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Russian Bishop Known as 'Putin's Confessor' Named Head of Crimea Diocese

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Metropolitan Tikhon (Shevkunov). **ppmon.ru**

Russia's Orthodox Church on Wednesday appointed a bishop who is reputed to be President Vladimir Putin's spiritual adviser to head the diocese of annexed Crimea.

The church's governing body published a ruling transferring Metropolitan Tikhon (Shevkunov) from the Diocese of Pskov and Porkhov, which he has headed since 2018, to the Crimean Diocese.

Metropolitan Tikhon was filmed in March 2023 accompanying Putin on his surprise visit to Crimea marking the nine-year anniversary of its annexation from Ukraine.

Crimea's Russian-installed Governor Sergei Aksyonov lauded Father Tikhon as "one of the most famous and influential" bishops.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the governor of the Crimean port of Sevastopol, credited Father Tikhon

with “paying close attention” to Crimea for many years before his transfer.

Both Aksyonov and Razvozhayev said they had maintained close contact with Father Tikhon prior to his appointment.

Metropolitan Tikhon’s links to Putin have been scrutinized since the late 1990s, when the president met him at a Moscow monastery frequented by Federal Security Service (FSB) agents.

Neither Metropolitan Tikhon nor the Kremlin have confirmed or denied his ties to Putin.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and formed the Crimean Diocese in June 2022.

Metropolitan Tikhon’s predecessor in the Crimean Diocese, Metropolitan Lazar, will retire following the transfer, the Church said in its ruling Wednesday.

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