

## Fostering Fellowship among Members

Since OCFs are Orthodox Christian *Fellowships*, it is important to do everything possible to nurture the development of relationships among people participating in the OCF. These relationships will be the litmus test of whether or not your OCF is “successful.”

Your guiding principle should be our Lord’s command to “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Keep in mind a few questions as you plan all gatherings and activities.

1. What would I want to experience when visiting the OCF for the first time?
2. What would make me more likely to return and participate in other activities?
3. What would make me less likely to return?
4. If I knew nothing about the Orthodox Christian Faith, what would I want my first experience to be like?

You may wish to have this as an item for discussion at a meeting.



### Some Keys to Nurturing Fellowship

- **Create an environment** that is open to suggestions and new ideas
- **Truly listen** when people share their suggestions and ideas.
- Be sure to **allow fellowship time** during every activity. Either as a break or at the beginning or end, put it into the schedule.
- **Utilize icebreakers.** Everyone hates them, but they are very important for groups with people who don’t know each other. It can be as simple as having everyone say their name and a hobby they have or a movie that they have seen recently. Or, it can be something more active like “human knots,” where you break into groups of 6 to 8 people have each person hold hands with two different people who are not next to them and have them “untangle” themselves.
- **Try to offer good food.** You cannot underestimate the importance of having good food at your activities. It shouldn’t be expensive, just good. We all know how much everyone enjoys the cafeteria food. From the beginning of time, food has always been a way to make people feel welcome and comfortable.

### ☒ Evaluation Check-list:

- ☐ I understand the various needs/ expectations that people are looking for in the OCF.
- ☐ I have started a directory of potential members.
- ☐ I have prepared a flyer that I can use to promote the OCF as I talk with people.
- ☐ I understand the different kinds of activities that are needed to keep a balanced schedule
- ☐ I have outlined a possible schedule for the OCF.
- ☐ I know some of the basic elements that can make activities successful.

# RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

✚ "So every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits."

(Matt. 7: 17-20)

## What a meeting should be like

In this passage Christ is speaking about false prophets. Many people think they are speaking and acting as Christians, but are in fact not being "true" to the Christian Faith. The goal of a group and therefore, its meetings must be to seek God's will and the benefit of others, and not personal goals. When an OCF meets, plans, and acts as Christians, then their efforts will draw people together. If an OCF is not proceeding as Christians, whatever group of people it gathers and builds will turn against itself and divide its members.

## There are certain steps to running a fruitful meeting:

1. Define and write the topics that need to be discussed.
2. Clarify the objectives and focus of each topic.
3. Be able to distinguish the important from the unimportant, and the "good fruit" from the "bad fruit."
4. Begin and end with prayer.
5. The first time you discuss a topic go around the group asking for input while suspending judgment.
6. Take a break to let ideas "gel" and to allow people's minds the opportunity to think in a relaxed manner.
7. The second time you discuss a topic analyze, decipher, and decide (A.D.D.) how the group should proceed.
8. Record your decisions and be accountable to each other for those decisions you make while avoiding pointing fingers.



## The Ministry of Food

Food is a very necessary, useful, and effective method of welcoming people. When good food is served, it helps people feel more "at home."

Try to provide quality food or snacks at your meetings. You may even want to connect your first meeting to a back-to-school barbeque or other type of meal.

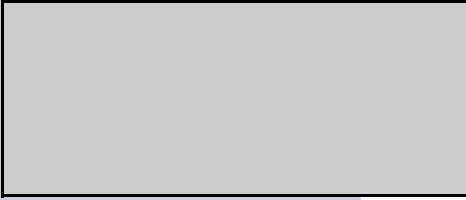
A wise man once said, "If you feed them, they will come."



## Aspects for a Fruitful Meeting

A fruitful meeting...

- Seeks and acknowledges God's presence at the meeting
- Tries to discern God's will when making all decisions
- Utilizes the "Keys to Nurturing Fellowship" on the previous page.
- Is a creative experience seeking to "explore" rather than "judge", and to "consider" rather than "criticize."



It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

(Acts 1:7-8)



### **Don't Interfere with the Holy Spirit!**

While it is crucial for a leader to know and be committed to what he or she is trying to accomplish, to make thorough plans, and to lead with confidence, he or she must remain aware of and open to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Christian leaders often find that their plans and goals have to take a side step to what the Lord is presenting to them through a specific situation, or person.

When leaders are able to see these situations as an opportunity for growth and not as a "crisis" they engender a sense of stability among the group and prepare it for growth.

## **Being an Effective Leader**

As a leader in this effort, thoughts and concerns about the success of the OCF may become upsetting and drag you down. It is difficult to predict what type of success you will have with the OCF. You know what your hopes and goals are, and have probably already faced a number of challenges. Remember, "It is not for you to know times and seasons." God will reveal His plan as He knows it will benefit you and what you are trying to accomplish in His name.

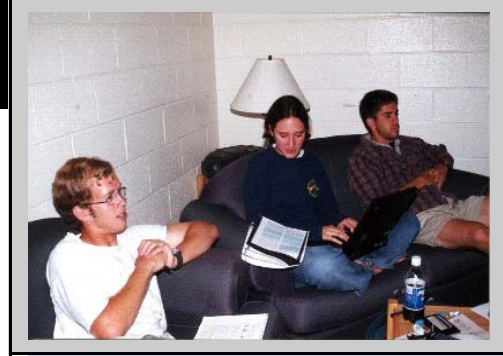
Instead of worrying about the future, try to focus on aligning your own current motivations and actions with Christ's. Try to develop a relationship with Him that permeates your thoughts, actions, habits, and dreams. For the Christian, that is the main task of any leader.



### **Basic Leadership Traits**

A leader...

1. Initiates
2. Provides ideas and structures
3. Takes the risk of failure
4. Elicits trust
5. Is a good listener and responds to problems by listening
6. Always accepts and empathizes, never rejects
7. Is genuinely interested in the followers
8. Has a sense for the unknowable and foresees the unforeseen
9. Is a good communicator
10. Is naturally intuitive



## The First Meeting

By this point you have already found out the rules about advertising on campus (posting flyers, putting ads in the campus newspaper, or tv/radio station, etc.). You have also spoken to a number of people about the OCF and identified some prospective members.

You are ready for your first meeting. Be sure to have a defined beginning and ending time which is listed on your flyer. If there are a lot of questions, try to schedule a follow-up meeting to address them or encourage people to speak to you personally.

Above all, try not to worry. God provides.



### An Agenda for the First Meeting

- Opening Prayer
- Introductions/Icebreaker/Fun Activity
- Welcome and Introduction of Leader(s) [and OCF Chaplain if blessed to have one]
- Goals of the OCF
- Description and Brainstorming of Activities
- Proposed Schedule for the Coming Year (Meetings and Activities)
- Need for and Role of Volunteers/Team Members
- Questions and Answers
- Closing Prayer



Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

(Matt 18:19- 20)

## ***Planning Subsequent Meetings***

### **Meeting Agenda Ideas**

#### **Opening Prayer**

#### **Introductions of new people (if any)**

#### **Goal of Meeting**

For example:

- To update everyone on past and future activities;
- To make a preliminary schedule for the year;
- To decide on how we are going to celebrate Father and his wife's anniversary.

#### **Reading/Approval of Minutes/Notes from Last Meeting**

(Does that sound like what happened? Any corrections? Etc.)

#### **Old Business**

Report on finances

Report on previous activities

Report about upcoming activities already in the planning.

Be sure to provide the opportunity for discussion on all of the above.

#### **New Business**

For example:

- New ideas for activities/projects.

#### **Assignment of tasks.**

#### **Evaluation**

How is the group doing in fulfilling the goals of the OCF?

#### **Closing Prayer**

#### **NOTE:**

Many groups also include a 30-minute "hot-topic" discussion during their meetings on items such as Drugs at School, HIV and AIDS, Being Orthodox in non-Orthodox world, Dating as an Orthodox Christian, The Place of Reason in faith, Career, Success, and Future, etc. Different members present the premise of the topic and the group picks up from there.

This provides an official venue for people to talk about things that they might not have the opportunity to talk about elsewhere and increases the "importance of the meeting" for participants thereby aiding attendance. It also helps to create a caring and trusting environment within the group



### **Selecting a meeting time and location**

- Don't assume that all meetings must be at 7:30 PM. 9:00 PM can often be a much better time for students since many are more ready to take a study break later than earlier.
- Always check a room before deciding on it. Be sure the room is not subject to disturbances (i.e. near a TV lounge), well ventilated, and well lit.



### **Evaluation Check-list:**

- ☐ I understand the purpose of having meetings and certain key elements that are necessary for keeping meetings productive.
- ☐ I understand that my success as a leader is directly related to my relationship to Christ.
- ☐ I and others have booked the location and time of the 1st meeting, advertised the meeting on campus, arranged for food and established the agenda .