

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church to Hold Talks

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church's governing body, the Holy Synod, decided on November 27 to hold talks with the Macedonian Orthodox Church and other Orthodox Christian churches on recognising the neighbouring country's church as autocephalous and agreeing to be its mother church.

The Holy Synod's decision did not state explicitly whether the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was agreeing to be the Macedonian church's mother church.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric sent a letter on November 9 asking to be recognised as an autocephalous church and for the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to be its mother church.

The Bulgarian church's governing body said that it was appointing a committee of bishops that would hold talks with the Macedonian and other Orthodox churches.

Formed at a time when Macedonia was part of communist Yugoslavia, the Macedonian Orthodox Church is not recognised by any other Orthodox Christian church.

In a Bulgarian-language media interview, Lovech Metropolitan Gavril said that if the Bulgarian church took a decision unilaterally without consulting the other Orthodox Christian churches, it risked precipitating a schism.

"It is important to make the right decision, because in order to be able to help the Macedonian Orthodox Church we should not harm the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Otherwise, neither will we help, nor will anyone help us," Gavril said.

Plovdiv Metropolitan Nikolai said: "If we really have received this call in this letter, for the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to be the mother church, the sacred duty is to intercede for the Macedonian Orthodox Church before the whole Orthodox world".

Ahead of the meeting, Bulgarian Orthodox Church Patriarch Neofit said: "We must accept the outstretched hand of the Macedonian church".