

ORTHODOX AUTOCEPHALOUS CHURCH OF ALBANIA

CHARTER OF THE ORTHODOX AUTOCEPHALOUS CHURCH OF ALBANIA

GENERAL

Article 1

1. The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, having as its Founder and Head our Lord and God Jesus Christ, is a divine institution in space as a presence and manifestation of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, remaining integrally united with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and all the sister Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and unwaveringly safeguards the sources of faith, namely Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition and the Holy Apostolic and Synodal Canons.
2. Its official title is the "Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania."

Article 2

Members of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania are all those who have been baptized in the Orthodox Church and reside in Albania, irrespective of their ancestry.

Article 3

1. The Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church, constituting the common foundation of the organization and administration of all the Orthodox Churches around the world, relegate the organizational and administrative systems and the operation of the life of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania.
2. The exact interpretation of the articles of the present Charter, in case that questions arise, is undertaken using the criterion of the Holy Canons.

Article 4

Fundamental values for the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania are: Ecclesiastically, the Patriarchal and Synodal Tome, through which the Ecumenical Patriarchate granted to it (April 1937), according to ecclesiastical order, Autocephaly and its canonical recognition by all the Orthodox Churches all over the world as an Autocephalous Church.

Politically, sub article 10, paragraph 6 and sub-article 24, paragraph 1, 2, of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania of 1998.^[1] So that, based on article 10, the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, one of the traditional religious communities of the country, is recognized as a Legal Entity and is independent to its administrative and management of its estates according to the authorities and to its Canons. According to article 24, paragraph 1, 2, religious freedom and the right of expressing religious faith, individually or in a group, are safeguarded in public and private life, via worship, education, the keeping of customs and festive events.

Article 5

The relations between the State and the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania are set by articles 10 and 24 of the Albanian Constitution, while based on their planned Agreement.

Article 6

The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, as the canonical successor of the centuries old tradition of the Orthodox Church in the geographical area of the contemporary Albanian State, is the only legal heir of all the titles, estates, and property of the Orthodox cultural heritage and the rights of those Parishes, holy Monasteries and communities in the Albanian State.

Article 7

1. The official language of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania is Albanian. Those Orthodox who use another language are entitled to use their traditional liturgical language, provided that the Holy Synod has approved the texts of those languages. This approval also applies to the texts of the Holy Services in the Albanian language.
2. In correspondence with the other Autocephalous Churches and generally with foreign recipients, it is permissible that other languages can be used.

ORGANISATION

Article 8

The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania is organized as follows:

1. The Archdiocese of Tirana and Durrës, including the Hierarchical Districts: Tirana, Durrës, Skoda and Northern Albania.
2. The Metropolis of Berat, including the Hierarchical Districts: Berat, Vlorë, Lushnjë and Mallakastra.
3. The Metropolis of Gjirokastrë, including the Hierarchical Districts: Gjirokastrë, Pogoni, Përmet, Sarandë, Delvina and Himara.

4. The Metropolis of Korçë, including the Hierarchical Districts: Korçë, Prespa, Pogradec, Devoll and Kolonjë.
5. The Metropolis of Elbasan, includes the hierarchical region of Elbasan, Shpati, and Librazhd.
6. The Metropolis of Apollonia and Fier, including the hierarchical regions of Fier, Patos and Libofshë.

Article 9

The Holy Synod can establish Metropolises or Dioceses, if for pastoral reasons it is deemed necessary, following the jurisdiction, which the canonical order and tradition of the Church foresees.

Article 10

No Orthodox cleric is entitled to exercise priestly duties in Albania, if he is not canonically inscribed in the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania and has no previous special permission of the competency of this clerical office.

HOLY SYNOD

Article 11

1. The Holy Synod is the highest authority of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, according to the Patriarchal and Synodal Tome of the bestowing of its Autocephaly by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. It consists of the Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and all Albania, as its permanent President, and of the active Metropolitan and Bishops.
2. The Holy Synod is headquartered in the capital of the country and is officially entitled the "Holy Synod of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania."

Article 12

The Holy Synod has the following responsibilities:

1. It protects the faith, worship, ecclesiastical discipline, organization and the administration of the Church, based on the dogmas and the Holy Canons.
2. It elects the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Bishops and publishes the related Encyclicals for their recognition.
3. It appoints the Locum Tenens of vacant Metropolises.
4. It exercises canonical control over the acts and activities of the Metropolitan and Bishops, as well as the organs of the Church.
5. It cares for the reception of the Holy Myron from the Great Church of Christ.

6. It cares for the appropriate cultivation and consistent execution of the divine duties of the Clergy and Monastics.
7. It cares for the religious formation of the Orthodox people via sermons, lectures, catechetical teaching, pastoral visits, the publication of religious materials, electronic media, etc.
8. It approves publications of religious content, which are entitled to be circulated among the Parishes, Monasteries and/or Institutes of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania.
9. It rules on the resignation of its members.
10. It tries the President and its members for dogmatic and canonical infringements, according to the Holy Canons. It hears cases related to the defrocking of presbyters, deacons and monastics.
11. It authentically interprets, through all the ecclesiastical organs, the provisions of the Charter and of the General Administration Regulations.
12. It convenes the Ecclesiastical Assemblies and Conferences, whenever the needs of the Church require them.
13. It convenes the Synodal Committees to study and to provide opinions on specific topics.
14. It supervises the management of the movable and immovable property of the Archdiocese, the Metropolises, the Parishes and the Monasteries.
15. It establishes Institutes and Associations serving the spiritual, social, educational and cultural work of the Church.
16. It decides on issues of any nature, which are not regulated by the present Charter or Regulations.

Article 13

1. The Holy Synod is convened by the presidency of the Archbishop, regularly once every three months and extraordinarily whenever a need arises.
2. Only the President of the Holy Synod, according to the Holy Canons, is responsible for the convening of the Holy Synod and the setting of the agenda. Its President also convenes the latter, as long as half of its members are summoned by letter.
3. In the absence of the President of the Holy Synod, the Metropolitan with the longest tenure of hierarchical ordination presides, registering the canonical instruction or permission of the Archbishop.
4. The participation of Hierarchs in the regular and extraordinary sessions of the Holy Synod is obligatory. The abstainers of the sessions without serious cause are subject to the conditional sanctions provided by the Holy Canons.

Article 14

The Holy Synod has a cleric as the Arch-Secretary and a cleric as Secretary, recommended by the Archbishop and appointed by the Holy Synod.

Article 15

The Holy Synod has quorum as long as the President and at least half of its members participate, making decisions valid by a simple majority vote of the members participating, in the event of a deadlock, the vote of the President prevails.

Article 16

In the interval between the sessions of the Holy Synod, in the case of urgent or pressing matters the Archbishop acts and correspondingly informs the Holy Synod at its first session, which then approves his actions.

HIERARCHS

Article 17

1. The election of Hierarchs (Archbishop, Metropolitans, Bishops) is undertaken by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, according to the Holy Canons.
2. The Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council recommends candidates for episcopal consecration. Ultimately, the Holy Synod elects one of those.
3. The candidates for episcopal consecration, aside from the qualifications which the Canons of the Church designate, should indeed be graduates of the "Resurrection of Christ" Theological Academy or of an Orthodox Theological School of university level and remain and work for at least three years in Albania.
4. The Hierarchs of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania have Albanian citizenship. In special circumstances exceptions are permissible, following the decision of the Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council and of the Holy Synod.
5. For a Hierarchical consecration in the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania it is required to have at least three Hierarchs. In the case that there is a smaller number of surviving Bishops, to ensure the specified number by the Holy Canons, it is permissible to seek assistance from the provider of the Autocephaly, the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Article 18

Depending on the needs of the Church, it is possible for titular Metropolitans or Bishops to be elected with particular tasks. They are considered active members of the Holy Synod.

Article 19

The Hierarchs, regarding the understanding of their duties, provide before the Holy Synod the following affirmation: "I promise before the Triune God that I will guard the faith in the ecclesiastical dogmas and the Canons of the Orthodox Church and I will maintain the bond with the Orthodox Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches around the world."

ARCHBISHOP

Article 20

The Archbishop is the President of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, the head of the Orthodox Christians in Albania, their representative before the state authorities, international organizations and every authority and power.

Article 21

The title of the Archbishop is: "His Beatitude, Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and all Albania", his *feme* (title) in the ecclesiastical Services is exclaimed according to the liturgical practice of the local Church. The Archbishop has all the responsibilities and all the rights foreseen under the Holy Canons and the present Charter.

Article 22

The Archbishop has the following duties and rights:

1. He announces, according to the order of the Orthodox Church, his election and ascent through enthronement letters to the Great Church of Christ and to all the sister Orthodox Autocephalous Churches throughout the world and provides a legal confession and affirmation on his unwavering observance of the Orthodox faith and the safeguarding of all the sacred and Holy Canons, Holy Tradition and the order of the Holy Orthodox Church. He commemorates the name of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the other Patriarchs and Heads of the Holy Orthodox Autocephalous Churches according to the order in the Diptychs.
2. He convenes the Holy Synod and all the bodies or organs of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania and presides over their meetings.
3. He represents the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania before the state authorities and wherever there is a need, personally or via representatives.
4. He represents the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania at every real estate purchase agreement in Albania and abroad, personally or via his deputy. (**power of attorney**)
5. He maintains ecclesiastical communion and communication with the other Orthodox Churches.

6. He publishes encyclicals to all the Orthodox parishes of Albania, he visits, when he feels appropriate, the Hierarchs of the Church.
7. He ordains the Metropolitans and the Bishops jointly with the Hierarchs – members of the Holy Synod – and accordingly to the Holy Canons.
8. He accepts justified complaints against the Hierarchs and recommends the investigations entrusted to the Holy Synod to its member.
9. He visits the Parishes of the Archdiocese over a period of at least two years and submits a report annually to the Holy Synod.
10. With respect to issues or questions of general ecclesiastical nature, exceeding the limits of the jurisdiction of individual Autocephalous Churches, the Archbishop addresses, according to canonical order, the Ecumenical Throne, through whom they maintain communion with all the Orthodox Episcopate who rightly divide the word of truth, and thereby seeks the valid opinion and perception of the sister Churches.
11. He assumes a broader initiative, whenever the country is in a period of extraordinary necessity, from natural disasters or other causes, cooperating with the state authorities, the leaders of other religious communities and international organizations, for the relief of the victims and healing of wounds.
12. He exercises every other right, which is provided to him by the Holy Canons.

Article 23

The Archbishop may have two to three assistants Bishops, who perform whatever is required in these specific tasks and have all the privileges of active Hierarchs.

METROPOLITANS

Article 24

The Metropolitan has the following duties and rights:

1. He participates in the Holy Synod. He administers and shepherds his Metropolis within the specified limits of his province.
2. He is a member of the Holy Synod and represents his Metropolis to the local State Authorities and wherever a problem arises, personally or via his representative.
3. He ordains the clergy of his Metropolis.
4. He imposes penalties upon clergymen of the Metropolis predicated by the Holy Canons. For more severe offences that constitute a scandal, he refers them to the competent Ecclesiastical Courts.
5. He visits the Parishes of his Metropolis at least once biennially, by controlling the course of ecclesiastical matters; he give relative directives and submits an annual report to the Holy Synod.

Article 25

The Metropolitan commemorates "Our Archbishop (name)" during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. He enjoys all the rights, which are provided to him by the Holy Canons.

Article 26

1. Every Hierarch is required to remain constantly within the boundaries of his Metropolis, aside from circumstances of his participation in the sessions of the Holy Synod or in other official meetings, as well as when taking canonical leave. For all other circumstances he requires the approval of the President of the Holy Synod.
2. Regarding service matters, the Hierarch communicates with the ecclesiastical authorities of other Orthodox Autocephalous Churches via the Holy Synod.

CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLIES

Article 27

1. For dealing with general topics, which concern the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, the Clergy-Laity Conference is regularly convened biennially, but extraordinary if a need arises.
2. The Clergy-Laity Conference studies current ecclesiastical and social issues, and recommends to the Holy Synod and the Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council measures to be applied for ecclesiastical work and generally for the shake of the Orthodox witness to the contemporary world. The dogmatic and canonical issues are the exclusive responsibility of the Holy Synod.

Article 28

1. The members of the Clergy-Laity Conference are: the members of the Holy Synod, the members of the Clergy-Laity Council, two representatives per each monastery and twenty clergy and twenty laity for the appropriate representation of men, women and youth, from the Archdiocese and the Metropolises. This number can be increased to one-third after following the decisions of the Holy Synod, respective of the existing conditions each time.
2. The clergy are elected by the specific Conference by the plenary session of the clergy of the Archdiocese and the Metropolises. The laity is elected by the members of the Parish Councils, as well as by the members of the Administrative Council of the Ecclesiastical Institutions. For the achievement of the complete representation of all the regions, the Holy Synod publishes a relative encyclical at that time.

CLERGY-LAITY ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL

Article 29

1. For the management of ecclesiastical property and the control of the property of the Holy Temples of the Orthodox communities as well as those of the Holy Monasteries, the Holy Synod convenes the "Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council," which consists of all the members of the Holy Synod and twelve clergy and laity, at the center of the Church of Albania.
2. The Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council participates in the aforementioned ecclesiastical action under articles 17, 27 and 70 of the present Charter.
3. The four clergy and the four laity members of the Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council are elected every four years by the members of the Archdiocesan and Metropolitan Councils of each diocese. The remaining four members are elected by the Holy Synod.
4. The five-member Executive Committee, elected by the Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council, executes its decisions. Both of the bodies are presided over by the Archbishop.

Article 30

Attached to the Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council, the Inspection Committee also functions and supervised the management of the Archdiocese and the Metropolises and thereby provides recommendations to the Holy Synod.

Article 31

1. The Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council examines the financial records of the preceding year and the budget of the forthcoming year, which are ultimately approved by the Holy Synod.
2. It **draws up** the General Administrative Regulations of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, which is ultimately approved by the Holy Synod.

Article 32

1. The Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council convenes regularly twice annually and the Executive Committee convenes every three months. Both of the bodies convene extraordinarily, if a need is presented, following the invitation of the Archbishop.
2. The position of the acting Secretary of the Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council is fulfilled by the Arch-secretary of the Holy Synod.

ARCHDIOCESAN AND METROPOLITAN COUNCILS

Article 33

1. In the Holy Archdiocese and in each Holy Metropolis the Ecclesiastical Council of the Archdiocese or of the Metropolis convenes to support the work of the local Hierarchy.
2. The Ecclesiastical Council consists of the Archbishop or of the Metropolitan as President, five clergy and five laity, with the equal representation of men, women and youth. The members are elected every four years, according to the General Regulations of Administration.
3. The Ecclesiastical Council convenes following the invitation of the President, regularly, three times annually, and extraordinarily, whenever a need presents itself. It examines the established conditions, which influence the course of the Archdiocese or the Metropolises, and seeks appropriate means of maintaining the spiritual, pastoral and social work of the Church.

HIERARCHICAL PROVINCE (VICARIATE)

Article 34

The Hierarchical Province (Vicariate) is an ecclesiastical administrative unit, which includes a specific number of Parishes of a specific area of the Archdiocese or of the Metropolises.

Article 35

The Archbishop and the Metropolitans appoint their representative clergy to the Hierarchical Committee for each Hierarchical Province, who then coordinates ecclesiastical work in it, in the name of and under the direct supervision of the local Hierarchy.

Article 36

The Hierarchical Vicar presides over the Ecclesiastical Council of the Hierarchical Province, which consists of an additional three clergy and three laity. They are elected for a four-year term by the Parish Councils and are appointed by the local Hierarchy. The Hierarchical Vicar works to apply the orders, decisions and clauses of the higher ecclesiastical authorities in all the Parishes of his jurisdiction.

HOLY MONASTERIES

Article 37

1. The Holy Monastery is the center of *askesis*, worship, and spiritual radiation according to the monastic traditions of the Orthodox Church.

2. Each Holy Monastery is managed by the brotherhood/sisterhood, who cohabitates therein, under the leadership of the abbot/abbess and the members of the Abbot Council.
3. The Holy Monasteries of Albania comply with the Holy Canons and the Orthodox Monastic Traditions.
4. The Financial Committee of the Archdiocese or each Diocese takes care of the maintenance, supervision and ensurance of the property of Holy Monasteries that flourished in the past and today have no monks.
5. The Holy Monasteries of the Nativity of the Theotokos – Ardenica, The Dormition of the Theotokos – Zvernec, Saint Marina - Llenge, and Saint Theodor of Drymades are designated Synodical Monasteries.
6. The Holy Monestaries of Saint Kosmas Aitolos - Kolkondes and Saint John Vladamir – Shijon are sites of pilgrimage of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania.
7. The Synodical Monasteries and the Pilgrimages of the Orthodox Church of Albania are governed by the Holy Synod and under the direct supervision of its Chief Secretary.

PARISHES AND PARISH PRIESTS

Article 38

The Parish is the worship community of faithful, clergy and laity, who reside in a specific area, city or village, and have as its center the Holy Church.

Article 39

1. The parish priests are selected, ordained and appointed by the local Hierarch.
2. Each Parish has one or more parish priests, relative to the number of faithful and the Holy Churches and chapels of the Parish and relative to its financial situation.

Article 40

The parish priest is the president of the Parish Council and is responsible for the application of the clauses of the present Charter. Wherever more than one priest serves, the local Hierarch appoints the president.

Article 41

The priests conduct their duties and enjoy rights, which are provided for by the Holy Canons and the Tradition of the Church, in obedience to the local Hierarch.

Article 42

1. The administration of the Parish is maintained by the Parish Council, which consists of: a) the Parish Priest as President, b) the remaining clergy, c) four to ten lay members

(men, women and youth), respective of the size of the Parish, which are appointed by the local Hierarch **every four years, following the proposal of the Head of the Parish for a double number of candidates.**

2. Each Ecclesiastical Councilor ought to:
 - 2.1. Be an active member of the Orthodox Church (namely to be baptized, to participate in Holy services and to **take part in the holy sacraments of the Church**).
 - 2.2. Not have a relation, through blood or marriage, with the Parish Priest or any other member of the Parish Council.
 - 2.3. Not have executive political power.
 - 2.4. Participate regularly in the meetings of the Parish Council.
3. An Ecclesiastical Councilor, who is inadmissibly absent for three consecutive meetings of the Ecclesiastical Council, is replaced by another, substitute member, following the proposition of the Parish Priest - President.
4. The Ecclesiastical Councilor is dismissed if:
 - 4.1. It is proven that they did not apply the decisions and orders of the head authority.
 - 4.2. They did not accept a financial audit on behalf of the responsible finance department of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania.
 - 4.3. They act independently and carry out work without the previous approval of the head of their authority.
 - 4.4. They use the space of the Church for aims foreign to it or they entrust the finances of the Church to a non-ecclesiastical entity.
5. An Ecclesiastical Councilor, being made redundant following the decision of the local Hierarch, is replaced by another, substitute member.
6. No one is recognized as a member of the Parish Council, if they do not have the appointment document having on it the signature of the local Hierarch and the seal of the Archdiocese or of the local Metropolis.
7. Any interference of members of the state authority in the Parish Councils contravenes the Constitution of the State and therefore any Councilor appointed by whichever state authority is not entitled to be recognized by the Church of Albania.
8. The office of the Ecclesiastical Councilor is unpaid and incompatible to that of a paid employee of the Church.
9. The length of the tenure of the Ecclesiastical Councilors is four years, starting on the 1st of September of their appointment and concluding on the 31st of August of the fourth year following their appointment.

Article 43

The right of election and voting to all the Ecclesiastical Councils are granted to all Orthodox, men and women above the age of 18 years who are residents of the Albanian Republic. The way of election of the members of the Ecclesiastical Councils of the cities

and villages, their responsibilities and their duties, are defined by the General Regulations of Administration.

FORMATION OF CLERGY, INSURANCE, LEAVE

Article 44

The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania allocates and administers special means, and higher and superior schools for the formation of its ministers.

Article 45

The clergy of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania who are entitled to be ordained are men of impeccable character, who fulfill the conditions prescribed by the Canons, who have completed at least secondary education and have a degree from the "Resurrection of Christ" Orthodox Theological Academy of Albania or of another Theological School of at least the same level. Only the Holy Synod may make exceptions, in the case of emergencies.

Article 46

The clergy of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania and its employees are insured according to the laws of the Albanian State.

Article 47

Clergy and monastics of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, in order to go beyond the borders of Albania, must possess a document of permission from the cleric-in-charge of their ecclesiastical area.

CLERGY ASSEMBLIES (SYNAXIS)

Article 48

1. The clergy of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania regularly gather biennially, or extraordinary when a need arises, at the General Clergy Assembly (Synaxis). Its aim is the addressing of current issues, the renewal of the spiritual life of the clergy and their reinforcement for the best performance of their mission.
2. Clergy Assemblies in the Archdiocese and in each Metropolis take place every three months or whenever deemed necessary by the local Hierarch.
3. The presence of clergy at the Clergy Assemblies is mandatory; any unexcused absence results in canonical penalties.

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL WORK

Article 49

The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania pays special care for the Christian education of the Orthodox Youth, as well as for the catechism of children and adolescents. To achieve this goal a special body of Catechists, consisting of graduates of the "Resurrection of Christ" Orthodox Theological Academy or of specially trained youth, is assembled in the Archdiocese and in the Metropolises. At all the levels of church life, Parishes, Metropolises and the Archdiocese, youth participate in an active and responsible manner.

Article 50

Under the auspices of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania newspapers, journals, books and other publications are published to cover liturgical, pastoral, spiritual, edifying and other needs of the Orthodox flock. Publications not approved by the responsible ecclesiastical authority are not entitled to be circulated within the confines of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania.

Article 51

Corresponding to the sacerdotal, homiletical, catechetical and to general spiritual work, the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania is interested in the general progress of Albanian society and develops special programs in the areas of health, education, social welfare, agricultural development, culture, ecology and others.

Article 52

For the better service of social activities, the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania has founded two Institutions: the "Annunciation" Institute and the "Breath of Love" Institute, **managed by Charters approved by the State.**

Article 53

1. In order to deal with diverse needs, the Holy Synod may form other institutions, limited liability companies, agencies or associations with an appropriate relevant statute and a clear identification of their aims.
2. The areas of land relevant to the hydroelectric projects of companies of the Church are under the supervision of the Holy Synod.
3. The President of the foundations and the companies is the Archbishop of Tirana, Dures and Albania.
4. Presidents of the Associations of Orthodox Intellectuals, Orthodox Women and Orthodox Youth are elected by the Holy Synod for three years, following a proposal of the Clergy-Laity Council.

Article 54

1. Within the Archdiocese and Metropolises, Associations may be formed upon the initiative of local factors and the approval of the Holy Synod: Orthodox Women, Orthodox Youth, Orthodox Intellectuals and others, in order to strengthen spiritual, catechetical, missionary and social work of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania.
2. Unions, Associations and other organizations, founded without the approval of the Holy Synod, are not entitled to operate, to act under its auspices, to represent the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania nor to participate in the convening of its bodies.

ECCLESIASTICAL PROPERTY

Article 55

1. Every movable or immovable piece of property, belonging to the Archdiocese, the Metropolises, the Parishes and Monasteries, constitutes the ecclesiastical property of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania and is intended to serve its spiritual, educational and social work.
2. No member of the clergy of any degree or lay commissioner of any other office may donate or sell movable and immovable property of the Church. In case that a dispossession is needed, the opinion of the Clergy-Laity Council is required as well as a decision of the Holy Synod.

Article 56

1. Everything established or anything that may be acquired by the Churches of the cities and villages constitutes its own property. Its management and use takes place based on the clauses of the General Regulations. For the sale or transfer of the spaces used for Divine Worship, prior approval of the Holy Synod is required.
2. The Holy Synod approves the buying and selling of immovable property of Holy Monasteries. It, prior to the decision-making, seeks the recommendation of the local Metropolitan and the relative legal opinion and consent of the Metropolitan Council of the area, of which the Holy Monastery belongs to.

Article 57

Movable property also includes the objects intended for Divine Worship. Sanctified items may not be used in transactions. Whenever there is a need to retire them, they are transferred to the *Skevophilakion* of the Archdiocese or of the Metropolis.

Article 58

In the event of the departure of a part or of the entire Orthodox population of a village, city or area, the Holy Churches, Holy Monasteries and their property remain the property of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania.

Article 59

For the effective management of the immovable and movable property of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, the Holy Synod may form a special company of restricted responsibility.

INCOME AND EXPENSES

Article 60

1. For the strengthening and development of its pastoral, educational and social work, the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania accepts donations, inheritances and offerings of every nature from individual or legal entities from Albania or from abroad.
2. The expenses for the maintenance of the places of worship are offset by voluntary offerings by the faithful and from the income from the Holy Church or from the Holy Monastery themselves.

INCOME OF THE HOLY CHURCHES AND ITS MANAGEMENT

Article 61

1. Through the Holy Synod, the Synodical Committee of Financial and Technical Cases functions. It consists of: a) a Metropolitan, president, b) a Bishop, c) the General Director of Financial and Technical Services, d) a Lawyer, e) a Technician. All members are appointed by the Holy Synod for five years with the possibility of a renewal of their appointment. The Synodical Financial and Technical Service has the following departments: a) Financial Affairs b) Property, c) Legal Cases, d) Technical Service including the Office of Restoration/Conservation.
2. Through the Holy Synod, an Audit Committee functions consisting of a) an Archbishop or his named representative, b) a Metropolitan or Bishop, c) a Representative of the Clergy-Laity Council, d) an economist, e) a lawyer. All members are appointed by the Holy Synod for five years with the possibility of a renewal of their appointment. The tasks of this Committee are carried out by a special Secretary elected by the Synod.
3. The Financial Committee of the Archdiocese or Diocese consists of : a) the relative Prelate b) a Clergyman, member of the Clergy-Laity Council, c) a layman, member of

the Clergy-Laity Council and two other members (preferably an economist and a lawyer). The above mentioned are appointed from the Archdiocesan or Metropolitan Council for three years, with the possibility of a renewal of their appointment.

4. The Archdiocese and the Diocese manage the finances; they have the same accounting and the same VAT. In order to arrange issues of budget, a special request is submitted to the president of the Holy Synod.
5. The income of the Holy Synod, the Archdiocese, the Metropolises, the Monasteries, the Pilgrimages and the Churches come from: a) donations b) contributions of the faithful for liturgical celebrations c) selling of candles that are bought from the central factory of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania d) from general offerings, heritages etc. For any offering or donation a double receipt of the relevant fund is given e) from income of limited companies, from revenues of movable and immovable property as bank deposits, bonds, renting of farmlands, buildings etc.

USE OF PARISH INCOME

Article 62

1. The revenues of all parishes following their registration are allocated as follows:
 - 1.1. 50% is given for the clergy salaries to the Archdiocese Fund or to the relevant Metropolis.
 - 1.2. 30% is allocated from the Church Council for: payment of the staff, for the expenses of the church and for its charitable works.
 - 1.3. 10% for the Budget of the Archdiocese or the relevant Metropolis
 - 1.4. 10% for the Budget of the Holy Synod, as a contributor to the general needs of the Church.
2. The income from pilgrimage sites and veneration sites is managed by the Council of the Archdiocese or the relevant Metropolis.
The relevant budgets are approved by the local prelate.
3. Any reserve funds from churches are deposited under the name of the particular church to a special bank account following the authorization given by the Archbishop or a local Metropolitan. For amounts that exceed a defined limit every year from the Holy Synod, an approval of the local prelate is required.

DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

Article 63

1. A Spiritual Court functions at the Archdiocese and in each Metropolis consisting of the local Hierarchy, as its President, and two clergy, as members. This court hears,

within thirty days from the day of the canonical misdemeanor is committed, all its clergy under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese or Metropolis. It is competent to impose a suspension of up to a year for misdemeanors that provoke scandals. The decisions of the above-mentioned court may be appealed to the Holy Synod. The subsequent juridical procedure is defined by the General Regulation of Administration.

2. A Great and Sublime Synod of twelve Arch-Priests is convened in the case that a lawsuit is heard or for misconducts of a Hierarch. All members of the Holy Synod participate in it except for the person tried. The Holy Synod submits a request to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, that provided Autocephaly, for appointing Metropolitans for the completion of the necessary number. At this Synod the Archbishop presides.

Article 64

To any of the serious misdemeanors foreseen by the Holy Canons of presbyters, deacons and monastics, which exceed the jurisdiction of the local Hierarch, the accused clergy are indicted to the Holy Synod, where they are irrevocably tried.

Article 65

The decisions of the Holy Synod regarding the infliction of any form of sentence are made by a simple majority vote.

Article 66

The Holy Synod defrocks clergy accused of serious canonical or penal offences, for which the prescribed penalty is defrocking, following the recommendation of the local Hierarch.

REGARDING MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Article 67

1. The service of marriage is celebrated following the obtainment of the document of permission of the Hierarch (or of his representative) of the place of the celebration of the mystery.
2. For the issue of the permission the following is required:
 - 2.1. Baptismal certificate
 - 2.2. Signed statement of the couple regarding the inexistence of any delay or subversive obstacles.
 - 2.3. A certification of more than two active Orthodox witnesses.
 - 2.4. Certification of a civil marriage – due to its requirement in Albania.

Article 68

1. In regard to the filing of a divorce, the local Hierarch takes great care to reconcile the couple.
2. For the final spiritual annulment of the marriage, the prior submission of the civil decision by the state court is required, through which the marriage is cancelled through divorce. The Hierarch signs the final document of the Ecclesiastical Authority.

LETTERHEAD AND SEALS

Article 69

1. The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania uses the following letterhead (titles) and respective seals:
 - 1.1. For the Holy Synod: "Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania – Holy Synod."
 - 1.2. For the Archdiocese: "Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania – Holy Archdiocese"
 - 1.3. For the Metropolises: "Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania – Holy Metropolis of..."
2. The aforementioned seals are round and have in the center the traditional double-headed eagle and a cross. The seals of the Parishes only have a cross in the center. The seals are used exclusively by their respective responsible bodies. Any different seal used previously or any seal held by an unauthorized individual is considered to be invalid.

Article 70

The present Charter repeals and replaces any previous one. It may be amended following the joint decision of the Holy Synod, the Clergy-Laity Ecclesiastical Council and the Clergy-Laity Assembly, taking into consideration the absolute majority of their members. It is not possible that articles 1-7 of the present document be amended or revoked. The present Charter was unanimously accepted by the Clergy-Laity Assembly of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania on 4 November 2006 and was ratified by the Holy Synod on 6 November 2006.