

INSTRUCTIONS TO CHURCH WARDENS

Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia
23 October/5 November 1959 (Council Protocol #15)

1. The Church Warden is a trusted member of the parish, elected for each parish church for the acquisition and utilization, in collaboration with the Rector and Parish Council, of church funds and the maintenance of all church property, under the oversight and with the guidance of the Rector and the Diocesan Bishop.
2. Church Wardens for churches which do not constitute part of a formal parish are appointed in the order determined in each individual case by the Diocesan Authority, according to the institution within which the given church exists, and are confirmed in their position by the Diocesan Bishop.
3. The Church Warden, in the exercise of his duties under the direct supervision of the Rector, is guided by the Parish By-Laws, and the rules of this Instruction, submitting in all his acts to the orders of the Diocesan Bishop.
4. Persons are elected to the position of Church Warden who are well-known to the parish for their Christian piety and loyalty to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, who are zealous for the moral and material well-being of the parish, and who are conscientious in paying their parish membership dues.
5. The following may not be elected to the position of Church Warden:
 - a. Those less than twenty-five years of age;
 - b. Those who do not come to Confession and Holy Communion at least once a year;
 - c. Those who have lost their employment because of being convicted of malfeasance by a court of law, or who have been deposed from any of the ranks of the clergy;
 - d. Those whose goods and property are in receivership because they have declared bankruptcy;
 - e. Insolvent debtors;
 - f. Those with questionable or reprehensible means of employment;
 - g. Those who live in cohabitation outside the bounds of ecclesiastical matrimony;
 - h. Those who are not conscientious in paying their [parish] membership dues;
 - i. Those who have not lived at least six months in the parish and have not been enrolled in the register of parish members.
6. The Church Warden is elected by the General Parish Assembly for a three-year term of office.
7. The name of the newly-elected Church warden is submitted by the Rector to the Diocesan Bishop for confirmation, and after confirmation the oath is administered to him, the text of which is signed in duplicate. The form of the oath before assuming the duties of Church Warden is as follows:

"I, the undersigned, do promise upon the Holy Gospel and the life-creating Cross of the Lord to fulfill the duties of Warden of the Church of [name of church] with exactitude, being guided by the Canons of the Church and the "Instructions for Church Wardens" with the contents of which I am acquainted, zealously, honorably, with the fear of God,

for the good of the Holy Church and for the salvation of my soul, being mindful that therein I will be responsible before the law and before the Lord God at His dread judgment. As an assurance of this my promise, I kiss the Word and Cross of my Savior. Amen.

(signature of the Warden).

Oath administered by: (signature of the priest).

8. Upon assuming his responsibilities, the Church Warden, in the presence of one of the members of the clergy and a representative of the Parish Council, verifies all church property according to the inventory, and all of the church's account books. There is set down, over the signatures of all present thereat, a special act concerning the results of the verification. This is kept with the church's documents. If something cannot be accounted for during the verification, or if something is discovered to be damaged, the Diocesan Bishop must be informed of it immediately.

9. The Church Warden is a member of the Parish Council by virtue of his position.

10. When the three-year term of the Church Warden's office elapses, the Church Warden may be re-elected to other successive three-year terms continually. In such a case the oath is not administered again.

11. The following duties are the responsibility of the Church Warden:

- a. The taking up of plate collections for monetary donations to the church;
- b. The reception of all funds, endowments and offerings made to the church;
- c. The collection of special collections;
- d. The collection of revenues from the rental of church property;
- e. The sale of church candles and candle-stubs;
- f. The purchase of all that is necessary for the divine services (as directed by the Rector): candles, ecclesiastical wine, prosphoras, incense, olive oil, liturgical books, etc.
- g. The maintenance in good condition, the repair and acquisition of the vestments and ecclesiastical utensils;
- h. The most meticulous care that the iconostasis, hanging lamps candle stands, etc., are kept in good condition;
- i. The supervision of the proper care and maintenance of the church, church-related structures, grounds, cemeteries, grave markers, and other properties belonging to the church;
- j. Care that the congregation maintain order and silence during the divine services in church;
- k. The recording of all moneys received and disbursements made by him for proper accounting;
- l. The entering in the inventory of the church's possessions of all articles acquired and donated to the church.

12. In those diocese where there are diocesan candle works for the provision of church candles, incense and olive oil, it is obligatory that Church Wardens acquire the designated articles only from such suppliers.

13. Moneys collected during plate collections, as well as those taken in during the sale of candles and received as donations, are counted by two persons and, over their signatures, are turned over to the church's treasurer.

14. Every month, the Church Warden reports to the Parish Council on the state of the church's finances. The Rector of the church may make inquiry of the parish's financial state at any time.

15. Sums of money which exceed those determined for current expenses are submitted by the Warden to the Church Treasurer and are deposited by the latter in the bank in the church account, from which they may be withdrawn over no fewer than two signatures, one of which must be that of the Rector or his proxy.

16. Candles and candle stubs are kept in separate depositories, the keys to which are kept by the Church Warden.

17. Moneys, documents and non-liturgical articles belonging personally to the Church Warden, to members of the clergy or other persons, are not to be stored in the church.

18. Obligatory collections established by the Diocesan Authority and the Synod of Bishops are to be sent in without delay, in accordance with the instructions concerning such collections.

19. Intermittent sums received from collections in benefit of various institutions are sent to those places and within such time periods as are indicated in the instructions concerning such collections.

20. As regards the recording of income and disbursements in the principal bound parish financial record book and the setting forth of the annual financial report, the Warden and the Treasurer are guided by the existing rules and forms established by the Diocesan Authority.

21. Church property and church finances are audited by the Auditing Committee, which is elected by the General Parish Assembly, as well as by the Dean, where such exists. The Diocesan Bishop has the right, to conduct an audit at any time, either personally or through a person empowered by him to do so.

22. The Church Warden who fails in good conscience to fulfill his duties is relieved of his position by decision of the Diocesan Bishop, after proper verification thereof, if admonition is unsuccessful. For conduct resulting in the loss of or damage to church property, the Church Warden is liable under the law.

23. In case of the death or resignation of the Church Warden before his term of office is fulfilled, the Diocesan Bishop entrusts the administration of the duties of the Warden to one of the members of the Parish Council, on the recommendation of the local clergy, until a new election is held.

24. In the case of necessity, the Parish Council can elect an Assistant Warden from its membership, who will act in his place when he is absent, and may likewise fulfill a portion of his duties by mutual consent.

This instruction to Church Wardens was confirmed by the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on 23 October/5 November 1959 (Council Protocol #15).