



## Opening session of the Russian Orthodox Church Holy Synod

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The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, chaired by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, has begun its session on 25 December 2009, at the patriarchal residence in Chisty Pereulok.

In his introduction, Patriarch Kirill noted that the Synod met for six summer and winter sessions in 2009, three at St. Daniel's Monastery, two at the historical building of the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg, and one at the historical building of the Russian Orthodox Church Synod at the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev – the Mother of Russian cities. This synodal year ends with a session in Chisty Pereulok, the historical city residence of the Patriarchs of Moscow.

'Very important decisions were made this year concerning changes in the central church structure as new synodal bodies have been established and the work of the existing synodal institutions has been considerably reviewed', the patriarch said.

His Holiness stressed that the Holy Synod decisions, especially those adopted at the session in March 31 in the Danilov Monastery, proved to be very timely and necessary, saying, 'The good impulses given by the work of the new bodies have already been appreciated by society because some of them work precisely at the junction of church-state and church-society relations'.

Speaking about the agenda of the present session, Patriarch Kirill said: 'We are to consider the results of the changes made in the church governance structure and to analyze and act upon a number of documents on improving our church life.'

The Synod's permanent members are Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus; Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kishinev and Moldova, Archbishop Hilarion of the Department for External Church Relations; and Archbishop Varsonofy of Saransk and Mordovia, acting chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate. The hierarchs who have been summoned for the session are Metropolitan Iriney of Dnepropetrovsk, Archbishop Simon of Brussels and Belgium, Archbishop Vadim of Irkutsk and Angarsk, Archbishop Zosima of Elista and Kalmykia, and Bishop Tikhon of Archangelsk and Kholmogory.

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