia every four years. If need be, the Holy Synod acting at the proposal of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall make the decision to replace a member of the Inter-Council Presence.
5. The permanent members of the Holy Synod and members of the Supreme Church Council shall be members of the Inter-Council Presence *ex officio*. In the event of leaving their posts, they shall continue to participate in the work of the Inter-Council Presence if the Holy Synod does not decide otherwise.
6. The decision to include an item on the agenda of the Inter-Council Presence shall be made by a Local or Bishops' Council, the Holy Synod or the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
7. The Inter-Council Presence shall carry out its work in accordance with the procedure defined by the Provision for the Inter-Council Presence subject to approval by the Holy Synod.

## VIII- THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND SYNODAL INSTITUTIONS

1. The Moscow Patriarchate shall be an institution of the Russian Orthodox Church, uniting the structures supervised directly by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

The Moscow Patriarchate shall be governed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

2. The Synodal institution shall be an institution of the Russian Orthodox Church in charge of general church matters falling within its competence.

3. The Moscow Patriarchate and the synodal departments shall be bodies of executive power of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.

The Moscow Patriarchate and the synodal institutions shall have an exceptional right to be plenipotentiary representatives of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod within their scope and competence.

4. The synodal institutions shall be established or dissolved by the decision of the Holy Synod and shall be accountable to it.

The Regulations (Statutes) of the Moscow Patriarchate and the synodal institutions and amendments to them shall be confirmed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia with the advice and consent of the Holy Synod.

5. The synodal institutions shall be headed by persons appointed by the Holy Synod.

6. The synodal institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church shall be as follows:

a) the Chancery functioning as part of the Moscow Patriarchate exercising its rights as synodal institution;

b) the Department for External Church Relations;

c) the Publishing Council;

d) the Education Committee;

e) the Financial-Economic Department;

f) the Department for Monasteries and Monastics;

g) the Department for Religious Education and Catechization;

h) the Department for Charity and Social Ministry;

j) the Mission Department;

g) the Department for Relations with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies;

k) the Youth Department;

l) the Department for Church-Society Relations;

m) the Information Department

o) the Prison Service Department

p) the Committee for Cooperation with the Cossacks

q) the Patriarchal Council for Culture.

7. Other synodal institutions can be established in case of necessity.

8. The synodal institutions shall be coordinating bodies in relation to similar institutions functioning in the Self-governing Churches, Exarchates, Metropolia and dioceses, and as such shall be entitled to apply, within their competence, to diocesan bishops and heads of other canonical units, to send them their regulations and to request relevant information.

9. The work of the synodal institutions shall be regulated by the Provisions (Statutes) approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia with the advice and consent of the Holy Synod.

## IX – THE ECCLESIASTICAL COURT

1. Judicial authority in the Russian Orthodox Church shall be exercised by the Ecclesiastical Courts through ecclesiastical legal proceedings.
2. The judicial system in the Russian Orthodox Church shall be established on the basis of holy canons, the present Statute and the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court.
3. The unity of the judicial system of the Russian Orthodox Church shall be ensured through the following:
  - a) observance by all church courts of the established rules of ecclesiastical legal proceedings;
  - b) recognition of the necessity for the canonical units and all members of the Russian Orthodox Church to implement court rulings which have taken effect;
4. judgement in the Russian Orthodox Church shall be exercised by the ecclesiastical courts at the following three instances:
  - a) diocesan courts exercising jurisdiction within their dioceses;
  - b) the General Ecclesiastical Court exercising jurisdiction throughout the Russian Orthodox Church;
  - c) the supreme court, which is the court of the Bishops' Council.
5. The canonical sanctions such as suspension of clerics for life, deposition and excommunication shall be imposed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia or the diocesan bishop subject to approval by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – by the Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine and the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church).
6. The procedure for investing the ecclesiastical court judges with powers shall be established by holy canons, the present Statute and the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court.
7. Legal actions shall be accepted for consideration by the ecclesiastical court in accordance with the procedure and under the conditions established by the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court.
8. The rulings of ecclesiastical courts which have taken effect as well as their instructions, requests, summonses and other orders shall be binding for all clergymen and laymen without exception.
9. The examination of cases in all ecclesiastical courts shall be carried out in closed session.
10. The diocesan court shall be the court of first instance.
11. The function of diocesan court judges can be fulfilled by clergymen empowered by the diocesan bishop to administer justice in the diocese entrusted to his care.

The function of the chairman of the court may be fulfilled by a vicar bishop or a presbyter. The members of the court must be presbyters.
12. The diocesan court shall consist of at least five judges in the rank of bishops or priests. The chairman, vice-chairmen and secretary of the diocesan court shall be appointed by the diocesan

bishop. The diocesan assembly shall elect at least two members of the diocesan court on the proposal of the diocesan bishop. The term of the diocesan court judges shall be three years with possible re-appointment or re-election to a new term.

13. The early recall of a chairman or a member of the diocesan court shall be effected by the decision of the diocesan bishop.

14. The ecclesiastical legal proceedings shall be exercised in court session with the participation of the diocesan bishop.

15. The terms of reference and the legal proceedings procedure for the diocesan court shall be established by the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court.

16. The rulings of the diocesan court shall take effect and shall be enforced after their approval by the diocesan bishop, and in the event envisioned in Article 5 of this Chapter – after their approval by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – by the Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine and the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church).

17. The diocesan courts shall be financed from the diocesan funds.

18. The General Ecclesiastical Court as the court of first instance considers cases of ecclesiastical offences of bishops and heads of synodal institutions. The General Ecclesiastical Court is the court of second instance for cases of ecclesiastical offences of clergy, monastics and laity under the jurisdiction of the diocesan court.

19. The General Ecclesiastical Court shall consist of the chairman and at least four members in episcopal rank who shall be elected by the Bishops' Council for the term of four years.

20. The early recall of the chairman or a member of the General Ecclesiastical Court shall be exercised by the decision of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod subject to approval by the Bishops' Council.

21. The right to appoint an acting chairman or a member of the General Ecclesiastical Court in the event of a vacancy shall belong to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.

22. The term of reference and the procedure for legal proceedings of the General Ecclesiastical Court shall be established by the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court.

23. The rulings of the General Ecclesiastical Court shall be put into effect after their approval by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.

In the event that the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod disagree with a ruling of the General Ecclesiastical Court, the decision of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod shall come into force.

In this event the case may be referred to the court of the Bishops' Council for the final ruling.

24. The General Ecclesiastical Court shall exercise judicial supervision over the work of the diocesan courts in the judicial forms stipulated by the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court.

25. The General Ecclesiastical Court shall be financed from the general church funds.
26. The court of the Bishops' Council shall be the ecclesiastical court of final appeal.
27. The court of the Bishops' Council functioning as part of the Local Council shall be the first and the last instance for dogmatic and canonical deviations in the work of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
28. The Bishops' Council shall exercise legal proceedings in accordance with the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court.
29. The work of the ecclesiastical courts shall be supported by the staff of these courts subordinate to their chairmen and acting on the basis of the Provision for the Ecclesiastical Court.

## X – THE AUTONOMOUS CHURCHES

1. The Autonomous Churches which are parts of the Moscow Patriarchate shall carry out their work on the basis and within the scope provided by the Patriarchal Tomos issued in accordance with the decisions of a Local or Bishops' Council.
2. Decisions on the establishment or dissolution of an Autonomous Church as well as the definition of its territorial boundaries shall be made by a Local Council.
3. The bodies of church authority and governance of an Autonomous Church shall be the Council and the Synod headed by the Primate of the Autonomous Church in the rank of metropolitan or archbishop.
4. The Primate of an Autonomous Church shall be elected by its Council.
5. The Primate shall assume office after approval by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
6. The Primate shall be the Diocesan Bishop of his diocese and head the Autonomous Church on the basis of canons, the present Statute and the Statute of the Autonomous Church.
7. The name of the Primate shall be mentioned in all the churches of an Autonomous Church after the name of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
8. The bishops of an Autonomous Church shall be elected by its Synod.
9. The bishops of an Autonomous Church shall be members of the Local and Bishops' Councils and shall participate in their work in accordance with Articles II and III of the present Statute and attend the sessions of the Holy Synod.
10. Decisions of Local and Bishops' Councils and the Holy Synod shall be binding for an Autonomous Church.
11. The General Ecclesiastical Court and the court of the Bishops' Council shall be courts of final appeal for an Autonomous Church.
12. The Council of an Autonomous Church shall adopt a Statute regulating the governance of this Church on the basis and within the scope provided by the Patriarchal Tomos. The draft Statute of an Autonomous Church shall be agreed in writing with the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
13. The Council and Synod of an Autonomous Church shall act within the bounds defined by the Patriarchal Tomos and the present Statute regarding the governance of an Autonomous Church.
14. The Autonomous Church shall receive the Holy Chrism from the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
15. The Autonomous Churches are as follows:
  - The Chinese Orthodox Church;
  - The Japanese Orthodox Church.

## XI – THE SELF-GOVERNING CHURCHES

1. The Self-governing Churches which are parts of the Moscow Patriarchate shall carry out their work on the basis and within the scope provided by the Patriarchal Tomos issued in accordance with decisions of a Local or Bishops' Council.
2. The decision to establish or dissolve a Self-governing Church as well as the determining of its territorial boundaries shall be adopted by the Local Council.
3. The bodies of church authority and governance of a Self-governing Church shall be the Council and the Synod headed by the Primate of the Self-governing Church in the rank of metropolitan or archbishop.
4. The Primate of a Self-governing Church shall be elected by a Council from among candidates approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.
5. The Primate shall come into office after approval by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
6. The Primate shall be the Diocesan Bishop of his diocese and shall head the Self-governing Church on the basis of canons, the present Statute and the Statute of the Self-governing Church.
7. The name of the Primate shall be mentioned in all the churches of a Self-governing Church after the name of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
8. The decisions to establish or dissolve dioceses as parts of a Self-governing Church and to define their territorial boundaries shall be made by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod on the proposal of the Synod of the Self-governing Church subject to approval by a Bishops' Council.
9. The bishops of a Self-governing Church shall be elected by the Synod from among the candidates approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.
10. The bishops of a Self-governing Church shall be members of the Local and Bishops' Councils and shall participate in their work in accordance with Articles II and III of the present Statute and attend the meetings of the Holy Synod.
11. The decisions of the Local and Bishops' Councils and the Holy Synod shall be binding for a Self-governing Church.
12. The General Ecclesiastical Court and the court of the Bishops' Council shall be church courts of final appeal for a Self-governing Church.
13. The Council of a Self-governing Church shall adopt a Statute regulating the governance of this Church on the basis and within the scope provided by the Patriarchal Tomos. The Statute shall be approved by the Holy Synod and validated by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
14. The Council and Synod of a Self-governing Church shall act within the bounds defined by the Patriarchal Tomos, the present Statute and the Statute regulating the governance of a Self-governing Church.

15. The Self-governing Church shall receive the Holy Chrism from the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

16. The Self-governing Churches are as follows:

The Latvian Orthodox Church;  
The Orthodox Church of Moldova;  
The Estonian Orthodox Church.

17. The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with all her historically developed dioceses, parishes and other church institutions shall be a self-governing part of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The norms of the present Statute shall be applied with consideration for the Act of Canonical Communion of May 17, 2007, as well as the Provision for the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia with the amendments and additions made by the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Outside of Russia on May 13, 2008.

18. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church shall be a self-governing church with the rights of broad autonomy.

In its life and work, it shall be guided by the Tomos of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Statute of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church confirmed by her Primate and approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

## XII –THE EXARCHATES

1. The dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church can be united into Exarchates on the basis of national and regional principle.
2. The decisions on the establishment or dissolution of the Exarchates as well as their names and territorial boundaries shall be taken by the Bishops' Council.
3. The decisions of the Local and Bishops' Councils and the Holy Synod shall be mandatory for the Exarchates.
4. The General Ecclesiastical Court and the court of the Bishops' Council shall be church courts of final appeal for an Exarchate.
5. The supreme church authority in an Exarchate shall belong to the Synod of the Exarchate chaired by the Exarch.
6. The Synod of an Exarchate shall adopt a Statute regulating the activities of the Exarchate.

The Statute must be approved by the Holy Synod and confirmed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

7. The Synod of an Exarchate shall act on the basis of the canons, the present Statute and the Statute regulating the governance of the Exarchate.
8. The minutes of the Synod of an Exarchate shall be submitted to the Holy Synod and approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
9. The Exarch shall be elected by the Holy Synod and appointed by a Patriarchal decree.
10. The Exarch shall be the Diocesan Bishop of his diocese and shall exercise the governance of the Exarchate on the basis of the canons, the present Statute and the Statute regulating the governance of the Exarchate.
11. The name of the Exarch shall be mentioned in all churches of the Exarchate after the name of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
12. The Diocesan and Vicar Bishops of an Exarchate shall be elected and appointed by the Holy Synod on the proposal of the Synod of the Exarchate.
13. The decisions on the establishment or dissolution of the dioceses comprising an Exarchate and on the definition of their territorial boundaries shall be taken by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod on the proposal of the Synod of the Exarchate subject to approval by the Bishops' Council.
14. The Exarchate shall receive the Holy Chrism from the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
15. In the Russian Orthodox Church at present there is the Byelorussian Exarchate located in the territory of the Republic of Belarus. 'The Byelorussian Orthodox Church' shall be another official name of the Byelorussian Exarchate.

## XII – THE METROPOLITAN AREAS

1. The dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church can be united into Metropolitan Areas.
2. The decisions on the establishment or dissolution of Metropolitan Areas as well as their names and territorial boundaries shall be made by the Holy Synod subject to approval by the Bishops' Council.
3. The decisions of the Local and Bishops' Councils and the Holy Synod shall be binding for the Metropolitan Areas.
4. The General Ecclesiastical Court and the court of the Bishops' Council shall be the courts of final appeal for a Metropolitan Area.
5. The supreme church authority in a Metropolitan Areas shall belong to the Synod of the Metropolitan Area chaired by the head of the Metropolitan Area. The Synod of a Metropolitan Area shall consist of the Diocesan and Vicar Bishops of the Metropolitan Area.
6. The Synod of a Metropolitan Area shall submit to the Holy Synod for consideration and to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia for approved a draft Statute of the Metropolitan Area and, if necessary, a draft internal provision for the Metropolitan Area, and subsequently draft amendments to these documents.
7. The Synod of a Metropolitan Area shall submit to the Holy Synod for consideration and to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia for approval draft Statutes of the Metropolitan Area, parishes, monasteries, theological schools and other canonical units as well as amendments (additions) to them.
8. The Synod of a Metropolitan Area shall act on the basis of canons, the present Statute, the Statute regulating the governance of the Metropolitan Area and/or the internal provision for the Metropolitan Area.
9. The minutes of the Synod of a Metropolitan Area shall be submitted to the Holy Synod and approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
10. The bishop heading a Metropolitan Area shall be elected by the Holy Synod and appointed by Patriarchal decree.
11. The bishop heading a Metropolitan Area shall be the Diocesan Bishop of his diocese and direct the governance of the Metropolitan Area on the basis of canons, the present Statute, and the Statute regulating the governance of the Metropolitan Area.
12. The name of the bishop heading a Metropolitan Area shall be mentioned in all the churches of the Metropolitan Area after the name of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
13. The Diocesan and Vicar Bishops of a Metropolitan Area shall be elected and appointed by the Holy Synod.
14. The decision on the establishment or dissolution of member dioceses of a Metropolitan Area and the definition of their territorial boundaries shall be made by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod subject to approval by the Bishops' Council.

15. The Metropolitan Area receives the Holy Chrism from the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

16. In the Russian Orthodox at present there are the following Metropolitan Areas:

- The Metropolitan Area in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- The Metropolitan Area of Central Asia.

#### XIV- THE METROPOLIAS

1. Two or more dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church can be united in a Metropolia.
2. Metropolias are formed for the purposes of coordinating the liturgical, pastoral, missionary, educational and youth work as well as social, charitable, publishing and informational activities of the dioceses and their cooperation with society and governmental bodies.
3. The decisions to establish or dissolve Metropolias, to determine their names, boundaries and composition shall be made by the Holy Synod subject to approval by the Bishops' Council.
4. The dioceses comprising a Metropolia shall be canonically accountable directly to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, the Holy Synod, the Bishops' and Local Councils.
5. The General Ecclesiastical Court shall be the highest instance for the diocesan church courts in the member dioceses of a Metropolia.
6. As required, but at least twice a year, the Metropolia shall hold a bishops' council consisting of all the Diocesan and Vicar Bishops of the Metropolia, as well as the secretary of the bishops' council appointed by the head of the Metropolia.

The powers of the bishops' council and the procedure of its work shall be defined by the Provision for the Metropolias approved by the Holy Synod.

7. The Vicar Bishops of a Metropolia shall participate in the bishops' council with the right to vote.
8. The head of a Metropolia (Metropolitan) shall be the Diocesan Bishop of one of the member dioceses of the Metropolia and shall be appointed by the Holy Synod upon the pertinent decree of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
9. The name of the head of a Metropolia (Metropolitan) shall be mentioned in all the churches of the Metropolia after the name of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia as follows:
  - within his own diocese, "For our Lord, His Eminence (name) Metropolitan (title)"; in the brief form: "For our Lord, His Eminence Metropolitan (name)".
  - within other dioceses: "For the Lord, His Eminence (name), Metropolitan (title); in the brief form: "For the Lord, His Eminence Metropolitan (name)".
10. The affairs of a Metropolia are executed by the diocesan administration headed by the Metropolitan.
11. The powers of the head of a Metropolia (Metropolitan) shall be defined by the Provision for the Metropolias.

## **XV – THE DIOCESES**

1. The Russian Orthodox Church shall be divided into dioceses – local churches governed by the bishop and uniting the diocesan institutions, deaneries, parishes, monasteries, church representations, theological educational institutions, brotherhoods, sisterhoods and missions.
2. The Diocese shall be established by the decision of the Holy Synod subject to approval by the Bishops' Council.
3. The boundaries of the dioceses shall be determined by the Holy Synod.
4. Each diocese shall have the bodies of diocesan administration acting in the framework determined by canons and the present Statute.
5. There can be institutions established in the dioceses as necessary to meet church needs. Their activities shall be regulated by the provisions (statutes) approved by the Holy Synod.

### **1. The Diocesan Bishop**

6. The Diocesan Bishop, in succession of the authority from the holy apostles, shall be the primate of the local church – the diocese, and shall canonically rule it with the conciliar assistance of the clergy and laity.
7. The Diocesan Bishop shall be elected by the Holy Synod upon the relevant decree of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
8. If need be, the Holy Synod shall appoint Vicar Bishops to assist the Diocesan Bishop with the range of competence stipulated by the Provision for the Diocesan Vicariates or at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop.
9. The Bishop shall have the title that includes the name of the cathedral city. The Bishops' titles shall be determined by the Holy Synod.
10. The candidates for the office of bishop shall be elected from among the monastics or unmarried white clergy, must be at least 30 years old and be obliged to take monastic vows. The nominated candidate's moral qualities must conform to the high rank of bishop and he must be a graduate of a theological school.
11. The Bishops shall enjoy the fullness of hierarchal authority in the matters of doctrine, religious rites and pastoral care.
12. The Diocesan Bishop shall ordain clergymen and assign them to places of their ministry, appoint all workers of the diocesan institutions and authorize monastic investitures.
13. The Diocesan Bishop shall have the right to accept clergymen from other dioceses into his diocese provided they have letters of release and the right to release clergymen to other dioceses and present their personal dossiers and letters of release at the request of bishops.

14. No decision of the diocesan administration body can be implemented without the consent of the Diocesan Bishop.

15. The Diocesan Bishop can issue archpastoral letters to the clergy and laity within his diocese.

16. The Diocesan Bishop shall be obliged to submit an annual report in the prescribed form on the religious, administrative, financial and economic state of the diocese and his own activities to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

17. The Diocesan Bishop shall be an authorized representative of the Russian Orthodox Church before the appropriate bodies of state authority and administration in matters concerning the work of his diocese.

18. In governing the diocese, the Bishop shall:

a) take care for the preservation of the faith, Christian morals and devotion;

b) supervise the correct celebration of the divine services and observance of proper church decor;

c) be responsible for the implementation of the provisions of the present Statute and the decisions of the Councils and the Holy Synod;

d) convene the Diocesan Assembly and the Diocesan Council and chair them;

e) exercise, if necessary, the right of veto on a decision of the Diocesan Assembly and refer it to the Holy Synod;

f) approve the civil statutes of the parishes, monasteries, church representations and other canonical units comprising the diocese;

g) in accordance with the canons, visit the parishes of his diocese and exercise control over their activities directly or through his authorized representatives;

h) have the supreme authoritative oversight over the diocesan institutions and monasteries in his diocese;

i) supervise the activities of the diocesan clergy;

j) appoint (or dismiss) rectors, parish priests and other clergymen;

k) submit for the approval by the Holy Synod the names of the rectors of theological educational institutions, father superiors (mother superiors) and abbots of the monasteries in the diocesan jurisdiction and issue decrees on the appointment of these officers on the basis of the decision of the Holy Synod;

l) approve the membership of the Parish Assembly;

m) partly or fully change the membership of the Parish Assembly if its members deviate from canonical rules and regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church and violate the parish statute;

n) take a decision on the convocation of the Parish Assembly;

- o) confirm the appointment (or relieve) the chair persons of the auditing commissions and parish treasurers elected by the Parish Assembly;
- p) withdraw the Parish Council members who violate canonical norms and parish statutes;
- q) approve the financial and other reports of the Parish Councils and reports of the auditing commissions of the parishes;
- p) have the right to appoint (or relieve) the chairman of the Parish Council and the assistant rector (church warden) and introduce them into the membership of the Parish Assembly and Parish Council or omit them from thereof;
- q) approve the minutes of the Parish Assembly;
- r) grant leave to the clergy;
- s) be concerned for the improvement of the spiritual and moral state of the clergy and for the enhancement of the level of their education;
- t) care about the training of clergymen and church servants and for this objective send the worthy candidates to theological educational institutions;
- u) oversee the state of church sermons;
- v) petition the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia for granting deserving clergymen and laymen appropriate awards and himself confer the awards upon them in the prescribed manner;
- x) give his blessing to the establishment of new parishes;
- y) give his blessing to the construction and repair of churches, prayer houses and chapels and ensure that their exterior and interior decoration conform to the Orthodox church tradition;
- z) consecrate churches;
- z1) care for the state of church singing, icon-painting and applied church arts;
- z2) intercede before the bodies of state authority and administration for the return to the diocese of churches and other buildings and constructions intended for ecclesiastical purposes;
- z3) solve matters of the ownership, use and disposal of the diocesan property;
- z4) dispose of the financial assets of the diocese and, on its behalf, conclude agreements, give powers of attorney and open bank accounts and have primary authority to sign financial and other documents;
- z5) exercise control over the religious, administrative and financial activities of the parishes, monasteries, educational institutions and other diocesan units;
- z6) issue his own executive and managerial acts on all matters of the life and work of the diocese;
- z7) confirm the belonging to his diocese of all the parishes, monasteries and other canonical units of the diocese located on its territory;

z8) directly or through appropriate diocesan institutions care for:

- works of charity and social service;
- providing the parishes with all objects necessary for celebrating divine services;
- meeting other ecclesiastical needs.

19. In overseeing the canonical order and church discipline, the Diocesan Bishop shall:

- a) have the right to have paternal influence on the clergy and to incur penalty upon them, including punishment by reprimand, dismissal from the occupied position and suspension;
- b) admonish laymen and, if need be, impose punishments upon them or temporarily excommunicate them in accordance with canons and refer grave misdemeanours to the ecclesiastical court;
- c) approve punishments imposed by the ecclesiastical court and have the right of mitigation of punishment;
- d) in accordance with the canons, solve problems arising in concluding church marriages and divorces.

20. A vacant diocese shall be temporarily governed by the bishop appointed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. During the period of vacancy of the episcopal see, no business shall be conducted pertaining to the re-organization of the diocesan life and no changes shall be made in the work initiated in the period of governance by the previous bishop.

21. In the event of the vacancy of the diocese or the transfer of the ruling bishop or his retirement, the Diocesan Council shall set up a commission to audit the diocesan property and draw up an appropriate act of transference of the diocese to the newly-appointed bishop.

22. The church property, which was at the disposal of the bishop by virtue of his rank and office and which remains in the official bishop's residence shall be put into the inventory book of the diocese after his death and shall be transferred over to the diocese. The personal property of the deceased bishop shall be inherited in accordance with the current laws.

23. The diocese cannot remain vacant for more than forty days, except in special cases when there are sufficient reasons for prolonging the vacancy.

24. The Diocesan Bishops shall have the right to leave their dioceses for valid reasons for not more than 14 days without asking for preliminary permission from the highest church authorities. If the absence is planned for more than 14 days, the bishops shall ask for the permission in the prescribed manner.

25. The Holy Synod shall determine the maintenance of the Diocesan Bishops. Upon retirement they will be given bishops' pension, the size of which shall be determined by the Holy Synod.

26. When the bishop is 75, he shall submit his petition for retirement to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. The matter of the time for granting such a petition shall be decided by the Holy Synod.

## **2. The Diocesan Vicariates**

27. The diocesan vicariate is a canonical unit of the diocese uniting one or several deaneries of the diocese.

28. The Diocesan Bishop shall exercise the supreme power in the governance of the vicariates.

29. The Vicar Bishop shall be appointed (or relieved) by the decision of the Holy Synod at the proposal of the Diocesan Bishop.

The Vicar Bishop shall help the Diocesan Bishop to govern the diocese. The powers of the Vicar Bishop governing the vicariate shall be defined by the Provision for the Diocesan Vicariates approved by the Holy Synod, as well as by written or oral instructions of the Diocesan Bishops.

The Diocesan Bishop can also be assisted by appointed Vicar Bishops who do not govern vicariates. Their powers shall be determined by the written or oral instructions of the Diocesan Bishop.

30. The Vicar Bishop is an ex officio member of the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Assembly with the right to vote.

31. To carry out his work the Vicar Bishop:

- a) convenes the meetings of the vicariate clergy;
- b) establishes the council and office of the vicariate;

The vicariate clergy meeting and the vicariate council shall be advisory bodies under the Vicar Bishop.

32. The vicariate clergy meeting shall consist of the clergy of all the canonical units of the vicariate.

The powers and the rules of procedure of the clergy meeting shall be defined by the Provision for the Diocesan Vicariates.

The decisions of the clergy meeting shall come into force after their approval by the Diocesan Bishop.

33. The vicariate council includes:

- a) the Vicar Bishop;
- b) the deans of the member districts of the vicariate;
- c) the confessor of the vicariate;
- d) one clergyman from each deanery of the vicariate, elected for a three-year term by the vicariate clergy meeting;
- e) no more than three clergymen chosen at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop.

The vicariate council shall be chaired by the Vicar Bishop. The secretary of the vicariate council shall be member of the vicariate council appointed to this position by the order of the Vicar Bishop.

The membership of the vicariate council shall be approved by the Diocesan Bishop.

The power and the rule of procedure for the vicariate council shall be defined by the Provision for the Diocesan Vicariates.

The decisions of the vicariate council shall come into force after their approval by the Diocesan Bishop.

34. The vicariate may have a secretariat consisting of office workers appointed by the order of the Vicar Bishop.

35. The head of the vicariate secretariat shall be accountable to the Vicar Bishop and shall be appointed by him.

### **3. The Diocesan Assembly**

36. The Diocesan Assembly headed by the Diocesan Bishop shall be the governing body of the diocese and shall be composed of the clergymen, monastics and laymen living on the territory of the diocese and representing the canonical units of the diocese.

37. The Diocesan Assembly shall be convened by the Diocesan Bishop at his discretion but at least once a year, and also by the decision of the Diocesan Council or on the demand of no less than 1/3 of the members of the previous Diocesan Assembly.

The procedure of convening the members of the Diocesan Assembly shall be established by the Diocesan Council.

The Vicar Bishops shall be members of the Diocesan Council ex officio with the right to vote.

38. The Diocesan Assembly shall:

a) elect delegates to the Local Council;

b) elect members of the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Court;

c) establish necessary diocesan institutions and care for their financial maintenance;

d) work out general diocesan rules and regulations in accordance with the resolutions of the Councils and decisions of the Holy Synod;

e) oversee the diocesan life;

f) hear the reports on the state of affairs in the diocese, on the work of the diocesan institutions, on the life of the monasteries and other canonical units of the diocese and make decisions on these reports.

g) consider the annual reports on the work of the Diocesan Council.

39. The Diocesan Assembly shall be chaired by the Diocesan Bishop. The Diocesan Assembly shall elect the deputy chairman and the secretary. The deputy chairman can guide the Assembly if so instructed by the Chairman. The secretary shall be responsible for drafting the minutes of the Diocesan Assembly.

40. The quorum of the Assembly shall be the majority (more than a half) of its members. The decisions shall be taken by the majority of votes. In the event of a tie, the Chairman shall cast the deciding vote.

41. The Diocesan Assembly shall work in accordance with the adopted rules of procedure.

42. The minutes of the Diocesan Assembly shall be signed by the Chairman, his deputy, the secretary and two members of the Assembly elected to do it.

#### **4. The Diocesan Council**

43. The Diocesan Council headed by the Diocesan Bishop shall be the governing body of the diocese.

The Diocesan Council shall be formed with the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop and shall consist of no less than four persons in the rank of presbyter, half of them appointed by the Bishop and the rest elected by the Diocesan Assembly for a three-year term.

The Vicar Bishop shall be ex officio member of the Diocesan Council with the right to vote.

44. If the members of the Diocesan Council violate the doctrinal, canonical or moral norms of the Orthodox Church and if they stand trial in the ecclesiastical court or are under investigation, they shall be dismissed from their office by the decision of the Diocesan Bishop.

45. The Diocesan Bishop shall be the chairman of the Diocesan Council.

46. The Diocesan Council shall meet regularly, but at least once in six months.

47. The quorum of the Diocesan Council shall be the majority of its members.

48. The Diocesan Council shall work on the basis of the agenda presented by the chairman.

49. The chairman shall guide the sessions in accordance with the adopted rules of procedure.

50. The Bishop shall appoint the secretary of the Diocesan Council from among its members. The secretary shall be responsible for the preparation of the necessary materials and for keeping the minutes.

51. In the event that disagreements arise concerning the matter under consideration, the matter shall be solved by the majority of votes. In the event of a tie, the Chairman shall cast the deciding vote.

52. The minutes of the sessions of the Diocesan Council shall be signed by all its members.

53. In accordance with the instructions of the Diocesan Bishop, the Diocesan Council shall:

a) implement the decisions of the Diocesan Assembly within the Council's terms of reference and shall be accountable before it about the work done;

b) establish the procedure of the election of the members of the Diocesan Assembly;

c) prepare the meetings of the Diocesan Assembly, including proposals for the agenda;

- d) consider matters pertaining to the opening of parishes, deaneries, monasteries, production units, administration bodies and other diocesan units;
- e) submit its annual reports to the Diocesan Assembly;
- f) take care for the raising of funds to meet the material needs of the diocese, and, if necessary, those of parishes;
- g) determine the boundaries of the deaneries and the parishes;
- h) consider the reports of the deans and take appropriate decisions;
- i) oversee the activities of the Parish Councils;
- j) consider the plans for construction, capital repairs and restoration of churches;
- k) take stock of the property of the canonical units of the Diocese including the buildings of churches, prayer houses, chapels, monasteries and theological educational institutions;
- l) within its competence, solve matters pertaining to the ownership, use and disposal of the property of the parishes, monasteries and other canonical units of the Diocese. The immovable property of the canonical units of the Diocese, namely, buildings, structures and plots of land can be abolished only on the basis of the decision of the Diocesan Council;
- m) conduct the audit of the diocesan institutions;
- n) take care of the material support of supernumerary clergymen and church workers;
- o) discuss the preparatory work for jubilees, general diocesan celebrations and other important events;
- p) solve any other matters which the Diocesan Bishop refers to the Diocesan Council to take decision or consider with the purpose of giving him appropriate recommendations;
- q) consider matters of liturgical practice and church discipline.

### **5. The Diocesan Administrations and other Diocesan Institutions**

54. The Diocesan Administration shall be the executive body of the Diocese under the direct guidance of the Diocesan Bishop and, together with other Diocesan institutions, shall assist the Bishop in exercising his executive authority.

55. The Bishop shall exercise the highest authoritative supervision over the work of the Diocesan Administration and all the diocesan institutions and shall appoint their staff in accordance with the staff list.

56. The work of the Diocesan Administrations and other diocesan institutions shall be regulated by the provisions (statutes) approved by the Holy Synod and also by the Bishop's instructions.

57. All Diocesan Administrations must have an office, accounting department, archives and the necessary number of other departments, which shall provide for missionary, publishing, social and charitable, educational, restoration and construction, economic and other kinds of diocesan work.

58. The Secretary of the Diocesan Administration shall be responsible for the office work of the Diocese and within the competence determined by the Diocesan Bishop shall assist him in the governance of the Diocese and guidance of the Diocesan Administration.

#### 6. The Deaneries

59. The Diocese shall be divided into Deaneries headed by Deans appointed by the Diocesan Bishop.

60. The boundaries of the Deaneries and their names shall be determined by the Diocesan Council.

61. The responsibilities of the Dean shall include:

- a) concern for the purity of the Orthodox faith and proper ecclesial and moral education of believers;
- b) supervision over the correct and regular celebration of the divine services, the proper decor and order in the churches and the state of church sermon;
- c) concern for the implementation of resolutions and instructions of the diocesan authority;
- d) concern for the timely revenue return of the collections from the parishes;
- e) counselling the clergy concerning both the discharge of their duties and their personal life;
- f) removing misunderstandings among clergymen and also between the clergy and laity without formal legal proceedings but with reporting the most notable incidents to the Diocesan Bishop;
- g) making a preliminary inquiry into church offences at the instruction of the Diocesan Bishop;
- h) petitioning the Diocesan Bishop for awarding clergymen and laymen deserving reward;
- i) making proposals to the Diocesan Bishop for filling vacant offices of priests, deacons, psalm-readers and precentors;
- j) concern for meeting the religious needs of believers in temporarily priestless parishes;
- k) supervising over the construction and restoration of church buildings within the Deanery;
- l) concern for the availability of all the objects necessary for the proper celebration of divine services and normal parish office work;
- m) fulfilling other duties placed upon him by the Bishop.

62. In discharging his duties the Dean shall visit at least once a year all parishes of his deanery to inspect the liturgical life, interior and exterior state of the churches and other church buildings as well as the proper conduct of church affairs and church archives and to examine the religious and moral state of the faithful.

63. The Dean can hold sessions of the Parish Assembly at the instruction of the Diocesan Bishop, at the request of the rector, the Parish Council or the Parish Assembly.

64. With the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop, the Dean can summon priests for fraternal meetings to consider church needs common for the Deanery.

65. The Dean shall submit annual reports to the Diocesan Bishop on the state of affairs in the Deanery and on his own work in the prescribed manner.

66. The Dean can have an office, the staff of which shall be appointed by the Dean with the knowledge of the Diocesan Bishop.

67. The work of the Dean shall be financed from the funds of his parish and, if necessary, from the general diocesan funds.

## XVI – THE PARISHES

1. The Parish is a community of Orthodox Christians consisting of clergymen and laymen united at a church.

The Parish shall be a canonical unit of the Russian Orthodox Church under authoritative supervision of the Diocesan Bishop and guidance of an appointed priest-rector.

2. The Parish shall be formed by voluntarily consent of the believing citizens of Orthodox confession who have come of age and with the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop. For obtaining the status of a legal entity the Parish shall be registered by the state bodies in the manner prescribed by the legislation of the country where the Parish is located. The boundaries of the Parishes shall be determined by the Diocesan Council.

3. The Parish shall begin its activities upon the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop.

4. The Parish in its civil and legal activities shall observe the canonical rules, the inner by-laws of the Russian Orthodox Church and the legislation of the country of its location.

5. The Parish shall necessarily allocate through the Diocese the funds for general church needs in the amount established by the Holy Synod and for the needs of the Diocese – in the manner and amount established by the bodies of the Diocesan Authority.

6. The Parish in its religious, administrative, financial and economic activities shall be subordinate and accountable to the Diocesan Bishop. The Parish shall implement the resolutions of the Diocesan Assembly and of the Diocesan Council and the instructions of the Diocesan Bishop.

7. In the event that some members split off or all members of the Parish meeting withdraw from the Parish, they shall not be entitled to claim any rights to the property and assets of the Parish.

8. In the event that the Parish Meeting takes a decision to withdraw from the hierarchic structure and jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Parish shall no longer be recognized as belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. That will entail the cessation of the activities of the Parish as a religious organization of the Russian Orthodox Church and will deprive it of the right to property, which belonged to the Parish by the right of ownership, use or on any other legal basis, as well as the right to use in its designation the name and symbols of the Russian Orthodox Church.

9. The parish churches, prayer houses and chapels shall be organized with the blessing of the Diocesan Authority and shall maintain the order established by the law.

10. The bodies of the Parish administration shall be the Diocesan Bishop, the Rector, the Parish Meeting, the Parish Council and the chairman of the Parish Council.

The supreme administration of the Parish shall belong to the Diocesan Bishop.

Control over the activity of the Parish shall be exercised by the Audit Commission.

11. The brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall be founded by parishioners only with the consent of the Rector and with the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop. Brotherhoods and sisterhoods have an objective to involve parishioners in concerns and works for maintaining churches in the appropriate condition

and participating in works of charity, social service, religious and moral education. Brotherhoods and sisterhoods at the parishes shall be under the authoritative supervision of the Rectors. In exceptional cases the statute of a brotherhood or sisterhood approved by the Diocesan Bishop can be submitted for state registration.

12. The brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall begin their activity upon the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop.

13. In exercising their activities the brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall be guided by the present Statute, the resolutions of the Local and Bishops' Councils, decisions of the Holy Synod, decrees of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, decisions of the Diocesan Bishop and the Rector of the Parish, as well as by the civil statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Diocese and the Parish, at which they are established, and by their own statute, if brotherhoods and sisterhoods are registered as legal entities.

14. The brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall allocate through the parishes the money for general church purposes in the amount established by the Holy Synod; for the diocesan and parish needs – in the manner and amount established by the bodies of the Diocesan authority and the Rectors of the parishes.

15. The brotherhoods and sisterhoods in their religious, administrative, financial and economic activities shall be subordinate and accountable to the Diocesan Bishops. The brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall abide by the decisions of the Diocesan Authority and the Rectors of the Parishes.

16. In the event some members split off or all members of the brotherhood or sisterhood withdraw, they shall not be entitled to claim any rights for the property and assets of the brotherhood and sisterhood.

17. In the event that a general meeting of the brotherhood and sisterhood takes a decision to withdraw from the hierarchic structure and jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, the brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall no longer be recognized as belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. That shall entail the cessation of the activities of the brotherhood or the sisterhood as a religious organization of the Russian Orthodox Church and shall deprive them of the right to property, which belonged to the brotherhood or sisterhood by the right of ownership, use or on any other legal basis, as well as the right to use the name and symbols of the Russian Orthodox Church in their designation.

### **1. The Rector**

18. Every parish shall be headed by the Rector of the church appointed by the Diocesan Bishop for spiritual guidance of the believers and administration over the parish clergy and the parish. The Rector shall be accountable to the Diocesan Bishop for his activity.

19. The Rector shall be responsible for the correct celebration of the divine services in accordance with the Statute of the Church, as well as for the church sermon, religious and moral state and proper education of the parish members. He must conscientiously discharge all liturgical, pastoral and administrative duties determined by his office in accordance with the established canons and the present Statute.

20. The responsibilities of the Rector shall include:

- a) guiding the clergy in fulfilling their liturgical and pastoral duties;
- b) supervising the condition of the church building, its interior decoration and the availability of all objects necessary for divine services in accordance with the requirements of the liturgical rubrics and instructions of the Church authorities;
- c) caring for correct and reverential reading and singing in the church;
- d) caring for the exact abiding by the instructions of the Diocesan Bishop;
- e) organizing catechetical, charitable, public and educational activities of the parish;
- f) convening and chairing the sessions of the Parish Meeting;
- g) suspending with sufficient grounds the implementation of the decisions of the Parish Meeting and the Parish Council on the matters of doctrinal, canonical, liturgical or administrative and economic nature with subsequent referral of the matter to the Diocesan Bishop for consideration;
- h) supervising the implementation of the decisions of the Parish Meeting and the work of the Parish Council;
- i) representing the interests of the Parish in the bodies of state power and local self-administration;
- j) submitting to the Diocesan Bishop directly or through the Dean the annual reports on the state of the parish, the work carried out in the parish and his own work;
- k) maintaining the official church correspondence;
- l) keeping a liturgical journal and safe-keeping the parish archive;
- m) issuing certificates of baptism and marriage.

21. The Rector can have a vacation and leave his parish for a while exclusively with the permission of the Diocesan authority received in the prescribed manner.

## **2. The Parish Clergy**

22. The Parish Clergy shall have the following members: a priest, a deacon and a psalm-reader. The number of the Parish Clergy can be increased or reduced by the Diocesan authority at the request of the Parish and in accordance with its needs. In any case the Parish Clergy should consist of no less than two persons – a priest and a psalm-reader.

*Note: a person in holy orders can assume the office of a psalm-reader.*

23. The election and appointment of the clergymen and church servants shall belong to the Diocesan Bishop.

24. In order to be ordained deacon or priest it is necessary:

- a) to be a member of the Russian Orthodox Church;

- b) to be of age;
- c) to have the necessary moral qualities;
- d) to have sufficient theological training;
- e) to have a certificate from his father-confessor of the absence of canonical obstacles to ordination;
- f) not to stand trial by the ecclesiastical or civil court;
- g) to take an ecclesiastical oath.

25. The members of the Parish Clergy can be transferred and dismissed from places of their ministry by the Diocesan Bishop at their personal request, according to the ruling of the ecclesiastical court or in accordance with the ecclesiastical expediency;

26. The responsibilities of the members of the Parish Clergy shall be determined by the canons and instructions of the Diocesan Bishop or the Rector.

27. The Parish Clergy shall be responsible for the spiritual and moral state of the parish and for discharging their liturgical and pastoral duties;

28. The members of the Parish Clergy cannot leave the parish without permission of the church authority received in the prescribed manner;

29. A clergyman can take part in the celebration of a divine service in another parish with the consent of the Diocesan Bishop of the diocese in which this parish is located, or with the consent of the Dean or the Rector provided there is a certificate which confirms his canonical capacity.

30. In compliance with Canon 13 of the 4th Ecumenical Council, clergymen can be accepted in another diocese only if they have letters of release from the Diocesan Bishop.

### **3. The Parishioners**

31. The Parishioners are persons of the Orthodox confession, who maintain living contacts with their parish.

32. Every Parishioner shall be obliged to take part in the divine services, make Confession and take Holy Communion regularly, observe the canons and church prescriptions, carry out deeds of faith, strive for religious and moral perfection and contribute to the well-being of the parish.

33. The Parishioners shall be responsible for the material support of the clergy and the maintenance of the church building.

### **4. The Parish Meeting**

34. The Parish Meeting headed by the Rector of the Parish, who is chairman of the Parish Meeting ex officio, shall be the highest governing body of the parish.

The Parish Meeting shall include the clergymen of the parish and the laymen who regularly take part in the liturgical life of the parish and who are worthy of participation in the parish affairs by virtue of

their commitment to Orthodoxy, their moral standing and experience of life. They shall be over 18 years, not under suspension or standing trial by an ecclesiastical or civil court.

35. The acceptance into the membership of the Parish Meeting and the withdrawal from it shall be made by the decision of the Parish Meeting on the basis of a petition (application). In the event that a member of the Parish Meeting is considered to be at odds with his position, he can be removed from the Parish Meeting by its decision.

In the event that the members of the Parish Meeting deviate from the canons, the present Statutes and other regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church or violate of the statute of the Parish, the memberships of the Parish Meeting can be changed completely or partly by the decision of the Diocesan Bishop.

36. The Parish Meeting shall be convened by the Rector or at the instruction of the Dean or other authorized representative of the Diocesan Bishop at least once a year.

The Parish Meeting convened for election or re-election of the members of the Parish Council shall be held with the participation of the Dean or any other representative of the Diocesan Bishop.

37. The meeting shall be held in accordance with the agenda presented by the chairman.

38. The chairman shall preside over the sessions in accordance with the adopted rules of procedure.

39. The Parish Meeting shall be entitled to take decisions if no less than half of its members take part in it. The resolutions of the Parish Meeting shall be adopted by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, the chairman shall cast the deciding vote.

40. The Parish Meeting shall elect from among its members the secretary who shall be responsible for the minutes of the session.

41. The minutes of the Parish Meeting shall be signed by the chairman, the secretary and five elected members of the Parish Meeting. The minutes of the Parish Meeting shall become effective upon approval by the Diocesan Bishop.

42. The resolutions of the Parish Meeting can be read out to the parishioners in the church.

43. The Parish Meeting shall be responsible for:

- a) preserving the inner unity of the Parish and promoting its spiritual and moral growth;
- b) adopting the civil Statute of the Parish, amendments and additions to it to be approved by the Diocesan Bishop and become effective upon the registration with the state;
- c) admitting and excluding the members of the Parish Meeting;
- d) electing the Parish Council and the Audit Commission;
- e) planning financial and economic activities of the Parish;
- f) providing for the safety of the church property and care for its increase;

- g) adopting the plans of expenditures, including the amount of allocations for charity and religious educational purposes and submitting them to the Diocesan Bishop for approval;
- h) approving the plans and examining the design and budget documents for construction and repair of church buildings;
- i) considering financial and other reports of the Parish Council and reports of the Auditing Commission and submitting them to the Diocesan Bishop for approval;
- k) approving the staff list and determining the upkeep of the members of the Parish Clergy and the Parish Council;
- l) determining the order of disposal of the parish property under the conditions stipulated by the present Statute, the Civil Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Statute of the Diocese, the Statute of the Parish and also by the current legislation;
- m) attending to the availability of all objects necessary for the canonical celebration of the divine services;
- n) attending to church singing;
- o) submitting petitions from the parish to the Diocesan Bishop and the civil authorities;
- p) considering the complaints brought against the members of the Parish Council and Audit Commission and submitting them to the Diocesan Administration.

## **5. The Parish Council**

44. The Parish Council shall be an executive and managerial body of the Parish meeting and shall be accountable to the Rector and the Parish meeting.

45. The Parish Council shall consist of the Chairman – the churchwarden, his/her assistant and the treasurer. The Parish Council shall be elected from among the members of the Parish meeting for the term of three years. Re-election is unlimited. The Diocesan Bishop shall approve the election of the Chairman of the Parish Council or appoint the Rector or another person to this office by his decree with the inclusion of this person in the Parish meeting.

The Diocesan Bishop shall be entitled to relieve a member of the Parish Council of his/her work, if he/she violates the canons, the provisions of the present Statute or of the civil Statute of the Parish.

46. In the period between the sessions of the Parish meeting the Parish Council shall:

- a) implement the decisions of the Parish meeting;
- b) submit the plans of economic activities, annual plans of expenditures and financial reports to the Parish meeting for consideration and approval;
- c) be responsible for the safety and proper maintenance of the church and other buildings, constructions, premises and adjacent territories, the plots of land belonging to the Parish and all the property which the Parish owns or uses, and keep records;

- d) purchase the property necessary for the parish and keep inventory books;
- e) solve current economic matters;
- f) dispose of the financial assets of the Parish with the consent of the Rector and under his control and keep records;
- g) provide the Parish with the necessary property;
- h) provide the members of the Clergy of the Parish with living accommodations in the event that they need them;
- i) in agreement with the Rector and in accordance with the list of staff hire workers and employees;
- j) take care for the safety and beauty of the church, for maintaining decent order during the divine services and processions with the cross;
- k) maintain contacts with the bodies of state authority, local government, public associations and citizens;
- l) take care for providing the church with all objects necessary for the proper celebration of the divine services.

47. The members of the Parish Council may be removed from the Parish Council by the decision of the Parish meeting or by the order of the Diocesan Bishop, if there are sufficient grounds.

48. The Chairman of the Parish Council – the churchwarden shall represent the Parish Council in business, financial, economic and administrative matters as well as in court and shall issue powers of attorney in case of necessity.

*Note: The Parish meeting shall be entitled in case of necessity to charge any member enjoying full rights to deal with the civil organizations and to defend the interests of the Parish in court.*

49. The Rector may be elected Chairman of the Parish Council with the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop.

50. All official outgoing documents of the Parish shall be signed by the Rector and the Chairman of the Parish Council – the churchwarden. In the event of the Rector being Chairman of the Parish Council, the treasurer shall be the second signatory.

51. Bank and other financial documents shall be signed by the Chairman of the Parish Council and the treasurer. In civil legal relations the treasurer shall act as chief accountant. The treasurer shall keep records and keep financial assets, donations and other contributions and compile annual financial reports. The Parish shall keep accounting reports.

52. In the event that the Parish Council is re-elected or the Diocesan Bishop changes its composition, and also if the Chairman of the Parish Council is re-elected, dismissed by the Diocesan Bishop or dies, the Parish Meeting shall set up a commission of three members, which shall draw up a statement on the availability of the property and financial resources. The Parish Council shall accept material assets on the basis of this statement.

53. The responsibilities of the assistant chairman of the Parish Council shall be determined by the Parish meeting.

54. The responsibilities of the treasurer shall include the discounting and keeping of the sums of money and other donations, the keeping of account-books, carrying out of financial operations at the instruction of the chairman of the Parish Council within the limits of the budget and compiling the annual financial reports.

## **6. The Auditing Commission**

55. The Parish meeting shall elect from among its members for the term of three years the Auditing commission of the Parish, which shall consist of the Chairman and two members. The Auditing commission shall be accountable to the Parish meeting. The Auditing commission shall audit the financial and economic activities of the parish, the safety and stock-taking of the property and its proper use, make annual inventory, audit the entering of donations and revenue returns and expenditure. The Auditing commission shall present the results of the auditing and the appropriate proposals to the Parish meeting for consideration.

In the event that the abuses are revealed, the Auditing commission shall immediately inform the Diocesan authorities.

56. The right of auditing the financial and economic activities of the parish and parish institutions shall also belong to the Diocesan Bishop.

57. The members of the Parish Council and the Auditing commission cannot be close relatives.

58. The responsibilities of the Auditing commission shall include:

a) regular audit, including the inspection of the availability of money, legality and regularity of the expenditures and the keeping of the expenses book by the parish;

b) supervision of the property;

c) annual inventory;

d) control for the collect-boxes and donations.

59. The Auditing Commission shall compile acts on the auditing and present them at the regular or extraordinary sessions of the Parish meeting. In the event of the abuses, lack of property or money and the revealed mistakes in the keeping and registration of financial operations, the Parish meeting shall take appropriate decision. The Parish meeting is entitled to bring an action in court with prior consent of the Diocesan Bishop.

## XVII – THE MONASTERIES

1. The Monastery is a church institution, living and acting in which is a community of men or women, consisting of Orthodox Christians who voluntarily have chosen the monastic way of life for spiritual and moral perfection and the common confession of the Orthodox faith.

2. The decision on the opening (abolishment) of Monasteries shall belong to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and to the Holy Synod on the petition of a Diocesan Bishop.

The monastery can be registered as a legal entity in the order established by the legislation of respective country.

3. Stavropegic monasteries shall be proclaimed as such by the decision of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod provided the canonical procedure be observed;

4. The stavropegic monasteries shall be under the supervision and canonical administration of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia or those Synodal departments authorized by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to exercise such supervision and administration.

5. The diocesan monasteries shall be under the supervision of the diocesan bishops.

6. In the event that one, several or all conventuals of the monastery withdraw from it, they shall have no right to the property and assets of a monastery and shall not make any claims to such.

7. The joining of the monastery or withdrawal from it shall be executed by the decrees of the diocesan bishop on the petition of the father superior (mother superior) or the abbot.

8. The monasteries shall be governed and live in accordance with the provisions of the present Statute, the Civil Statute, the Provision for the Monasteries and Monastics and their own statutes to be approved by the diocesan bishop.

9. The monasteries can have their representations. The community of Orthodox Christians in the jurisdiction of a monastery and located outside its territory shall be called the representation. The activities of the representation shall be regulated by the statute of the monastery to which this representation belongs and by its own civil Statute. The representation of the monastery shall be in the jurisdiction of the same bishop as the monastery is. In the event that the representation is located on the territory of another diocese, both the name of the diocesan bishop and the name of the bishop in whose diocese the representation is located shall be mentioned at the divine services in the representation church.

10. In the event the monastery takes a decision to withdraw from the hierarchic structure and jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, this monastery shall no longer be recognized as belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. This shall entail the cessation of the activity of the monastery as a religious organization of the Russian Orthodox Church and the monastery shall be deprived of the right to the property that belonged to the monastery by the right of ownership, use or on any other legal basis, as well as the right to use the name and symbols of the Russian Orthodox Church in its designation.

## XVIII – THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS

1. The theological educational institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church shall be the higher and secondary specialized educational institutions, which shall train clergymen and church servants, theologians and church workers.
2. The theological educational institutions shall be under the authoritative supervision of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, exercised through the Education Committee.
3. The theological educational institutions shall canonically belong to the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop, on the territory of whose diocese they are located.
4. The theological educational institutions shall be established by the decision of the Holy Synod on the proposal of the diocesan bishop supported by the Education Committee.
5. The theological educational institution shall be governed and shall carry out their activities on the basis of the present Statute and the civil and internal Statutes approved by the Holy Synod and confirmed by the diocesan bishop.
6. In the event that the theological educational institution takes a decision to withdraw from the hierarchic structure and jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, this theological educational institution shall no longer be recognized as belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. This shall entail the cessation of the activity of the theological educational institution as a religious organization of the Russian Orthodox Church and the theological educational institution shall be deprived of the right to the property that belonged to it by the right of ownership, use or on any other legal basis, as well as the right to use the name and symbols of the Russian Orthodox Church in its designation.

## XIX – THE CHURCH INSTITUTIONS ABROAD

1. The church institutions in the far abroad (hereinafter called 'overseas institutions') shall be the Russian Orthodox Churches' dioceses, deaneries, parishes, stavropegic and diocesan monasteries, as well as missions, representations and church representations located outside the CIS and the Baltic countries.
2. The supreme church authority shall exercise its jurisdiction over these institutions in accordance with the procedure established by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.
3. The overseas institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church shall be guided in their governance and work by the present Statute and their own Statutes, which must be approved by the Holy Synod with respect for the laws operating in each country.
4. The overseas institutions shall be established and abolished by the decision of the Holy Synod. The representations and church representations located abroad shall be stavropegic.
5. The overseas institutions shall carry out their ministry in accordance with the aims and tasks of the external work of the Russian Orthodox Church.
6. The heads and executives of the overseas institutions shall be appointed by the Holy Synod.

## XX – THE PROPERTY AND ASSETS

1. The assets of the Russian Orthodox Church and of its canonical units shall be formed from the following:

a) donations received during the celebration of divine services, Sacraments, requested services and rites;

b) voluntary donations of natural persons and legal entities, governmental, public and other enterprises, institutions, organizations and foundations;

c) donations received in disseminating Orthodox religious objects and Orthodox religious literature (books, journals, newspapers, audio- and video-recordings, etc.) and from the sale of these objects;

d) income received from the activity of the institutions and enterprises of the Russian Orthodox Church assigned for the statutory objectives of the Russian Orthodox Church;

e) allocations from the synodal institutions, dioceses, diocesan institutions, missions, church representations, representations, as well as parishes, monasteries, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, their institutions, organizations, etc.;

f) allocations from the profits of the enterprises established by the canonical units of the Russian Orthodox Church independently or together with other legal entities or natural persons;

g) other returns which are not prohibited by the legislation, including income from securities and deposits in the deposit accounts;

2. The general church plan of expenditures shall be formed from the resources allocated by the dioceses, stavropegic monasteries and parishes in Moscow, as well as from the designated funds coming from the sources mentioned in Par.1 of this section.

3. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod shall manage the general church financial assets.

4. The Russian Orthodox Church may own buildings, plots of land, objects of industrial, social, charitable, cultural, educational and other purposes and objects of religious purposes, financial assets and other property necessary for ensuring the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church, including the objects classified as monuments of history and culture, or receive the such for usage on other legal basis from governmental, municipal, public and other organizations and citizens in accordance with the legislation of the country in which the property is located.

The Russian Orthodox Church owns the movable and immovable property in the far abroad.

5. The property belonging to the canonical units of the Russian Orthodox Church by the right of ownership, use or on other legal basis, including the religious buildings, the buildings of the monasteries, general church and diocesan institutions, theological educational institutions, general church libraries, general church and diocesan archives, other buildings and facilities, plots of land, objects of religious worship, the objects used for social, charitable, cultural, educational and economic purposes, the financial assets, the literature and other property purchased or created at their own

expense, donated by natural persons and legal entities, enterprises, institutions and organizations, as well as handed over by the state and purchased on other legal basis shall be the property of the Russian Orthodox Church.

6. The manner of ownership, use and disposal of the property belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church by the right of ownership, use or on other legal basis shall be determined by the present Statute, the rules approved by the Holy Synod and the Provision for the Church Property.

7. The right of disposal of the property of the Russian Orthodox Church shall belong to the Holy Synod.

The ownership and use of the said property shall be exercised by the canonical units on the basis of canonical, legal and material accountability to an appropriate higher canonical unit of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Holy Synod shall delegate the right of partial disposal of the said property – excluding the worship buildings, the buildings of the monasteries, the diocesan institutions, the theological schools, the general church, diocesan and other archives, the general church libraries and the objects of religious worship, which have historical value – to the canonical units which own this property and use it on the basis of accountability to the appropriate higher canonical unit of the Russian Orthodox Church.

8. The Self-governing Churches, the Exarchates and the Metropolitan Areas shall use for their needs the plots of land, the buildings, including religious ones, the objects of industrial, social, charitable, cultural, educational and other purposes, including those classified as the monuments of history and culture, as well as any other property which they need for ensuring their activity and which were made available for them by governmental, municipal, public and other organizations and citizens, in accordance with the legislation of the country in which the Self-governing Church, the Exarchate and the Metropolitan Area is located or owns this property.

9. The Self-governing Churches, the Exarchates and the Metropolitan Areas shall use the property that belongs to them in accordance with the order established by the Provision for the Church Property.

10. The Moscow Patriarchate and the synodal departments shall be entitled to own or to use for their needs the plots of land, the buildings, including religious ones, the objects of industrial, social, charitable, cultural, educational and other purposes, including those classified as the monuments of history and culture, as well as any other property which they need for ensuring their activity and which were made available for them by governmental, municipal, public and other organizations and citizens in accordance with the current legislation.

11. The Moscow Patriarchate and the synodal institutions shall use the property belonging to them in accordance with the order determined in the Provision for the Church Property.

12. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall manage the financial assets of the Moscow Patriarchate.

13. The Synodal institutions shall be financed from the general church assets and through self-financing at the expense of the assets generated from the sources mentioned in Par.1 of this section.

14. The heads of the synodal institutions shall manage their assets within the plan of expenditures.

15. The diocesan budgets shall be formed from the sources mentioned in Par.1 of this section.

16. The Diocesan Bishop shall manage the general diocesan assets.

17. The Diocese shall be entitled to own or to use for its needs the plots of land, the buildings, including religious ones, the objects of industrial, social, charitable, cultural, educational and other purposes, including those classified as the monuments of history and culture, as well as any other property which they need for ensuring their activity and which were made available for them by governmental, municipal, public and other organizations and citizens in accordance with the legislation of the country where the Diocese is located.

18. The property which belongs to the Diocese by the right of ownership, including the buildings, constructions, the objects of religious purpose, the objects of social, charitable, cultural, educational and economic purposes, the plots of land, financial assets, literature and other property purchased or created at their own expense, donated by the natural persons and legal entities – enterprises, institutions and organizations handed over by the state, as well as purchased on other legal basis, shall be the property of the Russian Orthodox Church.

19. In the event of the dissolution of the diocese as legal entity, its movable and immovable property of religious purpose, which it possessed by the right of ownership, shall be transferred to the ownership of the Russian Orthodox Church, also in the person of the Moscow Patriarchate. Other property shall be sold to satisfy the creditors and to meet the contractual and other legitimate claims of the legal entities and natural persons. After the legitimate claims of the creditors are met, the rest of the property shall be transferred to the ownership of the Russian Orthodox Church, also in the person of the Moscow Patriarchate.

20. In the event of the dissolution of the diocese, all property which it acquired by the right of economic day-to-day management, use or any other legal basis in the manner and under the conditions stipulated by the law of the country where the diocese is located, shall be placed at the disposal of the Russian Orthodox Church, also in the person of the Moscow Patriarchate.

21. The financial assets of the parishes, monasteries, theological educational institutions, brotherhoods or sisterhoods shall be formed from the sources mentioned in Par.1 of this section.

The estimate of expenditure of the theological educational institutions shall be approved by the Diocesan Bishop, and in the event of general church financing of the school, the Diocesan Bishop shall submit the estimate to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia for approval after its prior consideration by the Education Committee.

22. The financial assets of the parishes, monasteries, theological educational institutions, brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall be managed on the basis of accountability to the Diocesan Bishop within the budgets approved by him respectively by the Chairman of the Parish Council on the basis of accountability to the Parish Meeting, considering the specifics provided for by the present Statute

and the statute of the parish; by the abbot or father superior (mother superior) of the monastery; by Rector of the theological educational institution; by the chairman of the brotherhood or sisterhood together with the members of the Council of the brotherhood and the Council of the sisterhood.

23. The parishes, monasteries, theological educational institutions, brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall be entitled to own or to use for their needs the plots of land, the buildings, including religious ones, the objects of industrial, social, charitable, cultural, educational and other purposes, including those classified as the monuments of history and culture, as well as any other property which they need for ensuring their activity and which were made available for them by governmental, municipal, public and other organizations and citizens in accordance with the legislation of the country where the parish, monastery, theological educational institution, brotherhood or sisterhood is located..

24. In addition to the main church building, the parish may have, with the blessing of the Diocesan Bishop, the attached churches and chapels, including those in hospitals, boarding schools, old people's homes, military units, places of imprisonment and cemeteries as well as in other places, provided that the legislation is observed.

25. The parishes, monasteries, theological educational institutions, brotherhoods or sisterhoods may rent, build or purchase in the prescribed manner the houses and premises for their needs, as well as become owners of other necessary property.

26. The property belonging to the parishes, monasteries, theological educational institutions, brotherhoods or sisterhoods by the right of ownership, including the buildings, constructions, objects of religious purpose, objects of social, charitable, cultural, educational and economic purposes, the plots of land, financial assets, libraries, the literature and other property purchased or created at their own expense, donated by natural persons and legal entities – enterprises, institutions and organizations, handed over by the state as well as that purchased on other legal basis, shall be the property of the Russian Orthodox Church.

27. In the event of the dissolution of the parish, monastery or theological educational institution as legal entity, their movable and immovable property of religious purpose belonging to them by the right of ownership shall be transferred into the ownership of the Diocese. Other property shall be sold to satisfy creditors and to meet contractual and other legitimate claims of the legal entities and natural persons. After the legal claims of the creditors are satisfied, the rest of the property shall be passed over to the Diocese.

28. In the event of the dissolution of the parish, monastery or theological educational institution, all property which they acquired by the right of economic management, efficient administration, use and on other legal basis in the manner and under the conditions established by the law of the country, where the parish, monastery and Theological educational institution are located, shall be passed over to the Diocese.

29. In the event of the dissolution of the brotherhood and sisterhood as legal entity, their movable and immovable property of religious purpose belonging to them by the right of ownership shall be transferred into the ownership of the parish, at which they were established. Other property shall be sold to satisfy creditors and to meet contractual and other legitimate claims of the legal entities and

natural persons. After the legitimate claims of the creditors are met, the rest of the property shall be passed over to the aforementioned parish.

30. In the event of the dissolution of the brotherhood and sisterhood, all property which they acquired by the right of economic management, efficient administration, use or on any other legitimate basis in the manner and under the conditions stipulated by the law of the country where the brotherhood and sisterhood are located, shall be passed over to the parish at which they were established.

31. The overseas institutions shall provide themselves with the assets in accordance with their resources and the laws of the countries on the territory of which they are located.

32. The overseas institutions may receive subsidies from the general church assets. The size of the subsidies shall be approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

33. Church money shall be deposited in the banks in the name of a respective overseas institution and shall be cashed by cheques drawn by the manager of credits.

34. The overseas institutions shall use the property belonging to them in the manner determined by the Provision for the Church Property.

35. The Holy Synod shall be entitled to make a financial auditing of general church and diocesan assets and shall set up a special synodal commission for this purpose.

36. The financial auditing of the stavropepic monasteries shall be carried out by the Audit Commission appointed by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

37. The financial auditing of the diocesan monasteries, diocesan administrations and parishes shall be carried out at the instruction of the Diocesan Bishop by the Audit Commission appointed by the diocesan authority.

38. The parish Audit Commissions shall act in accordance with Article XVI, 55-59, of the present Statute.

39. The management and stocktaking of the church property shall be carried out by materially accountable persons in accordance with the law of the country of location, the requirements of the present Statute and the Provision for the Church Property.

40. The church use of candles and other church items purchased or produced outside the Church shall not be allowed.

## XXI – ON THE PENSION PROVISION

1. The clergymen and church workers who are citizens of the Russian Federation shall receive the state pension in the prescribe manner if they work in the canonical units of the Russian Orthodox Church, which are registered as legal entities.
2. The pension provision of the clergymen and church workers who are citizens of other states shall be provided in accordance with the respective laws in the countries of their residence.
3. The Russian Orthodox Church may have the system of pensions of its own.
4. At the age of 75, each cleric holding in a canonical unit or diocesan body the post of father (mother) superior or abbot, rector of a parish, chairman of a parish council, dean, secretary of the diocesan council, chair or vice-chair of a diocesan department or commission; chair or member of the diocesan court, shall file a petition to the Diocesan Bishop for his or her relief from the respective duties. The decision on the time of compliance with such petition shall be made at the discretion of the Holy Synod on the proposal of the Diocesan Bishop. The Diocesan Bishop shall take care of the appropriate conditions for continuation of the liturgical and pastoral ministry of the clergy relieved from their duties due to age.

## **XXII – ON THE SEALS AND STAMPS**

1. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Diocesan Bishops shall have the stamp and the round seal with their names and titles.
2. The Holy Synod shall have the stamp and the round seal with the inscription ‘The Moscow Patriarchate – the Holy Synod’.
3. The Moscow Patriarchate, the Synodal departments, the Self-governing Churches, the Exarchates, the Metropolitan Areas, the Diocesan Administrations, the Parishes, the Monasteries, the Theological Educational Institutions and other canonical units with the status of legal entity shall also have the stamp and the round seal.

### XXIII – CHANGES TO THE STATUE

1. The present Statute is valid for the whole Russian Orthodox Church.
2. Since the moment of the adoption of the present Statute, the Statute on the Administration of the Russian Orthodox Church adopted by the Local Council on June 8, 1988 (with additions introduced by the 1990 Bishops' Council and the 1994 Bishops' Council shall expire.
3. The right to introduced amendments to the present Statute shall belong to the Bishops' Council.

*Present Texts of the Statues of the Russian Orthodox Church provided by the Department of External Church  
Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate*

*Official Hyperlink can be found [HERE](#)*