

# Parish By-Laws

## Part I

### (Name and Aims)

1. The parish shall bear the name St. Innocent of Moscow Russian Orthodox Church, and shall be organized under the laws of the State of Illinois as an ecclesiastical, non-profit corporation with all attendant powers related to same including, but not limited to, the ability for self-governance, to hold, transfer, and otherwise dispose of property, and to run its affairs in the normal course.
2. It shall be the aim of the parish to unite the believers around the parish church on the basis of the teachings, the canons, the traditions and the rules of the Russian Orthodox Church for the satisfaction of the religious needs and moral benefit of its members.
3. It is the primary mission of St. Innocent of Moscow Russian Orthodox Church to bring the Gospel and services of the Russian Orthodox Church to the people of America in the English language. In furtherance of these Aims, St. Innocent of Moscow Russian Orthodox Church commemorates itself and its individual existence to the observance of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

## Part II

### (General Provisions)

4. It will be the object of the parish to assist the believers, forming part thereof and united in the Faith of Christ our Savior, by means of prayers, sacraments, Christian teaching and Church discipline, in attaining salvation through the participation in sacraments and Christian enlightenment, worthy life and Christian charity. Accordingly, the immediate aims of the parish shall embrace: (a) the care of the church and its adornment; (b) the maintenance of the clergy; (c) the economic prosperity of the parish and the care and needs of its church building, the clergy and all parish institutions, the diocesan and social needs; (d) charitable work, and (e) educational work in the spirit of the Orthodox Church.
5. In conjunction with the parish church there shall be a clergy of not less than one member, viz. the pastor. The clergy shall be appointed by the diocesan authorities. The number of the members of the clergy may be increased or reduced by the Ruling Bishop according to the capacity and needs of the parish after review by and in agreement with the Church Parish Council.

Part III  
(Parishioners and Parish Members)

6. All Orthodox Christians of both sexes, regardless of their nationality, who have reached the age of 21 years; who have made the established minimum financial membership commitment through payment of dues, pledges, or tithes; who make their confession and take Holy Communion not less than once a year; and who take care of the moral and economic welfare of the parish may become parish members pursuant to approval of their written application by the Parish Pastor.

Annotation 1. By decision of the Church Parish Council for persons of Orthodox faith who have not reached the age of 21, there may be organized in conjunction with the parish, youth societies for their religious and moral upbringing.

Annotation 2. Persons who live in concubinage without Church marriage, or who are engaged in ignoble business, or who are convicted of criminal offenses shall have no right to participate in the parish meetings or be elected to parish offices. Those convicted of criminal offenses may be restored in their rights three years after they have served their term and after absolution by their father-confessor.

Annotation 3. Those who make confession to a priest outside of this parish must present to the Rector of St. Innocent a certificate from that priest.

7. All parish members shall be recorded by the Secretary of the Church Parish Council in a special register.

8. All parish members, except those mentioned in Annotation 2 under paragraph 6, who regularly pay the membership dues shall have the right to participate with a decisive vote in all Parish Meetings, to elect parish officials and to be elected to parish offices.

Annotation 1. The newly admitted members of the parish shall acquire the right to vote and to be elected to parish offices upon the expiration of six months after their admission to parish membership.

Annotation 2. Parish members who shall have failed to pay their annual civil calendar membership dues one month prior to the Annual Parish Meeting shall be deprived of their rights to vote and to be elected to parish offices. Parish members who shall have failed to pay their membership dues during the immediately preceding twelve months shall be excluded from parish membership. However, should a parish member fail to pay dues because of some valid reason (illness, unemployment, etc.) the question of his right to vote shall be solely determined by the Church Parish Council.

9. Parish members who shall be found disloyal to the parish, who engage in unethical or unacceptable behavior, or who neglect rules and obstruct lawfully adopted resolutions of the Parish Meetings and the instructions of the Church Parish Council, as well as those who shall have violated the good order and decorum in the church or shall be found engaged in some ignoble occupation may be excluded from parish membership by decision of the Church Parish Council, submitted by the latter for approval of the Ruling Bishop. The said persons may be restored in their rights by decision of the Church Parish Council provided they repent and prove by their ways of living and behavior their moral rectitude.

Part IV  
(Managing Organs and Officers)

10. The following shall be managing organs:
- a. The general meeting of the members of the parish, herein called Parish Meetings;
  - b. The Church Parish Council.
  - c. Auditing Committee

A. Parish Meetings

11. Parish Meetings shall be: 1) Annual and/or 2) Extraordinary

1. Annual Parish Meetings

12. The time for the convening of the Annual Parish Meeting shall be fixed by the Church Parish Council within the last third of the civil calendar year. Not later than three weeks prior to the Annual Parish Meeting the Church Parish Council shall post notices on the convening thereof together with the agenda. In addition thereto, the pastor, prior to the Annual Parish Meeting, shall announce its convocation from the steps before the altar on three successive Sundays after the divine service.
13. The pastor, or in the case of his absence or illness, the person designated by the pastor, shall preside over the Annual Parish Meeting. When a matter is deliberated upon which pertains to the pastor personally it shall be obligatory that another person appointed by the Church Parish Council preside over the meeting.
14. The following shall be within the competency of the Annual Parish Meeting:
- (1) the election of the Warden, the Auditing Committee, and the members of the Church Parish Council;
  - (2) the examination of the report of the Church Parish Council on the activities of the parish during the expired year;
  - (3) the examination and ratification of the Warden's, Auditing Committee's, and Treasurer's reports;
  - (4) the amendment of the By-Laws of the Parish.
- Annotation. Canonical matters shall not be within the competency of either the Annual or Extraordinary Parish Meetings.
15. The Annual Parish Meeting shall be considered valid in the presence of a quorum of  $\frac{2}{3}$  the active and accepted parish members, current in their dues and assessments.

Annotation1. If by the time fixed for the meeting the present parish members should fail to constitute the required quorum the meeting will be postponed and rescheduled weekly until such time as a quorum is present. The new meeting time will be posted immediately and shall be announced from the steps before the altar on Sunday after the divine service.

Annotation 2. The Parish Meeting checks the voting eligibility of its members. Every member of the Parish Meeting who has for some reason lost his right to participate in the meeting must of his own accord remove himself from participation in the meeting.

Annotation 3. Should the Annual Parish Meeting be called to order in the presence of the required quorum, but subsequently some members should quit the meeting and the number of those attending it should be less than said quorum, the meeting shall nevertheless be considered valid.

Annotation 4. Personal attendance of the parish members at the Parish Meeting for voting purposes shall be obligatory. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted.

16. All matters shall be decided by simple and open majority vote. However, should any one of those present demand secret balloting, his request shall be honored. In case of a tie the vote of the pastor or the person empowered by him to preside over the Annual Parish Meeting shall prevail.
17. The Secretary of the Church Parish Council shall keep the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and shall record all decisions adopted together with dissenting opinions, should any be expressed by the participants in the meeting.

## 2. Extraordinary Parish Meetings

18. Extraordinary Parish Meetings, if necessary, may be convened:
  - A. by order of the Ruling Bishop;
  - B. by the pastor of the parish;
  - C. by the Church Council;
  - D. pursuant to a written request of not less than one third of the parish members submitted to the Church Parish Council.
19. All provisions of the By-Laws pertaining to the convening of the Annual Parish Meetings (11-15) and the keeping of the minutes (16) shall be likewise applicable to the Extraordinary Parish Meetings.

Annotation: In emergency cases an Extraordinary Parish Meeting may be convened in an eight day term. Regarding such a meeting the pastor shall make an announcement from the steps before the altar after the Sunday divine service, and in addition, the Church Parish Council shall mail respective notices with a precise indication of the matter in connection with which the said meeting is being convened.
20. Only such matters shall be within the competency of an Extraordinary Parish Meeting as are specified in the notice convening same.

## B. The Church Parish Council

21. The Church Parish Council shall be composed of
- A. the Pastor of the parish who by virtue of his office shall be President of the Church Parish Council;
  - B. the Church Warden;
  - C. the President or the Sister Superior of the Sisterhood organized in conjunction with the parish and functioning under the supervision of the pastor.
  - D. the Treasurer;
  - E. the Secretary;
  - F. staff members of the clergy;
  - G. from one to five lay members of the parish.
22. All the officials enumerated in Par.20, with the exception of the Pastor and the staff members of the clergy appointed by the Ruling Bishop, the Warden, as well as the Senior Sister of the Sisterhood, shall be elected for a term of two years, or until new officials are elected. The Warden shall be elected for a term of three years. All the said officers, with the exception of the Pastor and the staff members of the clergy, shall perform their duties free of pay.
23. The following shall be within the competency of the Church Parish Council:
- A. the adornment of the parish church and the safety of the entire church property;
  - B. the maintenance of the clergy and their provision with living quarters;
  - C. the collection of the membership dues and other items of the members' self-taxation;
  - D. the keeping of the parish books;
  - E. the care of organizing the church choir under the direction of an experienced conductor;
  - F. the care of the educational and charitable work of the parish;
  - G. the dealing on behalf of the parish with civil authorities in connection with all matters involving the parish;
  - H. the fixing of the amount of membership dues and other items of self-taxation.

## C. Parish Officers

### a. The Pastor

24. The Pastor of the parish shall:
- 1. Conduct the divine services and ceremonies according to the Orthodox rite;
  - 2. Instruct the parish members and those attending church in the rules of the Orthodox Faith and devotion;
  - 3. Instruct the children in catechism;
  - 4. Endeavor to uplift the spiritual and moral level of the members of the parish;
  - 5. Preside over all Parish Meetings and all meetings of the Church Parish Council;
  - 6. Supervise, with the assistance of the Church Warden, the adornment of the parish church;

7. Have general supervision of the work of the Church Parish Council and the Church Warden, with the inherent and full authority and ability to delegate tasks or other measures he deems appropriate to the other members of the existing Parish Council;
8. Keep ecclesiastical registers and issue copies of the records therefrom;
9. Communicate on behalf of the parish with the diocesan authorities in connection with all matters involving the parish;
10. Be responsible for the welfare of the parish;
11. Keep the church seal;
12. Supervise the execution of all decisions of the Annual and Extraordinary Parish Meetings and those of the Church Parish Council.

b. Members of the Clergy.

25. The members of the clergy, being the immediate assistants of the pastor in the performance of his religious duties and in his educational work among the parish members and those attending church, shall:
  - a. Participate in all the meetings of the Church Parish Council as well as in the Annual and Extraordinary Parish Meetings;
  - b. Perform special duties conferred on them by the pastor.

c. The Church Warden.

26. The Church Warden, being the immediate assistant of the parish Pastor with respect to parish matters, shall be directly responsible for the safekeeping of the church property. In addition he shall:
  1. See to it that good order be observed in the church during services;
  2. Take charge of membership fees, and record parish membership;
  3. Keep an address list of the parish members;
  3. Take charge of the sale of candles;
  4. Handle plate collections and donations, issue receipts for donations
  5. Turn over plate collection and donation moneys, membership fee moneys, and candle-sale moneys to the treasurer.

d. The Treasurer.

27. The duties of the Treasurer shall comprise:
  1. Keep track of the monetary receipts and disbursements of the parish;
  2. The keeping of the parish receipts and disbursement ledgers in the form prescribed by the diocesan authorities;
  3. The compilation of the financial estimate and of the annual financial report for their submission to the Church Parish Council and the Annual Parish Meeting.

e. The Secretary.

28. The duties of the Secretary shall comprise:

1. The pursuance, under the direction of the Pastor, of all correspondence on behalf of the Church Parish Council;
2. The keeping of the minutes of the Annual and Extraordinary Parish Meetings as well as those of the Church Parish Council;
3. The posting and/or mailing of notices convening all Parish Meetings and the meetings of the Church Parish Council;
4. The preparation, under the direction of the Pastor, of the reports to the Annual and Extraordinary Parish Meetings.

f. Members of the Church Parish Council.

29. The members of the Church Parish Council shall:

1. Participate in all meetings of the Church Parish Council;
2. Be assistants of the Pastor and Church Warden;
3. Perform special duties conferred on them by the Pastor and the Church Parish Council;
4. In case of illness or temporary absence of some officer, they shall by order of the Pastor, perform the duties of the absent officer.

g. Sisterhood

30. In conjunction with the parish there may be established a Sisterhood. Its chairman or Sister Superior, being guided in her work by the instructions of the Pastor, shall:

1. Take care, together with the other sisters, of the cleanliness of the church, the vestments and other objects in the sacristy;
2. Take an immediate part in the organization of the charitable work of the parish;
3. Take charge of the refectory and the household connected therewith;
4. Guide and coordinate the work of the members forming part of the Sisterhood.

h. Auditing Committee

31. The Auditing Committee shall be comprised of three members elected by the Annual Parish Meeting for a term of one year.

Annotation. Members of the Church Parish Council cannot be members of the Auditing committee and visa versa.

32. The Auditing Committee shall begin its work not later than two weeks prior to the date fixed for the annual Parish Meeting. The Auditing Committee shall engage in any necessary discord, discussion, and/or negotiation with any applicable CPA, financial advisor, or other income tax practitioner who is handling the financial affairs of the church.

The following shall be the duties of the Auditing Committee:

1. The verification of the entire Treasurer's accounting and the report compiled by him/her on the status thereof to the Annual Parish Meeting and the Church Parish Council.
2. The compilation of the findings on the verification of the accounting and of the report referred to in section one of this paragraph.
3. The submission of the findings referred to in section two of this paragraph to the Annual Parish Meeting.
4. The recommendation to the Annual Parish Meeting regarding any desirable change in the method of the keeping of the Treasurer's accounting.

D. Meetings of the Church Parish Council

33. The meetings of the Church Parish Council shall be convened by the order of the Pastor not less than twice a year.
34. At the meetings of the Church Parish Council all matters shall be decided by simple majority vote while in case of a tie the vote of the Pastor, or the person presiding over the meeting pursuant to his instruction, shall prevail.

Part V  
(Parish Property)

35. The following shall be a part, not necessarily exclusive, of the property of the parish itself, being titled solely to the Diocese of Chicago & Detroit, Des Plaines, IL 60017 (ROCOR – Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia):
  - (a) The church building with all of its appurtenances as well as churches, oratories and chapels annexed to the parish church;
  - (b) Everything that is donated to the church and brought to God's altar, for instance: articles needed for church use;
  - (c) Personal and real property donated for the adornment of the church;
  - (d) Moneys received by the church from different sources, viz; candle-sales profits, jug and plate moneys, residues of profits, and from the sale of plots in parish cemeteries and various sundry incomes;
  - (e) Personal and real property and capital funds specifically donated or bequeathed to the church for its benefit or to its ownership, even though with a special designation for charitable and educational needs of the parish or the maintenance of the clergy;
  - (f) Voluntary Payment;
  - (g) Plate collections within the boundaries of the parish;
  - (h) Voluntary collections under subscription lists;
  - (i) Voluntary donations in kind by the parishioners;
  - (j) Incomes from real estate owned by the parish;
  - (k) Collections made by decision of the General Parish Meetings.



36. The management of the church building and parish property and the capitals shall be vested in the Church Parish Council.
37. Church real estate may be purchased or otherwise acquired out of church funds by decision adopted either by the Annual Parish Meeting or the Extraordinary Parish Meeting especially convened therefore. The sale of church real estate shall be effected subject to the Annual Parish Meeting or the Extraordinary Parish Meeting especially convened therefore.
38. Monetary funds, income and receipts, belonging to the church shall be disbursed in accordance with the estimate adopted by the Annual Parish Meeting.
39. The parish property of every kind may be acquired, sold, alienated, exchanged, mortgaged, leased and ceded for building purposes by the decision of the Annual Parish Meeting.

Part VI  
(Parish Monetary Funds)

40. All parish sums, as these are being received, shall be deposited by the Treasurer to the current account of the parish with a bank pursuant to the direction of the Church Parish Council. The Church Parish Council shall authorize the signing of checks.

Part VII  
(Amendment of the Parish By-Laws)

41. Amendments of these By-Laws may be made, if warranted by local conditions, not otherwise than with the consent of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the parish members (as defined in paragraph 8) at a lawfully convened meeting.
42. The suggested text of the paragraphs of the By-Laws, which it is proposed to amend, shall be incorporated into the notices convening the respective meeting.

Part VIII  
(Closing of the Parish)

43. The closing of the parish can take place not otherwise than with the consent of 3/4 of the parish members (as defined in paragraph 8) at a lawfully convened meeting.
44. The final disposition of the entire parish property shall be determined by the Diocese of Chicago & Detroit, Des Plaines, IL 60017 (ROCOR – Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia).

**Parish By-Laws for  
St. Innocent of Moscow Russian Orthodox Church.**

Adopted: November 2002  
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