



Holy Synod makes decisions concerning life of Russian Orthodox Church

At its session on 22 March 2011, the ROC Holy Synod, chaired by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, considered the Church's internal life, external relations, church-society relations and theological education.

It was agreed to establish a Supreme Church Council. The Bishops' Council held in February 2011 resolved the following: 'Supporting the intention of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to hold regular conferences of heads of Synodal departments, these conferences be given a formal status as Supreme Church Council by analogy with the body that had been established by the 1917 All-Russia Church Council and which had to discontinue in the years of persecution. The Holy Synod be charged with making a decision on the establishment of the Supreme Church Council after all the appropriate normative documents have been developed. The decision of the Holy Synod and the appropriate amendments to the Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church be submitted for approval by the next Bishops' Council'.

The Holy Synod adopted a Provision for the Supreme Church Council of the Russian Orthodox Church and the following membership of the Council to be chaired by the Patriarch:

- Metropolitan Varsonofy of Saransk and Mordovia, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate
- Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Department for External Church Relations
- Metropolitan Clement of Kaluga and Borovsk, chairman of the Publishing Board
- Archbishop Ioann of Belgorod and Stary Oskol, head of the Synodal Mission Department
- Archbishop Yevgeny of Vereya, chairman of the Synodal Education Committee
- Archbishop Feognost of Sergiev Posad, chairman of the Synodal Commission for Monasteries
- Archbishop Mark of Yegorievsk, head of the Office for Moscow Patriarchate Institutions Abroad
- Bishop Mercury of Zarsk, head of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechism
- Bishop Irinarch of Krasnogorsk, head of the Department for Prison Service
- Bishop Ignaty of Bronnitsa, head of the Department for Youth
- Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, director of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat
- Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk, director of the Moscow Patriarchate's financial and economic office
- Bishop Kirill of Pavlov Posad, chairman of the Synodal Committee for Cooperation with the Cossacks
- Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuevo, head of the Synodal Department for Charity and Social Service
- Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov, head of the Synodal Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement

- Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov, executive secretary of the Patriarchal Council for Culture
- Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, head of the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations
- Mr. V. P. Legoida, head of the Synodal Information Department.

Two new dioceses have been established in the North Caucasus: the diocese of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk, which will include parishes in some regions of the Stavropol Krai and in the Republics of Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and the diocese of Vladikavkaz and Makhachkala, which will include parishes in North Ossetia, Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya.

The request of Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutisy and Kolomna, who has been the chairman of the Synodal Commission for Canonization since 1989, to relieve him of his duty, was granted. He will be replaced by Bishop Pankraty, abbot of the Valamo Monastery of the Transfiguration.

The Holy Synod also relieved Hegumen Philaret (Bulekov) of his duty as Moscow Patriarchate representative to the Council of Europe and dean of the Parish of All Saints in Strasbourg and appointed him vice-chairman of the Department for External Church Relations. He will be replaced in Strasbourg by Hegumen Philip (Ryabykh).

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk made a report on the meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission in February 2011 in Chambes, Switzerland, whose task is to make a preliminary study of issues to be put on the agenda of the Pan-Orthodox Council. The commission considered a procedure for signing the Tomos of Autocephaly and the sacred diptychs of the primates of autocephalous Churches. He reported that the commission failed to reach a consensus on both points. The Holy Synod approved the position taken by the Russian Orthodox Church's delegation at that meeting.

Metropolitan Hilarion also reported to the Synod about his visit to Czechia in February 2011 and the visit made to the Russian Orthodox Church by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, in March 2011. The Synod expressed satisfaction at the metropolitan's fruitful talks.

He also notified the Synod about the theological talks to take place between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland in September 2011 in Lahti, Finland. The Synod appointed a delegation for the talks.

After a report by Patriarch Kirill on dioceses and parishes abroad, the Synod made some decisions concerning the dioceses of Sourozh, Argentina and South America, as well as Moscow Patriarchate parishes in Italy and the Patriarchal Parish of Sts Peter and Paul in Dublin, Ireland.

