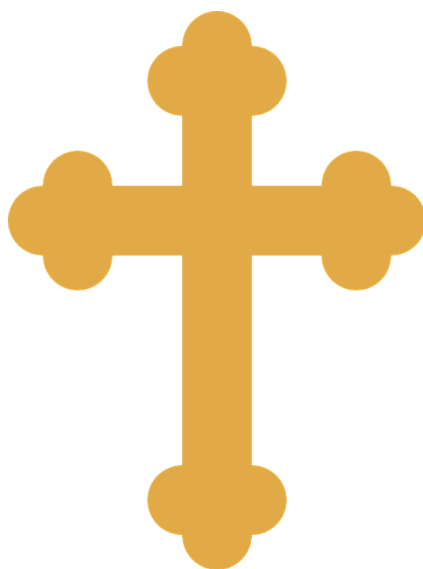


Young Adult Ministry Handbook

2024 Edition



The Young Adult Ministry Board
of the
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of
Los Angeles and the West

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Message From The Authors

Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Christ is in our midst!

We're excited to share this handbook with you, crafted specifically for young adults navigating the rich and profound tradition of our faith. As young adults ourselves, we understand the unique challenges and incredible opportunities that come with this stage of life. We've experienced firsthand the beauty and depth of our orthodox church, and we're passionate about helping you explore and live out this faith in a way that's meaningful and authentic to your life.

This handbook is designed to be more than just a resource; it's a guide and a companion as you walk your path in the Orthodox Christian tradition. It's filled with practical advice, and spiritual insights to help you build a vibrant community of faith within our church.

In this guide, you'll find tools to help you deepen your relationship with Christ, bring young adults together, build a community within your church, become a better leader in and out of your community, applying it to your everyday life. Our hope is that this handbook will support you in growing spiritually, fostering meaningful connections, and living out your faith with purpose and joy.

So, as you turn these pages, know that you're not alone on this journey. We're walking alongside you, and we're excited to see how God will use this time to shape and inspire your faith. Welcome to a community of young Orthodox Christians ready to explore, learn, and grow together. Let's embark on this journey with open hearts and eager spirits!

Our Authors

Christopher Nofal (President 2023-2025, Events Chair 2022-2023)

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Message from Sayidna

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan SABA

The Right Reverend
Bishop ANTHONY



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Los Angeles
And The West

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

November 13, 2024
John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

My beloved young adults,

Glory to Jesus Christ!
Glory Forever!

Since my days as a member of KERYGMA, the church's ministry to our young adults has been a personal focus of mine. Unfortunately, we have lost so many of our young adults to other religious traditions or worse yet, no religious tradition at all. There are many reasons for this, but I believe the most important one is our young adult's lack of understanding their lives as followers of Jesus Christ.

Our faith is more than what we say, but how we live! Our deep and rich Orthodox Faith has so much to offer to everyone, but especially our young adults. We live in this temporary world with a multitude of temptations ~ all of which comes from the Devil, the Evil One, who hates God and would not love anything better than to pull us away from Him.

Our faith has developed over the last 2,000 years to help us with one thing ~ how to fight off the temptations and to passover from this temporary life into the eternal life God has for us in His Kingdom.

I want to thank all of those who worked so hard to produce this handbook. They have given our parishes what might be the most important thing they can have in ministering to our young adults. May God grant much fruit from their loving labors!

May God bless and be with you always.

+ Bishop Anthony

+Bishop ANTHONY
Bishop of Los Angeles
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

Chancery of Los Angeles and the West
454 South Lorraine Boulevard
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Orthodox Christian
YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY ✝

Building a Successful Ministry

Building a young adult ministry for your parish can seem overwhelming. Although your situation is unique, here are a few tips for kickstarting the ministry in your parish community.

Communicate clearly and effectively with your parish priest

- The first step in beginning a young adult ministry is getting your priest's blessing
- Next, establish a relationship with your priest built on trust, transparency, and responsibility
- Keep him informed of your ideas and actions, and follow through on commitments.
- Your priest wants to help – seek their guidance and counsel. They are an incredible resource, and you need their help in this effort, just as they need you
- Meet with your clergy and board every month. Your priest wants the same thing you want – for the young adults to be successful and grow in faith and understanding

Surround yourself with a reliable team

- The most effective ministries are led by a strong, dedicated board, with the blessing and guidance of a spiritual advisor.
- Be upfront about your goals, and make sure your team is on board.
- If you have the same goals, it will be much easier to work towards it together.

Be consistent and persistent

- Especially when you are starting out, never cancel events!
- When you plan anything for your ministry, stick to the time. As you establish a consistent schedule, the rest will begin to fall into place
- If you postpone the ministry events, why should you expect anyone else to follow through? Set your goals, and work towards them
- Even when it seems difficult, remember why you are in this ministry. If your goal is for the glory of God, you don't need to worry - just keep it up!

***Do Not Cancel Anything!
Even If Only One Person Comes To The Event!!***

2 Corinthians 4: "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart."

Building a Team

Your team should only include people from your parish. Each team member should have a designated role with associated responsibilities. The foundation of your team should be the four positions below, but, if you don't have four team members, don't fret! Fill as many roles as you can.

Board positions are as follows:

President	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop annual goals and execution plan with the help of the board• Track status of meeting goals and execution plan• Facilitate monthly meetings• Communicate with YAM Presidents from other parishes• Delegate responsibilities as needed
Vice President	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support President with duties• Act on behalf of President when absent
Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss annual budget allocation with President and parish priest• Work with board to establish budget breakdown into different types of spend• Track actual vs. budgeted spend• Manage the finances/accounts for the ministry• Handle finances from events held
Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep record of meeting minutes• Organize folders and own centralized document repository• Handle board communications such as meeting reminders• Draft event flyers and manage young adult communications including emails and social media posts

Consult your parish priest on whether you will have an election or appointment of board members.

The goal should be clear among the team:

- Build the community, spread the faith, & have a positive safe space for everyone!

Best practice is to build a team between 3-5 people:

- This seems to be the perfect fit to build new ideas, share the workload, and **hold each other accountable**
- A smaller team avoids the conflict of several differing opinions
- Practice team building exercises to encourage camaraderie

Identify each individual's strengths and build upon it:

- Everyone has strengths and weaknesses, that is life!
- When we work among our strengths as a team, all things are possible through Christ!

Although you have established a great team that is achieving great things for the church, you will need to ensure that you don't appear as a clique but ensure everyone is welcome.

Matthew 18:20 “ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

Understanding Your Role

You're the President!

Your role is to define the vision for your parish ministry with the guidance of your spiritual advisor, and then work with your board to establish a plan for achieving that vision.

Have minor goals reaching your bigger objective and dreams!

- Short Term Goals: Goals that you want to achieve monthly and execute for the year you are serving (Events, goals, etc.)
- Intermediate Goals: Goals that you want to achieve within 6 months (Retreats, etc.)
- Long Term Goals: Goals that you want to achieve yearly or in the long run. Ones that you want for your successors and your vision of what you see this ministry becoming and serving as in your Parish. (Service, Fellowships, Prayer groups, etc.)

Be on the same page as your Spiritual Advisor:

- Meet with your Spiritual Advisor and discuss your short, intermediate, and long term goals
- Have a close relationship with your Spiritual Advisor, because your spirituality and relationship with him can affect how you serve
- Make sure to receive the blessing from your Spiritual Advisor for any event, flier or decision made regarding the ministry
 - *Bottom Line: The priest should be aware of what's going on with the ministry!*

Build an open, reliable team and don't be afraid to delegate:

- This step is very important in determining how your goals are executed
- Have clear communication with your team members
- Make sure your team holds each other accountable

Never forget the young adults you are serving:

- This is a key point in remembering the purpose of the ministry and your role
- Never forget that your position is not for personal glory but for the greater good of serving others in your parish and becoming close to each other through Christ
- Everything you do reflects on them!

Clear communication with your spiritual advisor and team will take you far and help you reach your goals! Never lose sight of your ministry's mission!

Philippians 4:6 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"

Planning Events

- Here is a list of various events you can plan on a parish level:
 - Spiritual/Worship
 - Ask Abouna
 - Bible Study
 - Retreats (Day, Weekend)
 - Vigils
 - Social
 - Dinners
 - Hafli's (Cultural/Folk Dance)
 - Service Projects
 - Soup Kitchen
 - Food Drive
 - Clothes Drive
 - Thanksgiving Meal Kits
 - Hygiene Kits
 - Fundraisers
 - Bake Sale
 - Car Wash
- *Official events should be blessed by the parish priest.*
- *Make events age-inclusive and appropriate!*

Co-Hosting Events with Sister Churches

1. Contact the priest of the other churches to get their blessing to talk to the coordinator.
2. Work hand-in-hand with the board of other churches to create a successful event
3. Advertise the event through both parishes
4. Have fun!

Keep the momentum going!

Acts 11:21 “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.”

Spreading the Word

Once you've successfully established a young adult ministry, it's critical that you ensure parish awareness of your events. Consider using a combination of existing parish communication channels in combination with young adult specific channels to spread the word.

Church Bulletin

- Get the message out to everyone!
- Start promoting each event at least **two weeks** before the event:
 - Make sure you know what day your parish finalizes its bulletin
 - Make sure you send the information to the appropriate person

Group Messaging Platforms

- Examples of platforms to communicate as a group: WhatsApp, GroupMe, Slack, Facebook Messenger, Instagram Messaging

Parish Council

- Talk with your parish priest in order to hold an election and become elected members. Report to your council every month on past, present and future events and news.
- Have one young adult member be part of the Parish Council to keep both parties abreast of events, etc.

Social Media

- Use the social media platform that is most utilized within your parish and make sure to maximize on that platform and keep it active!
- Use this platform to advertise past and future events in order to keep people up to date with your hard work! Make your hard work noticed

Email List

- Gather as many emails as possible and try your best to send bi-weekly or monthly newsletters. If nothing is going on for your YAM at the moment, share what is going on with the church! Keep everyone involved

Phone Numbers

- Some people won't respond to any of the above sources of communication and will need a personal text or call. Trust me, we understand your job isn't easy
 - Use your team to divide the responsibility of reaching out to the members

Matthew 5:37 "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

Communicating within the Orthodox Community

When communicating with clergy and fellow parishioners, it's important to follow proper church etiquette. Here are some guidelines on how to communicate within the church community.

How to address, or start an email with clergy*:

Bishop	Master Bless
Priest	Father Bless

** If you are ever confused about how to address someone or how to write part of an email, don't hesitate to contact your clergy for clarity.*

Greetings during various seasons within the church:

Feast Day	Greeting	Response
Any Feast Day	Blessed Feast Day	Blessed Feast Day
Christmas	Christ is Born	Glorify Him
Palm Sunday	Blessed Palm Sunday	Blessed Palm Sunday
Pascha	Christ is Risen	Truly He is Risen

- If writing an email in a certain season, you start with the proper address → proper seasonal greeting.
 - *ie. Master Bless, Christ is Risen!*
- Example on how to end an email:
 - *Your servant in Christ,*
Your name
Title
- Make sure to ask for your priest's blessing for an event:
 - Start and end the email as shown above
 - State the nature of your event
 - Date, Time, Location, Content (ie. social, spiritual, etc.

Philemon 1:6 "That the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus"

Being Consistent & Persistent

*Regardless of the scenario, **refrain from canceling events**. Whether it is 2 people or 50 people who attend, you serve God first and therefore should stay committed to completing the event.*

People may:

- Ignore your texts, calls, email blasts etc.
- Reject facebook event invites or not interact with your instagram posts
- Let you know they are coming but don't show up

None of these scenarios matter. Keep up with your faith and consistency. Continue to pass along the message to the same audience regardless of their interaction. Young adults will come.

We want to always be inviting to anyone and everyone, especially our non-Orthodox friends; this is a great opportunity to share the faith.

Factors to consider for one's absence:

- Individuals' personal life
- Different cultural backgrounds
- Some people may not be familiar with others or may feel shy with new people

It is impossible to know what someone may be going through in their personal life that hinders their presence at church or church related events. So our duty is to make sure they feel welcome at all times. You are not asked to beg people to participate in events. Just be **Consistent and Persistent**, do not let it bring down your faith. **Young adults will come!**

Make sure to maximize your presence on social media! We live in a world of social media, therefore we should utilize it to our advantage in promoting events.

Joshua 1:9 “Behold, I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be cowardly or fearful, for the Lord your God is with you in all things, wherever you go.”

Handling Teen Transition

Teenagers transitioning from high school into college can find it difficult to stay engaged with their faith as they move into dorms and are surrounded by people of varying backgrounds and walks of life. Depending on their situation, they may not have transportation to the nearest Orthodox church.

The young adult ministry can play an influential role by providing a community of like-minded individuals their age and older amidst the many questions and doubts that can arise at college. This ministry has the unique opportunity of ensuring that teens remain connected to the Church as they transition into adulthood.

Here are a few ways that you can ensure that teens transition into the young adult ministry:

Publicize the Young Adult Ministry with your parish's Teen SOYO

- Plan visits to talk about the Young Adult Ministry at Sunday school
- Work directly with the teen SOYO coordinator at your parish to identify which teens are in this year's graduating class and where they'll be attending college
- As teens are about to graduate, you can approach them and their parents about being added to the young adult contact list

Connect your parish's teens with HOST

- HOST (Helping Orthodox Christians Thrive) is a program created by our Antiochian Archdiocese of North America to help college students stay connected to the Church as they relocate for college or begin their careers away from home
- HOST facilitates the connection between a local parish and a visiting or newly relocated young adult parishioner
- Parishes of the Antiochian Archdiocese that are participating in HOST create a Church-away-from-home experience by providing reliable transportation to and from Church for services, a warm introduction to the parish community, a shared meal and more
- Please visit www.antiochian.org/dashboard?name=Host for more information

Contact the leaders of OCF groups at nearby universities

- OCF (Orthodox Christian Fellowship) ministers specifically to students on college campuses across North America
- With over 100 active chapters, OCF offers college students unique opportunities to interact with Orthodox students in their community as well as across the world
- OCF aims to "transform the lives of college students by guiding them along the path to Jesus Christ through His Church, cultivating a campus community of worship, witness, service, fellowship, and education"
- For more information, please visit www.ocf.net

Facilitating Role Transitions

Leading a young adult ministry is hard work, and you can make it easier for your successor by adequately preparing them for the role. While it may be tedious, any information that you can provide your successor will help with keeping the young adult ministry running seamlessly.

Document best practices and repeatable processes

- Write down your primary duties in a transition document for your position, including processes followed or unique learnings identified from operating in your parish
- After hosting an event, presidents should hold retrospective meetings with their board where they document any learnings for future events, including:
 - What went well
 - What could be improved
 - Action items for next event
- If you plan the same event(s) every year, write a handbook for that event(s) so it can be easily transitioned

Conduct knowledge transfer with your successor

- Meet with your successor to discuss best practices, historical events held, and any learnings/advice from your time in the position
- Share all documentation with your successor, including key passwords
- Ensure that they are aware of any plans in progress and set them up for success by providing any necessary details

Transition any financial account information (if applicable):

- The account holder address should be his/her parish address and not their personal address
- Previous signers and account holders should be removed and the new members should be added ASAP

Don't be afraid to reach out to those who have held your position in the past. They should be referenced as a resource and guide especially in your first few months!

Acts 1:20 “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office.’”

Closing Remarks

In this handbook, we have provided the steps needed to launch a successful young adult ministry. While these steps are important, the key to a successful ministry is to keep our mission in mind at all times: bringing young adults closer to God and the Church by facilitating fellowship and fostering spiritual growth. By ensuring a good balance of spiritual/worship, social, and service events, you can ensure a well-rounded experience for your young adults.

If you have any questions on how to handle specific situations, you can contact our board by emailing dlawyoungadults@gmail.com, or submitting a Q&A form on our website, www.dlawyam.com.

The DLAW YAM board would like to thank His Grace The Right Reverend Bishop ANTHONY+ Michaels, Diocese of Los Angeles & the West for his support and guidance at all times. In addition, we would like to extend our gratitude to Father David Sommer for all of the wisdom and guidance that he provided as our spiritual advisor over the last two decades and look forward to working with our new spiritual advisor, Father Christopher Dillon.

Acknowledgements

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