

Putin Visits Valaam Monastery, Meets Patriarch

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The  **Moscow Times**

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the Valaam Monastery in Russia's northern republic of Karelia on Sunday and received communion there, the RBC news agency reported on Monday. Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill led the liturgy.

“We are happy to see you and to pray together. We appreciate everything you do for the country and for us,” Kirill said to Putin. “Many of our fellow believers are praying for you now,” he said.

Putin has made clear that religious issues are important to him and during his third term as Russian president, “insulting religious beliefs” was criminalized.

The week before his trip to the monastery, Russian media had reported that Putin cancelled all his scheduled engagements for a number of days.

The reasons behind the cancellations are still unknown. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov denied that the engagements had been cancelled and told journalists that none of Putin’s

scheduled trips had been “definitely confirmed.”

“It seems that Putin often behaves in this manner, if we analyze his political career. He neglects domestic policy and its subjects, so he can cancel meetings for his own reasons,” political analyst Stanislav Belkovsky told The Moscow Times.

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