

Requirements for Residences on Parish and Mission Property

The following requirements are obligatory for all parishes and missions in the Diocese of the South

As stewards of the missions and parishes across our Diocese, we are entrusted with a sacred duty. The properties, buildings, and resources of our churches are dedicated to the worship of God and the propagation of the Holy Orthodox Faith.

The Diocesan Administration recognizes that we cannot, nor do we desire to, micromanage every aspect of local parish and mission administration. We rely heavily on the faithful, day-to-day service of our priests and Parish Councils to maintain our communities. However, it is an ancient and foundational canonical principle of our Orthodox Faith, famously echoed by Saint Ignatius of Antioch, that we "do nothing without the bishop". This expectation is enshrined in the canons and our by-laws, which remind us that in matters of both spiritual and secular administration, major decisions require the knowledge, approval, and blessing of the Diocesan Bishop.

Because the protection of our holy spaces from secular entanglements and liabilities is of paramount importance, I am writing today to clarify and formally reiterate our expectations regarding the use of church grounds. While we entrust much to local discretion, the specific matter of individuals residing on parish property brings significant legal and spiritual implications, making it important enough to clarify and enshrine in a formal directive.

Therefore, please be reminded of the following expectation: **No individual, whether a clergyman of the OCA or any other jurisdiction, a parishioner, or an unaffiliated third party, may establish residency or execute a lease to reside on any property belonging to a parish or mission of the Diocese of the South without the express, prior written review and permission of the Diocesan Administration. This permission must include a formal letter and blessing from the Diocesan Bishop.** This includes temporary accommodations such as people sleeping in their cars, campers or tents on any diocesan, parish or mission property.

I offer this reminder pastorally, to ensure our communities remain canonically and legally secure. Please remind your Parish Councils that, under the Uniform Parish By-Laws of our Diocese, the parish corporation is the owner of all Parish property and assets, "*which it holds in trust for the Diocese*". Consequently, local Parish Councils do not possess the unilateral authority to lease, alienate, or encumber parish real estate without hierarchical oversight.

If your parish currently has individuals residing on church property (including clergy in parish-owned rectories or apartments), I ask that your Parish Council submit a summary of these arrangements to the Diocesan Administration (administration@dosoca.org) within the next thirty days. This is simply a pastoral review to ensure that all such current arrangements are properly documented, legally sound, and formally blessed.

May the Lord continue to guide and strengthen us all in the faithful stewardship of His Holy Church.

Approved / Adopted:



Alexander, Archbishop of Dallas and the South

May 28, 2026