

Provisional Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (2017)

I. General Regulations

1. As there is no Supreme Church Authority in the Russian Church at the present time, the foundational canonical basis of the Russian Church is Decree No. 362 of the Holy Patriarch, Holy Synod and the Supreme Church Council of the Russian Church of November 7/20, 1920, and this is the framework around which church life must be organized.
2. In accordance with Decree No. 362 and the decisions of the Local Council of 1917-1918, at the present time the Russian Church, both in Russia and outside its territory, must consist of church districts (*okrug*), temporarily self-governing on the basis of conciliarity and in Eucharistic communion with each other (if no canonical obstacles exist that would preclude such communion). The number of church districts will be determined by life itself.
3. These districts should be formed on a voluntary basis. They must consist of several dioceses and have a First Hierarchy, in accordance with Apostolic Canon 34 and other canons. The First Hierarchy must be elected by the bishops of the district. The districts must be governed by their District Council of Bishops under the chairmanship of the First Hierarchy.
4. If necessary, Councils of Bishops from several districts can be convened to resolve general church issues. Special Council sessions with the participation of clergy and laity can also be convened. However, there should be no church administrative bodies that govern over several such districts.

II. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA)

1. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) is the diaspora district of the Russian Orthodox Church and is provisionally self-governing on the basis of conciliarity.
2. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) is guided in its internal life and administration by Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition, by the sacred canons and church regulations, by the rules and pious customs of the Local Russian Orthodox Church, in particular, by Decree No. 362 of His Holiness the Patriarch Tikhon, Synod and the Supreme Church Council of the Russian Orthodox Church dated November 7/20, 1920, and by the conciliar decrees and enactments of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, including these Provisional Regulations.

3. The Diaspora Church District is governed by the Council of Bishops of the district under the chairmanship of the First Hierarchy.
4. In the absence of a First Hierarchy, the bishop senior most by consecration will serve as chairman of the Council of Bishops.

III. The District Council of Bishops

1. The Council of Bishops of the Diaspora Church District, to be convened at least once a year, is the supreme body of church legislation, administration, court and control of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.
2. The chairman of the district Council of Bishops is the First Hierarchy of the district. The Council membership includes all bishops who are members of the church district.
3. Bishops who are members of the District Council but who cannot attend the Council due to extenuating reasons, must submit their opinions on agenda items to the Council or entrust their proxy to other bishops. Bishops who cannot attend the Council meeting can express their opinion on the subjects of the agenda with the help of modern means of communication.
4. Decisions of the district Council of Bishops are made by general consensus of all the bishops participating in the meeting or by majority opinion. In the case of tie votes, the Chairman of the Council has the deciding vote.
5. Matters subject to resolution by the Council are brought forth for its consideration by the Bishop-members of the Council.
6. When special needs arise, the First Hierarchy of the district will communicate with the First Hierarchs of other districts of the Russian Orthodox Church for the purpose of convening councils, including bishops of these districts, to resolve general church questions.
7. Special Councils with the participation of clergy and laity can be convened occasionally. The decisions of such Special Church Councils are valid only upon their approval by the Episcopal Conference, consisting of all the bishops who participated in the Council and presided over by the Bishop senior in consecration.
8. Decisions to accept bishops and clergy from other Orthodox jurisdictions into church communion is included in the purview of the district Council of Bishops.

IV. District Advisory Council

1. The Diaspora Church District will include a district Advisory Council consisting of clergy and laity representatives from all of the dioceses of the District.
2. The members of the district Advisory Council are appointed by the diocesan Bishops from members of Diocesan Advisory Councils.
3. The District Advisory Council participates in the work of the district Council of Bishops as an advisory body to it.

V. The First Hierarch

1. The Diaspora District of the Russian Orthodox Church is led by the First Hierarch, who is selected from the episcopacy of the district and elected by the district Council of Bishops.
2. The First Hierarch is the chairman of the district Council of Bishops.
3. The name of the district First Hierarch is commemorated during Divine services in all the churches of the district before the name of the local ruling bishop.
4. The First Hierarch, in addition to chairing the Council of Bishops, also has the following authorities:
 - a) convenes the district Council of Bishops, as well as Special Councils with clergy and laity participation, and serves as their Chairman,
 - b) communicates with First Hierarchs of the Church Districts of the Russian Church and with Representatives of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches in matters of church life and in fulfillment of the decrees of the district Council of Bishops, and also in his own right,
 - c) appeals to the congregation of his church district with Archpastoral epistles and instructional lessons.

VI. On Dioceses and Diocesan Bishops

1. All dioceses of the Church District are under the authority of Diocesan Bishops.
2. Diocesan Bishops possess, according to Divine law, all the fullness of hierarchical authority within their dioceses.
3. To assist the Diocesan Bishop in administering the diocese, the following diocesan auxiliary bodies may be established:

- a) Vicar Bishops,
 - b) Diocesan Convocation,
 - c) Diocesan Council
4. The structure of the diocesan auxiliary bodies is set out in the Regulations of the ROCA of 1964, in accordance with the decisions of the Local Council of 1917-18.