

Flyers

Most people today are “audio/visual” and need something to look at as you talk to them about the OCF. Creating a general flyer about the OCF which describes its goals, times and locations of meetings, contact information, etc. is a powerful tool for reinforcing your point. A flyer is also a reminder for them of your conversation when they get home. Keep a bunch with you at all times.



Things to include on an OCF flyer

- NAME OF SCHOOL Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF)
- Summary statement of the group’s purpose of: (i.e., Witnessing to the Orthodox Christian Faith through fellowship/fun, education, worship, and service.)
- One or two events/activities you are planning/hoping to have (Barbeque, Bible Study, Vespers service, Service Project, etc.).
- Regular meeting times and places. Choose a time and place. As the OCF grows, you can always change it.
- Contact information (Yours and one or two other people’s who are willing to be a contact.)



Go to Worksheet 7: [Student Directory](#) to keep track of the people’s information as they express interest in the OCF.



Note Pad

It’s a good idea keep a note pad and pen with you at all times so that you can get people’s information when they express an interest in the OCF.



Once a Week

Some OCFs which meet every week attract and keep members by focusing on a different aspect of the F.E.W.S each week.

- The first week of the month is always a fun/fellowship event.
- The second week is a bible study, lecture series, or retreat type of thing.
- The third week is an akathist, molieben, compline, matins, or vespers on campus. Often, these are readers services, since it can be difficult to find clergy who can come on campus.
- The fourth week is some type of service project.

In this way, people with different needs and expectations can all have something to look forward to each month.

Developing a Schedule

Planning ahead is always tentative. It is difficult to predict the many changes and challenges that you will face in the days and months ahead. Don't use this as an excuse to avoid planning.

Remember, if a goal is to gather people for an ongoing OCF, then there has to be thorough planning and consistency. The death of many a group comes from poorly planned activities that happen in starts and stops.

As the leader of the group it is your responsibility to provide vision and direction. Before going into the first meeting, you need to have an idea of the types of schedules the OCF could and should adopt.



Keeping the Balance: The F.E.W.S

OCFs can easily get off to the wrong start if they become too focused on one type of activity. People are different and often have different needs. While some people might be really excited about a regular Bible study, other people are looking for opportunities just to meet other Orthodox friends. There are four basic areas that you should keep in mind as the OCF plans its schedule.

- **Fellowship:** People need opportunities to simply "be" with others. There is nothing un-Christian about having fun with friends. In fact, we are supposed to develop our relationships with others. As the scripture says, "It is not good for man to be alone."
- **Education:** While many people are drawn to OCFs to meet people, a lot of people look for a place to learn about and grow in their faith. Retreats, lectures, Bible studies, and book groups, are all ways people can learn more about the Christ and His Church.
- **Worship:** It is at the very center of who we are as Orthodox Christians. A Christian by definition lifts up his/her heart in praise and prayer to Christ. All activities should begin and end with prayer and all schedules should include worship services, even if they are readers' services (akathists, moliebens, vespers, matins, complines, etc.).
- **Service:** As Christians we are supposed to love others since God first loved us. Christ Himself says that if you don't care for others, you don't care for God (Matthew 25).

So what do you want the OCF to be like? Take a little time to dream about what you want, and to evaluate your situation. This will help you develop a schedule that is reliable and exciting.

How often should the OCF meet (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly?)

Based upon conversations you have had, what appears to be good days, times, and locations for basic meetings? (Remember, there is no perfect time and location for everyone. The idea is to do your best to accommodate most people)

- Day/Time
- Location

What are some things you would like the OCF to do?

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✚ So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

(Matthew 7:12)



Attendance

Frustrations about attendance are by far more damaging to the ongoing growth of an OCF than low attendance itself. Never be visibly upset about a low turn-out at a meeting or activity.

There is a saying that, “God only gives you what you can handle.” The few who did come may be all that you can handle at that moment. Remind yourself that each person there is a gift from God and treat them accordingly.

Follow the example of the Hospitality of Abraham (Gen 18) when he entertained three strangers who later revealed themselves as angels. Proceed with the knowledge that your efforts are being prayed for and that it is God who makes things grow. We do the planting and the nourishing.

Guidelines for Planning

As you start to jot down ideas, keep the following things in mind:

- Plan with the Church calendar in mind, building an awareness of the cycle of feasts and fasts.
- Get a copy of any campus-wide events on campus that could conflict with what you are hoping to do.
- Try to have gatherings on campus or at a place where people who don't have cars can get to.
- Try to come up with one day and time for meetings (i.e., Thursdays at 7 pm). People's lives get frantic. It helps when they don't have to think too much to remember when meetings are.
- Have some activities regularly on a different day than the one you chose above, since there could easily be people who are interested in the OCF but are busy on the regular meeting day (i.e., first week of the month Bible study on Thurs, second week of the month trip to the coffee house on Wed, etc.)
- Week nights tend to work best for most students. At the beginning save the weekend for Vespers, Divine Liturgy and special trips.
- For meetings and discussions choose locations that are conducive to people being able to talk with others comfortably and that allow food.



The following worksheets are provided to help you develop your schedule and plan events.

- Worksheet 8: [Monthly Planner](#)
- Worksheet 9: [Event Planning Sheet](#)



Planning for the year

As much as possible, while allowing for flexibility, try to plan for an entire school year. If you are using rooms on campus often you will need to reserve them months in advance since you will be in competition with other student groups. In addition, the earlier you start to communicate your activities, the better chance you will have of gathering more people.

Worksheet 8 is a planning guide for one month. Make copies of this page for each month you are hoping to have activities and draft a schedule for yourself. You can present these as a topic for discussion at your first meeting.

Elements of positive events/activities

There are 4 elements that go into any creative activity that can improve its quality and success, regardless of how you may measure those things. They should be:

Active: If education, it engages the learner to interact with information, either through directed discussions or other personal involvement with the topic. If service it challenges the participant physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. If worship, the person is provided with opportunities to actively participate.

Significant: If education, it can be related to their life experience and situation. If service, it provides an outreach beyond the OCF. If worship, services should be held that connect campus life to parish and Church life as a whole, following the festal cycles.

Open: If education, it allows the participant the freedom not to know the “right answer” or to disagree. If service, it allows people with a variety of abilities to participate. If worship, it is conducted primarily in a language that is common to the participants.

Connected: All events should include elements of fellowship, education, worship, and service.



Locations

It is strongly suggested for OCFs on individual colleges to have most meetings on campus and not at a nearby parish, someone’s home, etc..

The reason for this is two-fold:

1. Transportation can become an obstacle for people becoming part of the OCF.
2. At the beginning, the campus is a neutral location that provides a certain sense of security. People can feel uneasy about entering an unfamiliar church and may not feel as able to be themselves. As things grow, this can change.