

God Absent From Church's New Spiritual Guide

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The  **Moscow Times**

God is absent from a new spiritual guide the Russian Orthodox Church is drafting in tandem with Russia's ruling party, a newspaper said on Thursday.

Instead justice, patriotism and solidarity top the list of the guideline, dubbed "Eternal Values: The foundation of Russian Identity, which the Church is to publish with the dominant United Russia party, headed by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

The moral guide lists the values in order of their importance in the eyes of the church and the party: 1. justice, 2. freedom, 3. solidarity, 4. unity, 5. self-restraint and sacrifice, 6. patriotism, 7. welfare and 8. love, the daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported.

The paper cited Church spokesman, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, as saying the principles were based on how strongly they are "rooted in God's truth and in the life experiences that remain constant."

The Orthodox Church has gained substantially in power in Russia since the fall of

communism, forming close ties with Russia's political elite.

But its dominance has drawn criticism from rights groups who say it's growing political role undermines Russia's secular constitution.

Earlier this month, the Church outraged Russian feminists by proposing that women dress more modestly.

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