



July 24, 2020
Protocol 07/017

To the Reverend Clergy and Pious Faithful of the Diocese of New England,

Christ is in our midst!

With this letter, I am happy to announce the procedure by which, God-willing, a new bishop will be nominated and elected for the Diocese of New England. This procedure is in conformity with the standard procedure for such an election in the Orthodox Church in America.

The procedure is as follows:

1) This present letter will serve as notice to all parishes of the Diocese of New England that any parishioner in good standing can identify one possible candidate for possible nomination as diocesan bishop. Names may be submitted directly and confidentially to the Chancellor of the Diocese of New England, Archpriest John Kreta, at the following email address: fjkreta@snet.net. All names of candidates must be submitted for nomination by August 31, 2020, and no names received after that date will be considered.

2) When identifying candidates, please note that according to the *Statute* of the Orthodox Church in America (Article VIII, Section 6), the following are the qualifications for a diocesan bishop:

- a. If he is not already a bishop, the candidate for the office of bishop shall be nominated from among the clergy or laity, monastic, celibate, or widowed.
- b. To receive episcopal ordination, the nominee must satisfy all the requirements of the Sacred Canons pertaining to this highest of all ecclesiastical offices.
- c. It is preferable that the candidate have completed a course of study in a graduate school of Orthodox theology.
- d. He should be conversant in the English language and, as appropriate, in another language commonly spoken among the faithful of the Diocese.
- e. If at the time of his nomination he is a layman or a celibate or widowed priest, he shall pronounce at least the first monastic vows (rasophore), if he has not already pronounced such vows.
- f. Diocesan bishops shall not be eligible for nomination for another Diocese.

3) The chancellor will initially discern simply that the qualifications of bishop are met by candidates whose names have been submitted.

- 4) At its meeting on February 18, 2020, the Diocesan Council established a Search Committee that includes: the Chancellor of the Diocese, Archpriest John Kreta; the three deanery deans, Archpriest Vasily Lickwar, Archpriest John Hopko, and Archpriest Mark Korban; and Fr. Steven Voytovich who has previously served as a Dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary. The Search Committee will review the candidates initially vetted by the Diocesan Chancellor (from #2) and from among them confidentially select three candidates.
- 5) The Search Committee will then meet, separately and confidentially, with these three candidates, informing them of the Search Committee's intent to present them as candidates.
- 6) The Search Committee then must send the names of the three candidates to the Secretary of the Holy Synod, His Eminence Archbishop Michael, for him to confirm which of these candidates are named in the list of candidates, which has been approved by the Holy Synod, that he maintains as Secretary of the Holy Synod. If any of these candidates are not already named on the Synodal list, the Search Committee will forward the name of such a candidate to the Metropolitan with a request that the candidate be vetted according to the process established by the Holy Synod for possible approval. Subsequently, the Holy Synod will inform the Search Committee if the vetted candidate has, or has not, received approval from the Holy Synod.
- 7) The candidate(s) nominated by the Search Committee and vetted and approved by the Holy Synod will be asked by the Search Committee to prepare a brief autobiography, and will then meet with the Diocesan Council which shall serve as the Nominating Committee. The Diocesan Council may request further background information and will interview the candidates at an appropriate time.
- 8) Next, the Diocesan Council will decide which of the candidate(s) will be forwarded to the **Special Diocesan Assembly**.
- 9) The Special Diocesan Assembly will follow this procedure for the nomination of a candidate, which has been approved by the Holy Synod:

PROCEDURES CONCERNING THE ELECTION OF THE RULING BISHOP

- I. The Special Diocesan Assembly shall begin with a Divine Liturgy and a special service of Invocation to the Holy Spirit.
- II. Following the Divine Liturgy, the Special Diocesan Assembly shall meet in accordance with the provisions of the *Statute* (Article VIII, Section 7; and Article IX). The Assembly shall then elect tellers entrusted to count the votes.
- III. The Committee on Credentials, appointed in advance by the Diocesan Council (Article IX, Section 8) shall then report the exact number of voting delegates.
- IV. The Locum Tenens, as chair of the Special Diocesan Assembly, shall call on the Nominating Committee to present the names of the candidates. Nominations will not be allowed from the floor. There shall be no speeches in support of or against any candidates.

V. The balloting will take place in secret, and diocesan-certified ballots shall be distributed to all delegates.

VI. On the first ballot one name shall be written. The ballots containing more than one name or names other than officially listed candidates shall be declared void.

VII. The results of the ballot, with figures, shall be announced by the Locum Tenens.

VIII. If at the first ballot a candidate receives 2/3 of the accredited votes, he shall be declared by the Locum Tenens as the designated nominee to the See and his name shall be submitted to the Holy Synod of Bishops for approval and canonical election.

IX. If no candidate receives 2/3 of the accredited votes, a second ballot shall take place and two names shall be written on each ballot. The ballots with fewer or more than two names, or names other than those of officially listed candidates, shall be declared void.

X. The Locum Tenens shall then announce the results. The names of the two candidates with the largest pluralities shall be submitted to the Synod for canonical election.

XI. However, if no candidate received more than 40% of the accredited votes, the Locum Tenens shall declare the ballot as non-conclusive and the Assembly as having failed to nominate a candidate for the office of Diocesan Bishop (Article VIII, Section 7.e). In this case, the Synod may elect another qualified candidate as Diocesan Bishop, or they may authorize another Diocesan Assembly to nominate a candidate.

XII. The Nominating Committee may also, at the beginning of the Special Diocesan Assembly, announce its failure to nominate a candidate, move that the Assembly waive its right to nominate the Bishop, and request that the Holy Synod directly elects a candidate.

XIII. Since the Assembly only nominates a candidate and the latter is to be approved by election of the Holy Synod, a nominated candidate is not to be declared as "Bishop-elect". The Locum Tenens and the Diocesan Council shall inform the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America and request him to convene the Synod for the canonical approval and election of the nominee. As mentioned above, if the nominee is not approved by the Holy Synod, the Synod shall direct the Diocesan Assembly to reconvene and elect another candidate.

XIV. The Diocesan Assembly shall adjourn with a Thanksgiving Service.

XV. Following his canonical election by the Holy Synod, the new Diocesan Bishop, if already of episcopal rank, has full authority and prerogatives as Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of New England. If the canonically elected candidate is not already a bishop, he will receive ordination (consecration) to the holy episcopacy, after which he will have full authority and prerogatives as Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of New England.

XVI. The date and place of the consecration, if necessary, and the enthronement shall be announced to all parishes so that the entire Body of the Faithful may take part in this event.

As the assigned Locum Tenens of the Diocese of New England, I encourage everyone involved to carry out this process in a spirit of peace, integrity, and love for Christ and His Body the Church. I

Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate

pray that we may all make our best efforts to “be united in the same mind and the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10) so that the God’s will may be done for the Diocese of New England.

With archpastoral blessings and intercessions,



+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada