

**HOLY GHOST RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
1510 EAST MAIN STREET  
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06610**

**A PARISH OF  
THE NEW ENGLAND DIOCESE  
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA**

## **PARISH BY-LAWS**



**April 25, 2017**

**Holy Ghost Russian Orthodox Church  
Bridgeport, CT  
BY-LAWS**

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## **PREAMBLE**

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Ghost Russian Orthodox Church, Bridgeport, Connecticut (hereinafter referred to as the "Parish") was founded in 1894 and incorporated in 1931 as *Holy Ghost Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church*. Under the guidance of Fr. Alexis Toth (canonized in 1994), the Parish was originally established as a parish of the North American Diocese of the Orthodox Church in Russia. In 1924 that Diocese became the self-governing Metropolitanate known as the *Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America*. On April 10, 1970, that same Metropolitanate was proclaimed to be the autocephalous *Orthodox Church in America* by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church of Russia meeting in Moscow, Russia.

As a parish of the New England Diocese (hereinafter referred to as "Diocese") of the Orthodox Church in America (hereinafter referred to as "OCA"), the life, organization and administration of the Parish are subject to the Holy and Apostolic Tradition of the Orthodox Church, and the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), adopted at the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council in July 2015, and hereinafter referred to as the "Statute."

The structure and administration of the Parish is regulated by the By-Laws herein presented which have been approved by the Diocesan authority. These By-Laws are intended to express the spirit of the Holy Orthodox tradition on a practical level, for the orderly procedure in the life of the Parish as a whole, and to help the Parish live its God-given life in a special, orderly and fruitful way.

The Patronal Feast of the Church is Feast of the Holy Spirit, celebrated the day after the Feast of Pentecost.

## **ARTICLE ONE: THE PARISH**

As a Parish of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the purpose of its existence is to worship God according to the Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church; to encourage and foster union and communion with God among the members of the Parish, calling them to love one another, to grow in holiness,

and to spread, defend and promote the Holy Orthodox Faith in America to the best of its ability and in an Orthodox manner.

## **ARTICLE TWO: THE RECTOR**

The Rector of the Parish shall be an Orthodox priest of the Church. He is appointed to the Parish by the Diocesan Bishop, who acts in agreement with the members of the Parish through the Parish Council. The Rector may not leave the Parish without the permission of the Bishop, and all matters regarding salary, etc. shall be clearly agreed upon at the time of his appointment. The Rector possesses the rights and exercises the responsibilities stipulated by the Sacred Canons, the Statute, and the directives of the Holy Synod and the Diocesan Authority.

By virtue of the Apostolic Succession abiding in the Church, which the Rector shares through his ordination, it is his duty to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and teach the doctrines of the Orthodox Church; to preside over the celebration of the Mysteries and Divine services; and to ensure that the life of the Parish as a whole is directed towards spiritual and not secular ends, in accordance with the purpose of the Parish's existence.

Since the Rector must answer to God for the lives entrusted to his pastoral care [Hebrews 13:17], nothing in the Parish may be initiated without his approval and blessing, and neither should he do anything pertaining to the life of the Parish without the knowledge of the members of the Parish and the Parish Council, so that always and everywhere there may be unity, mutual trust, cooperation and love. Consistent with his office as chief celebrant and teacher, the Rector makes the final determination over the selection of any choir directors, church music, translations, and overall matters pertaining to the church school.

The Rector heads the Parish office and therefore is entrusted with the care, custody, and maintenance of Parish sacramental and administrative records, inventories, and the official Parish seal. He also represents the Parish before local civil and judicial authorities and other third parties, either personally or through his delegate. The Rector presides over all Parish Council meetings and may give his blessing to the President, or in his absence, the Vice President to chair meetings.

In the event of a serious disagreement between the Rector and the members of the Parish or Parish Council, their motivated opinions shall be recorded in the Minutes and the matter referred to the Diocesan Bishop, through the District Dean, or in a manner determined by the Bishop. In such instances, the Bishop has the right to act in accordance with the Canons of the Church and his pastoral discretion.

## **ARTICLE THREE: MEMBERSHP**

### **Section 1: Rights and Responsibilities:**

By virtue of their baptism, chrismation and the partaking of the Eucharist, the members of the Parish are members of the Body of Christ [vfdssxsl Corinthians 12:27]. This is not only a privilege and a great gift from God, but also a responsibility. The faithful are members of the Royal Priesthood [1 Peter 2:9], which emphasizes their vocation to do everything to the glory of God. They are, therefore, co-workers [1 Corinthians 3:9] with the Lord, and at the same time, beneficiaries of all the gifts bestowed in the Church, and responsible stewards [1 Peter 4:10] for Her welfare and up-building.

A Parish member has a reasonable expectation for pastoral care in accordance with the Orthodox Tradition. He or she enjoys full benefits of participation in Parish life. He or she has the high-calling to spread, to strengthen and to witness to the Orthodox faith by:

- living according to the teaching of the Church;
- participating in the religious services;
- partaking of the Holy Sacraments;
- fulfilling acts of Christian mercy;
- supporting and helping the Parish, Diocese and OCA.

Those desiring to join the Parish from another Orthodox parish are required to present a letter of transfer to the Rector, signed by the Rector of the former parish.

Parish membership may be suspended or revoked by the Parish priest or the Diocesan Bishop for due cause, such as:

- open rejection of the Orthodox faith;
- public defamation or defiance of ecclesiastical authority;
- grave moral transgression;
- formal association with a non-Orthodox religious body.

## **Section 2: The Condition of Voting Membership**

The conditions of being a voting member of the Parish are as follows:

- A. The person must have been baptized and chrismated in the Name of the Holy Trinity, be at least 18 years of age, and consciously profess and uphold the doctrines and teaching of the Orthodox faith. No person may be a voting member of the Parish who is excommunicated by the Bishop, suspended from Holy Communion by the Rector for just cause, or whose actions and speech are clearly deemed, by a majority of the Parish Council, to be destructive to the life of the Parish.
- B. The person must partake of the Mysteries of Holy Confession and Communion at the Parish, at least annually, although frequent reception of the Holy Mysteries of Christ is encouraged as the norm of Orthodox life.
- C. Upon a decision at its 2015 Parish Assembly, the Parish Council has established Proportionate Giving as the means to maintain an annual operating budget and to support the Parish's mission.
  - 1. **Financial Commitment:** Parish members are encouraged to provide their financial support out of a grateful heart, giving a percentage of their income. No minimums are required of Parish members except for the amount required by the Diocese and to the OCA, an amount to be reported annually to the Parish by the Rector. (Refer to Attachment 1.
  - 2. **Inability to Fulfill Commitment:** A voting member of the Parish who is unable to fulfill his/her financial commitment to the Parish, the Diocese and the OCA, must notify the Parish Council, through the Rector or the President, in order to retain his/her voting privilege.
  - 3. **New Member** of the Parish must petition the Parish Council, through the Rector, to become a voting member of the Parish. His/her admission as a voting member must be confirmed by the Parish Council. He or she, however, cannot hold office until the expiration of 12 months.
- D. A voting member is eligible for election as a delegate to the Diocesan Assembly and the All-American Council.

## **ARTICLE FOUR: GENERAL PARISH ASSEMBLIES**

### **Section 1: Authority**

General Parish Assemblies (hereinafter referred to as “Parish Assembly/Assemblies”), are the highest administrative authority of the Parish as a corporation. All Parish Assemblies must be held on Parish premises. All voting members of the Parish may vote at Parish Assemblies. All decisions of the Parish Assemblies are binding on all members of the Parish. In addition to any other prerogatives listed in these By-Laws, the Parish Assembly strictly reserves the right to: approve all matters concerning the sale or purchase of real property by the Parish; approve any loan or mortgage made by the Parish; and oversee and approve the overall structure of the Parish’s finances. The Rector presides over all Parish Assemblies and is, *ex officio*, chairman. The Rector together with the Parish Council may invite additional persons with or without the right to speak, to do so, but without the right to vote.

### **Section 2: The Annual Parish Assembly<sup>1</sup>:**

An Annual Parish Assembly must be held and at a time determined by the Parish. (Refer to Attachment II.) At this Assembly, the Parish’s budget, presented by the Parish Council, is approved, and members of the Parish Council are elected. Also at this Assembly, reports concerning the overall life of the Parish are presented, and any matter concerning the Parish’s life may be discussed and voted upon.

### **Section 3: Special Parish Assemblies<sup>1</sup>:**

Besides the Annual Parish Assembly, Special Parish Assemblies may be convened by the Rector, the Diocesan Bishop, the President, or the Parish Council. Furthermore, twenty-five percent (25%) of the voting membership of the preceding fiscal year may petition the Parish Council to convene a Special Parish Assembly. A Special Parish Assembly is called for specific purposes, clearly stated, and no other item(s) may be discussed than that (or those) listed in the announcement convening the Special Parish Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> No Parish Assembly, either annual or special, shall take any action which is contrary to or not in accord with the Statute. Should there be any such conflict, the Statute shall prevail. Should there be a question whether an action of a parish Assembly is valid or lawful under this Statute, the issue shall be submitted to the Diocesan Authority for determination.

#### **Section 4: Announcement**

At the Divine Liturgy, the Rector shall announce the convening of an Annual or Special Parish Assembly for three consecutive Sundays before the Assembly and by notification in the Parish bulletin. In the event of a time-sensitive emergency requiring a Special Parish Assembly, the voting membership will be notified at least one week prior to such meeting.

#### **Section 5: Quorum:**

- A. The quorum for an Annual or Special Parish Assembly shall be no less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the voting membership of the Parish of the preceding fiscal year, not counting those members who have died, moved away, left the Parish, who are in the Armed Forces, away at school, away from home for an extended period of time or who are clearly incapacitated due to old age or chronic illness. Within these permitted exceptions, a list of voting members, upon which the quorum is based, shall be prepared annually by the Rector and the Financial Secretary for approval by the Parish Council.
- B. If the twenty-five percent (25%) quorum is not present, those members in attendance shall adjourn until the same day of the following week. At that adjourned Assembly, no quorum shall be necessary to convene a lawful Parish Assembly, and this section of the By-Laws shall be considered to be the public announcement of that Assembly.

#### **Section 6: Voting**

A simple majority vote by those voting members in attendance at any Parish Assembly shall be decisive on all matters, except on: amendments to these By-Laws; the purchase or sale of real estate; or the securing of loans or mortgages, each of which shall require two-thirds (2/3) vote of those present. An Annual or Special Parish Assembly may not vote to set aside the Statute of these By-Laws for any reason whatsoever.

#### **Section 7: Minutes**

- A. Confirmation: The original copies of the Minutes of all Parish Assemblies shall be countersigned by the Rector and the President to confirm its accuracy. Copies of the Minutes are sent to the Diocesan Bishop through the District Dean. All resolutions become effective upon the confirmation by the Bishop.
- B. Possession: The original copies of all Minutes of all Parish Assemblies are the property of the Parish. They shall be entrusted to the care of the Parish Council, through the Secretary, who shall carefully file them in the



Parish archives.

## **ARTICLE FIVE: THE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Section 1: Function**

The Parish Council is elected to assist the Rector in the administration of the Parish and to execute the decisions of Parish Assemblies. It seeks to foster the spiritual and material welfare of the Parish.

### **Section 2: Membership Requirements**

To be elected to the Parish Council, a person must be a voting member of the Parish for at least one year and must retain his/her voting membership in the Parish, as prescribed in Article Three of these By-Laws during his/her entire term of office. To be elected to the Executive Board, a person must be a voting member of the Parish for the two prior years and must retain his/her voting membership in the Parish.

### **Section 3: Composition**

The Parish Council shall be composed of the following: the Rector *ex officio*; up to eight (8) officers; a Board of Trustees consisting of up to nine (9) lay members; up to eight (8) elected Vestry members; and three (3) auditors. No "honorary members" shall be elected or appointed to the Parish Council.

- A. The Executive Board shall be composed of: the Rector *ex officio*, the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary, each of whom shall not be related by marriage or birth.
- B. The Board of Trustees shall be composed of: The Rector *ex officio*, the President, and up to nine (9) elected lay members who have been voting members of the Parish for the last five (5) consecutive years before election. These elected members serve a three (3) year term, with alternating renewals annually. The Board of Trustees elects its own chairman and secretary.
  1. Competency of The Board of Trustees
    - a. To ensure that the provisions of the Statute Parish By-Laws are not violated;
    - b. To investigate those tasks asked of it by the Rector, the President, or the Parish Council, provided they are not in the particular competency of the clergy or the Parish Council as

defined in these By-Laws.

- c. To advise the Parish Council on any matter it deems necessary.
  - d. To provide guidance regarding Parish investments.
- C. The Vestry: Up to eight (8) members of the Vestry shall be elected for a two (2) year term.
- D. Auditors: The three (3) auditors shall be elected for a three (3) year term, one being elected at each Annual Parish Assembly.

#### **Section 4: Election and Vacancies**

Each member of the Parish Council shall be elected into office by the voting members of the Parish at its Annual Meeting Assembly. Vacancies between Assemblies are filled by the President, confirmed by the Parish Council, and installed by the Rector.

#### **Section 5: Installation into Office**

Each year, all newly-elected or re-elected members of the Parish Council are installed into office in the church in the presence of the congregation by the Rector, and upon confirmation by the Diocesan Bishop. The new members shall assume their duties immediately upon being installed.

Those members whose terms have not yet expired are invited to reconfirm their commitment on the Parish Council, at the installation, if they desire.

All Parish Council members are encouraged to prepare themselves for their service through the Mysteries of Confession and Communion upon being installed.

#### **Section 6: Duties of Officers and Members of the Parish Council**

Unless otherwise stipulated in these By-Laws, the duties of all Parish Council members shall be decided by the Parish Council itself, or by a Parish Assembly. (Refer to Attachment III.)

#### **Section 7: Competency of the Parish Council**

The competency of the Parish Council is

- A. To exercise fiduciary responsibilities on behalf of the Parish.
- B. To implement the decisions and resolutions of the Parish Assemblies.

- C. To speak on behalf of the Parish as a corporation and secure legal counsel as necessary for the well-being of the Parish.
- D. To see to the good order at church services and manage the candle desk and religious stand.
- E. To see to the cleanliness, maintenance and upkeep of all Parish buildings and properties within budget limitations.
- F. To direct members of the Budget Committee to prepare an annual budget for approval at its Annual Parish Assembly, including parishioners' minimum financial commitment required to support the Diocese and the OCA.
- G. To manage the real property of the Parish and to keep accurate records of securities, bank balances and any and all other funds of the Parish.
- H. To invest Parish funds in accounts, such as interest-bearing savings accounts, certificates of deposit, and investment grade securities.
- I. To examine and prepare all matters brought before the Parish at a Parish Assembly.
- J. To see to the needs of the church school and choir.
- K. To give the Rector the authority to direct the Treasurer to make disbursements from the Charity Fund without Parish Council approval.
- L. To manage the Parish Hall in accordance with the regulations adopted at a Parish Assembly. (Refer to Attachment IV.)
- M. To see to all matters of the life of the Parish which are not strictly reserved by the Parish Assemblies or in the particular competency of the clergy.

### **Section 8: The Parish Council Meetings**

- A. Parish Council meetings must be held once a month with June, July and August excluded provided that the business of the Parish can be maintained during these months without a meeting.
- B. All Parish Council meetings must be held on Parish premises and upon reasonable notification of all members involved.
- C. All Parish Council meetings are open to all voting members of the Parish, but voting on any issues is restricted to the members of the Parish Council. At its discretion, and by majority vote, the Parish

Council may deem it necessary to hold a closed meeting, restricted to Parish Council members.

- D. The Rector presides over all Parish Council meetings but may give his blessing to the President, or in his absence, the Vice President to chair meetings.
- E. Opening attendance of one-half of the elected members shall constitute a quorum for a Parish Council meeting.
- F. A majority vote of those elected members in attendance shall decide all issues brought before the Parish Council.
- G. Original copies of the Minutes of all Parish Council meetings are the property of the Parish. They shall be entrusted to the care of the Secretary, who shall carefully file them in the Parish archives. Copies of Minutes are available to any voting member of the Parish upon request.
- H. All Minutes, records, financial reports, check or bank books, or any other documents belonging to the Parish and held in trust by outgoing members must be surrendered to the newly-elected officers within thirty (30) days of installation, in the presence of an auditor.

### **Section 9: Petition of Grievance**

Voting members of the Parish who disagree with any action taken by the Parish Council may submit a petition of grievance, in writing, to the Parish Council, through the Rector or the President.

### **Section 10: Committees**

Each year, the President shall appoint persons in the Parish to various Parish committees. These committees make regular reports to the Parish Council, upon request. Although the Rector and President are *ex officio* members of all such committees, committee members themselves need not be members of the Parish Council. The chairpersons of these committees, however, must be voting members of the Parish.

### **Section 11: Inability to Fill an Office**

Should it become impossible, for whatever reason, to fill any Parish Council seat, the Parish Council may lawfully administer the Parish without those seats

and until such time as they are filled. In such cases, the quorum for Parish Council meetings is adjusted accordingly.

## **ARTICLE SIX: THE REAL AND LIQUID PROPERTY OF THE PARISH**

### **Section 1: Ownership**

All real and liquid property of the Parish is in the sole ownership of the Parish as a corporation. It is administered by the Parish Council in accordance with the stipulations established by the voting membership of the Parish at an Annual or Special Parish Assembly. [Refer to Attachment V for a detailed list of Parish property.]

### **Section 2: Registration of Funds**

All Parish funds, including all savings, checking or investment accounts must be registered in the name of the Parish.

### **Section 3: Signatures and Seals**

- A. All legal or civil documents of the Parish must be countersigned by the Rector, the President and any officer(s) of the Parish as may be required by the Parish membership, or by law.
- B. All legal or civil documents requiring a seal shall always be sealed with the Parish Seal (Refer to Attachment VI). Entrusted to the care of the Rector, the Seal is the property of the Parish. In the event of the transfer of the Rector, the Seal is temporarily entrusted in the care of the District Dean until such time as a new Rector is appointed.
- C. Unless otherwise specified by a Motion of the Parish Council, all regular Parish savings accounts, investment funds, checking accounts, or any and all other Parish financial accounts shall be signed by one authorized signer. Modern banking practices (electronic banking, etc.) do not require a written signature.

## **ARTICLE SEVEN: PARISH AND PARISH-AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS**

Any Parish or Parish-affiliated organization that uses the name of the Parish overtly or by implication, and which meets on Parish property, is under the

general supervision of the Parish Council, which reserves the right to grant or withhold permission regarding the use of the Parish Hall or its properties.

## **ARTICLE EIGHT: AMENDMENTS AND ATTACHMENTS**

### **Section 1: Submission of Amendments**

Any voting member of the Parish may propose an amendment to these By-Laws by submitting it to the Parish Council, which shall make the final determination concerning its merit. In no case may an amendment or change contradict the OCA Statutes or be brought to the floor without prior approval of the Parish Council.

### **Section 2: Time and Vote**

Amendments, changes or additions to these By-Laws must be presented by the Parish Council to the voting members of the Parish at least thirty (30) days prior to an Annual or Special Parish Assembly. Any amendment or change requires two-thirds (2/3) vote by the voting membership present at the time of the vote. An amendment or change becomes effective upon confirmation by the Diocesan Bishop.

### **Section 3: Attachments**

The Attachments describing in more detail various aspects of the administration of the parish are not considered to be part of the By-Laws text. Its function is to clarify, implement and amplify the provisions of these By-Laws, so that the By-Laws need not be changed or amended frequently. The Attachments may be approved, changed or modified at a Special or Annual Parish Assembly by simple majority vote of those present, without the need to be presented beforehand. In no case may an Attachment violate either the OCA Statute or these By-Laws.

## **ARTICLE NINE: DISSOLUTION OF THE PARISH**

The dissolution of the Parish and its assets shall be done in accordance with Connecticut State Law and the decisions of those voting members remaining at the time of dissolution, and who act together with the Diocesan Bishop, or someone appointed by him. Upon dissolution, all sacred and untouchable items, such as antemensia, Eucharistic vessels and utensils, winding sheets, chrism and relics must be surrendered to the Diocesan Bishop, without fee or charge of any kind.



‡ **END OF TEXT** ‡

These By-Laws were approved at an Annual Parish Assembly  
of Holy Ghost Parish on November 6, 2016.

They were approved by Archbishop Nikon on  
April 25, 2017 per below-noted e-mail.

In the event of a conflict between these By-Laws and the  
OCA Statute, the OCA shall prevail. These By-Laws preempt  
all previous By-Laws.

From: **Fr. John Kreta** <[fjkreta@snet.net](mailto:fjkreta@snet.net)>

Date: **Tue, Apr 25, 2017** at 11:48 AM

Subject: bylaws

To: "[bpnikon@aol.com](mailto:bpnikon@aol.com)" <[bpnikon@aol.com](mailto:bpnikon@aol.com)>,  
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**Master Bless,**

**The By-law committee has determined that the revised by-laws for  
Holy Ghost, are in conformance with the OCA statutes,**

**In the Risen Lord,  
Fr. John**



