

APPENDIX B

THE STATUTE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

Article X - The Parish

The Statute of the Orthodox Church in America

Section 1: *The Parish*

The parish is a local community of the church having at its head a duly appointed priest and consisting of Orthodox Christians who live in accordance with the teachings of the Orthodox Church, comply with the discipline and rules of the Church, and regularly support their parish. Being subordinate to the Diocesan Authority, it is a component part of the Diocese.

Section 2: *Governing Statute*

The organisation and administration of a parish are subject to this Statute as adopted at the Second All-American Council of October 19th -21st, 1971, or as amended at any subsequent Council.

Section 3: *Parish and Diocese*

The parish is established by decision of the Diocesan Bishop within whose diocese it is constituted and after the local group petitioning him has satisfied the Bishop that it is self-supporting and stable and that its charter and by-laws are consistent with canonical requirements and the Statute of the Church. Every parish charter or set of by-laws must provide the mechanics for implementing all decisions of the All-American Council. No charter or by-laws of a parish shall be effective unless approved by the Diocesan Authority. According to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, the Bishop is the head of all parishes which constitute his diocese. He appoints parish clergy, has the obligation and right of regular and special visitations to the parish, approves received reports on parish life, and in case of conflicts and disorders within the parish, takes all necessary measure consistent with the Holy Canons.

Section 4: *Rector*

At the head of the parish is its Rector. According to the teachings of the Church, he is the spiritual father and teacher of his flock and the celebrant of the liturgical worship established by the Church. He teaches and edifies the People of God entrusted to his spiritual care "with no partiality" [James 2:1] and sees to it that all activities within the parish serve the religious goals of the Church. He is appointed by the Diocesan Bishop and cannot leave his parish without the permission of the Bishop. No activities in the

parish can be initiated without his knowledge, approval, and blessing; neither should he do anything pertaining to the parish without the knowledge of his parishioners and parish organs elected by them, so that always and everywhere there may be unity, mutual trust, cooperation, and love. In conformity with his teaching office, the Rector shall have final authority over the church school. To be free from material preoccupations and wholly committed to his sacred ministry, the priest must be compensated by the parish, the amount of his compensation being clearly agreed upon at the time of his appointment.

Section 5: *Parishioners*

- a) By virtue of their Baptism and Chrismation, the parishioners are members of the Body of Christ, and must strive to live in accordance with their high calling [*Ephesians 4:1*]. No one can be a member of the parish if he openly Betrays the teaching of the Orthodox Church, or if he lead a life or act in a manner condemned by the Holy Canons as incompatible with the name of Orthodox Christian.
- b) A “voting member” of the parish is a member [*as defined in Article X; Section 5(a)*] at least eighteen years of age, who partakes of the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion in his home parish at least once a year; has belonged to the parish for a period as may be fixed by the parish; and regularly fulfils such financial obligations as may be established by the All-American Councils, Diocesan Assemblies, and parish.

Section 6: *Financial Obligation*

Each year the parish shall remit to the Diocesan Treasurer its financial obligation to the Diocese and to the Orthodox Church in America. This financial obligation shall be determined on the basis of: (a) the number of members of the parish [*as defined by Article X; Section 5(a)*] who are eighteen years of age and over; and (b) the number of persons who fulfil such financial obligations as may be established by the All-American Councils, Diocesan Assemblies and parish, even though those persons may not be members as defined in Article X, Section 5(a). The parish is also responsible for submitting annually, by January thirty-first, a census containing the names (first and last) and addresses of such persons to the Diocesan Bishop. Additions and/or deletions shall be reported as they occur.

Section 7: *The Parish Meeting*

- a) Since, according to the universal teaching of the Church, all members of the Body of Christ are responsible for the preservation of the Faith and the edification of the Church, the by- laws of each parish shall provide for regular or special meetings of parishioners in good standing. At these

meetings all matters pertaining to the life of the parish may be discussed and acted upon, all necessary measures for the spiritual and material welfare of the parish initiated and approved, and officers and members of the Parish Council and other parish bodies provided for in the parish by-laws nominated and elected. All regular and special parish meetings must be announced by the parish priest from the Ambo on three consecutive Sundays and published in the church bulletin. The parish Rector presides at the parish meeting.

- b) The Rector is the intermediary between the parish and the Diocesan Authority, and, in case of his disagreement with one or several decisions of the parish meeting, his motivated opinion must be recorded in the minutes and the whole matter submitted to the Diocesan Bishop. Parish officers may state their motivated opinion, first to the District Dean, then to the Diocesan Bishop.

Section 8: *The Parish Council*

- a) The parish meeting shall elect a Parish Council to assist the Rector in the administration of the parish and to execute the decisions of the parish meeting. The Parish Council shall consist of as many officers and members as provided for in the parish by-laws. Their mode of election and their terms of office shall also be determined by the by-laws regularly adopted.
- b) All officers and members of the Parish Council shall, after their election at the parish meeting and approval of the Diocesan Authority, be duly installed by the Rector, making a solemn commitment to uphold their offices.
- c) The Orthodox Church teaches that there should be an active cooperation between clergy and laity on all levels of Church life. And since the Parish Council is the main parish organ of such cooperation, none of its meetings may be held without the knowledge and blessing of the Rector who, as the head of the parish, must take part in the discussion and solution of all parish affairs. While the priest is the head of the parish, he does not have to be the Chairman of meetings. Laymen may be Chairmen. The minutes of all meetings of the Parish Council shall be signed by the Rector and the senior elected officer of the parish. In case of the Rector's disagreement with one or several decisions of the Parish Council, his motivated opinion shall be recorded in the minutes and the matter referred to the parish meeting.
- d) The Parish Council shall be responsible not only for the spiritual and material needs of the parish, but also for the parish's unity and connection with the Diocese and the Church, for each parish is called to be a living cell and a member of the Body of Christ, and each carries responsibility for the whole Church.

Section 9: *Parish Property*

- a) The parish or parish corporation is the sole owner of all parish property, assets, and funds. In administering them, however, the parishioners and officers elected by them must always remember the religious nature, purposes and goals of the parish, and act as trustees of God's, not man's, property. The parish, as the whole Church, serves God and cares for God's work in the world, and all decisions concerning parish property must be inspired by that care and by the spiritual needs of the Church.
- b) If the parish is abolished, its property is disposed of following the provisions of the parish by-laws. If no such provisions exist, the property is at the disposition of the Diocesan Authority. In all cases, the sacred and untouchable items – the Holy Antimension, the Tabernacle and the Sacred Vessels – must be surrendered to the Diocesan Bishop.