



The **Cross of the Romanian Orthodox Church** is the symbol of the Irish branch of the Church and one of a number of crosses venerated across the Orthodox Traditions.

ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Orthodox Churches trace their roots to the twelve male apostles who, according to Christian teaching, were chosen by Christ to continue his teaching. The Orthodox movement comprises a group of independent churches that follow particular teachings, each having the right to elect its own leaders.

The *Christian Bible* is the key holy book of the Orthodox Churches, who share the principal beliefs of other traditions of Christianity (described on page 16).

The Orthodox movement is the largest Christian community in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, while it is the second largest Christian community in the world.

Clergy are referred to as priests.

Summary of Essential Practice Points:

Please refer to the full text of the highlighted points related to the following summary points.

1 Profile of the Orthodox Churches in Ireland:

Orthodox Churches in Ireland correspond to two main traditions who share core Christian beliefs, ceremonies and rituals. The membership of each church is highly culturally diverse. In summary, members come from Ireland, European and Eastern European countries, parts of the Middle East, parts of Asia, parts of Africa and North America.

of a threat to the life of an infant the Orthodox Churches prefer that the child is baptised. This should ideally be done by an Orthodox priest. If none is immediately available then the Orthodox Churches would wish that the parents baptise the child themselves using the guidance given under *Initiation ritual/infant baptism* below.

2 Religious contacts and religious practices:

Orthodox Churches practise a number of religious ceremonies, called *sacraments*, each of which has a specific purpose including aiding healing during illness, preparation for death and initiation of infants into the religion. It is preferable for service users to meet a priest from their own church who can discern the ceremonies that are necessary for the person. The contact details for each of the churches present in Ireland are listed at the end of the section.

3 Death-related religious rituals:

In the event of imminent death an Orthodox priest should be called who will perform the required ceremonies.

4 Cleaning and touching the body:

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

5 Initiation ritual/infant baptism:

The *Sacrament of Baptism*, the initiation ritual common among many Christian churches, is usually conducted at 40 days old. In the case

Profile of the Orthodox Churches in Ireland

The Orthodox movement has had a presence in Ireland for some decades. Census 2006 indicates that members in Ireland grew by just over 99% between 2002 and 2006, with 20,798 members in 2006. This makes the Orthodox movement the fifth largest (stated) religious affiliation in Ireland.

Essential Practice Point

1

Contributors indicate that there are churches corresponding to two Orthodox traditions in Ireland, namely the Greek and Oriental Orthodox. The traditions are based on historical development, while they share core Christian beliefs.

Orthodox membership in Ireland is highly culturally diverse. The membership of individual churches is outlined below. In summary, members come from Ireland, European and Eastern European countries, parts of the Middle East, parts of Asia, parts of Africa and North America.

The *Greek Tradition* has five main churches operating in Ireland:

- *Antiochian (Syrian) Orthodox Church:* This Church is currently developing with a mainly English speaking following from Ireland, England, the USA, Canada and South Africa.
- *Georgian Orthodox Church:* This Church has a following from Georgia and other Eastern European countries.
- *Greek Orthodox Church:* The Greek Orthodox Church developed in Ireland 25 years ago

and has had a base in Arbour Hill, Dublin 7, for the past ten years. Members come from countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Palestine with small numbers from other national/ethnic backgrounds including the United Kingdom, United States and Ethiopia.

- *Romanian Orthodox Church:* The Romanian Orthodox Church currently has branches in Dublin and Cork. Members come from Romania, some Roma communities, France, Lithuania, other Eastern European countries and Nigeria.
- *Russian Orthodox Church:* St Peter and Paul Church in Dublin was founded in 2001. Since then, churches have developed in Cork, Galway and Waterford. Members come from Eastern European countries including Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Poland.

The following three churches in Ireland arose out of the *Oriental Orthodox Tradition*:

- *Coptic Orthodox Church:* This Church originated in Egypt and has a mainly Egyptian following in Ireland. The group meets in Bray, Co. Wicklow.
- *Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church:* This Dublin based Church has a number of followers of Indian origin.
- *St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church:* This Dublin based Church has a following of Indian origin and comprises some healthcare staff.

Care of the ill

Religious contacts and religious practices

Essential Practice Point **2**

- The Orthodox Churches practise a number of religious ceremonies, called *sacraments*, each of which has a specific purpose including aiding healing during illness, preparation for death and initiation of infants into the religion. The churches share core beliefs, rituals and ceremonies. Representatives indicate that there are nuances based on language and culture. The diversity of origin of practitioners supports this view.
- It is preferable for service users to meet a priest from their own church who can discuss and discern the rituals and ceremonies that are necessary for the person. It is advised to check with the person which church they attend. Contact details for each of the Orthodox Churches in Ireland are presented at the end of the section.

Blood Transfusion and Organ Transplantation

There is no religious objection to these procedures.

Care of the Dying

Death-related religious rituals

Essential Practice Point **3**

In the event of imminent death an Orthodox priest should be called who will perform the required sacrament.

Cleaning and touching the body

Essential Practice Point **4**

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

Postmortem requirements

The Orthodox Churches prefer that the body is buried whole and undamaged.

Interment ritual

- The coffin is usually left open to reveal the head and shoulders until the moment of burial. An icon, for example the Mother of God (Jesus Christ), will be held in the hands and the family or priest will give these items as necessary to the healthcare setting.
- Burial is preferred in the Orthodox Churches.

Religious Icons and Symbols

Personal and religious items

- Orthodox followers may wear relics (images) of saints.
- Mary, the Mother of God (Jesus Christ) has a particular following and members may have images of her.
- Many Orthodox believers wear a baptismal cross, which has been blessed at baptism, throughout their lives.
- Some Orthodox believers may have their baptismal candle at their bedside.
- There may also be personal items that are specifically culturally related that need to be respected, for example jewellery.

Use of religious symbols

A crucifix, plain cross and candles are appropriate in the Orthodox traditions and can be used in the mortuary area.

Additional Notes on Maternity and Paediatric Care

Initiation ritual/infant baptism

Essential Practice Point

5

- Baptism, the initiation ritual common among many Christian churches, is usually conducted at forty days old. In the case of a threat to the life of an infant the Orthodox movement prefers that the child is baptised. This should ideally be done by an Orthodox priest.

- If no priest is available it is preferable that the parents baptise the child themselves, immersing/sprinkling him/her three times with pure water, using the words: “The servant of God [Name] is baptised in the name of the Father (immerse/sprinkle once), and of the Son (immerse/sprinkle once), and of the Holy Spirit (immerse/sprinkle once), now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

Foetal, infant and child death

- In matters of miscarriage and stillbirth an Orthodox priest will give guidance on the ceremonies to be conducted.
- Children usually receive a funeral service and an Orthodox priest will advise.

Memento of a deceased child

- There are no particular requirements in relation to giving mementos of the child to the parents, though this should be discussed with parents.

Developing a Local Orthodox Church Contact

The Romanian Orthodox Church currently has worship centres in a number of cities and the Coptic Orthodox Church is based in Bray, Co Wicklow. All of the other churches currently have bases in Dublin.

Contact numbers are provided here for Orthodox clergy strictly for the purposes of providing religious services for members and guidance for the healthcare setting as necessary. It is likely that other centres of worship will develop over time and as these developments take place the following

contacts should be able to provide local information:

Greek Tradition

Antiochian (Syrian) Orthodox Church, Dublin:

Contact: Reverend Fr David Lonergan

@ 087 6527184

Georgian Orthodox Church, Dublin:

Contact: Reverend Fr Malkhaz Kumelashvili

@ 085 763 1112

Greek Orthodox Church, Dublin:

Contact: Reverend Fr Ireneu Cracium

@ (01) 8474956 or Reverend Fr Thomas Cahill

@ (0505) 45849

Romanian Orthodox Church, Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Sligo:

Cork: Reverend Fr Viorel Hurjui @ 087 6772241

Other cities: Reverend Fr Godfrey O' Donnell

@ (01) 8404302/ 087 6780150

Reverend Fr Calin Florea @ 087 6148140

Reverend Fr Raul Simion @ 087 6394530

Reverend Fr Constantin Unca @ 087 2512101

Russian Orthodox Church (St Peter and St Paul), Dublin:

Contact: Reverend Fr George Zavershinsky

@ 087 9845907

Oriental Orthodox Tradition

Coptic Orthodox Church, Bray, County Wicklow:

Contact: Reverend Fr Athanasios George

@ (01) 2866809/ 087 2382813

Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, Dublin:

Contact: Reverend Fr Jobymom Skaria

@ 087 6315962

St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Dublin:

Contact: Reverend Fr Koshy Vaidyan

@ 087 6584677

Contributors

Reverend Fr George Zavershinsky, provided information for the Russian Orthodox Church. Reverend Fr Godfrey O' Donnell and Reverend Fr Calin Florea provided information for the Romanian and other Orthodox Churches; they also approved the finalised version. Reverend O' Donnell kindly supplied contact information for all of the Orthodox Churches listed above.