

# HOPE MINISTRY GUIDELINES

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**Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**

83 Saint Basil Road

Garrison, NY 10524

Tel: 646-519-6180

Fax: 646-519-6191

E-mail: [youthoffice@goarch.org](mailto:youthoffice@goarch.org)

Web: [www.youth.goarch.org](http://www.youth.goarch.org)

**Supervising Editor**

Rev. Mark A. Leondis

**Compiled By**

Melissa K. Bazos and Margo NT Kelley

**Edited By**

Christina Meares

**Cover Icon**

by the hand of Athanasios Clark ([pinello@hol.gr](mailto:pinello@hol.gr))

**Review Committee**

Archdiocese Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team

Rev. Bill Gikas

Rev. Peter Orfanakos

Theodora Maccone

Annette Jacobs

Bonnie Mellos

Dear Faithful,

With the blessings of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, we are pleased to offer the parishes, clergy, and youth workers of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the new *Holy Orthodox Primary Education (HOPE) Ministry Guidelines*.

These *Guidelines* are offered to assist the local parish in continuing to create and enhance their HOPE Ministry. These are guidelines—not by-laws. They are in no way intended to be the ultimate authority in HOPE Ministry programming, however, they are considered to be best practices for the ministry.

The question is often asked, “What is the Church doing for our Orthodox children?” A successful HOPE Ministry is but one of the answers to this question. As the Church of Christ, we must be willing to incorporate all members into the Body. A great way of doing this is to have our youth participate in all aspects of the Church, allowing them to fully experience the Orthodox Faith.

Using the basic principles of the HOPE Ministry—*worship, fellowship, service, and witness*—we pray that these *HOPE Ministry Guidelines* will assist you in ministering to our young people on their journey toward salvation.

These *Guidelines* have been reviewed and revised by the Archdiocese Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team, along with parish clergy and HOPE advisors. The Archdiocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team is comprised of the National Department and each Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry throughout our Archdiocese.

On behalf of this team, I pray that these *Guidelines* will assist you in your HOPE Ministry and will be a source of inspiration to all who read them.

☞ Reverend Mark A. Leondis, National Director  
Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

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# WHAT IS HOPE MINISTRY?

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is to coordinate the youth and young adult ministries of the national church in collaboration with Metropolis Directors; by providing standardized resources and training, this unified national ministry team enables youth workers, young people, and their families to better understand and fully experience the Orthodox Christian Faith.

The *Holy Orthodox Primary Education*, or HOPE, is a ministry of the Department. The mission of HOPE is to strengthen the relationship of young Orthodox Christians with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The program works to educate and edify young members of the Church, encouraging them to become active sacramental participants in the life of the Body of Christ. This ministry offers them the opportunity to experience the Faith, ultimately leading them to Salvation.

## **MINISTRY VS. ORGANIZATION**

HOPE is a ministry of the Church. It is not an organization or club, but simply a gathering of the faithful of the Church who share the same grades, ages and common interests. It is a spiritual ministry, based on the theological tenets of the Orthodox Christian Faith.

## **PARTICIPANTS VS. MEMBERS**

Belonging to HOPE Ministry depends solely on being an Orthodox Christian. Children are not classified as members or non-members—if they are members of the Faith, they belong! That is, they are participants or children rather than members. If non-Orthodox children wish to participate, welcome and offer ministry to them. Encourage them to participate in the program and explain to them that the Sacraments are only for baptized and/or chrismated members of the Orthodox Church. There have been many instances of entire families converting to Orthodoxy because of their child's involvement in HOPE Ministry.

## **GUIDELINES VS. CONSTITUTION**

Since HOPE is a ministry and not an organization or club, guidelines exist rather than a constitution. The Archdiocese Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries offers these guidelines to inform and direct the faithful as to the ecclesiastical purpose of HOPE Ministry, stressing the four characteristics of worship, fellowship, service, and witness.

## **WHO IT SERVES**

HOPE ministers to Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade children of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. In smaller parishes, it is sometimes necessary to combine HOPE and JOY (Kindergarten to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) Ministry, though it is not recommended. It is important that the advisors of this combined group familiarize themselves with both the HOPE and JOY Ministry Guidelines. During planning, pay special attention to the developmental needs of the individual children in the group, as each activity may not be appropriate for all the children who attend. Occasionally, special activities may be planned for specific grades.

## **YOUTH MINISTRY FOUNDATION**

A child's world is changing rapidly—it is virtually impossible to keep up with every new trend and movement of their culture. Growing up in today's society is a much more difficult task than it was in previous times. Our children are constantly being exposed to negative and destructive influences. If

these influences are not challenged, they can, and will, define who our children are and what they will become. Innocence is slipping away at an alarmingly early age. For these reasons, the positive teachings and traditions of the Orthodox Church must become a living presence in the lives of our children. This makes ministry to our children not an option, but rather a necessity.

But what is ministry? The word **minister** means to give aid to those in need. Therefore, a ministry of the Orthodox Church gives aid as part of the Body of Christ. A child becomes a full member of this Body at their baptism. The foundation of all youth ministry is the cultivation and education of our children, so that they may become **active** members of the Body of Christ. HOPE Ministry is but one means to this end; it must not stand alone, but rather be incorporated into the entire life of the Church and its mission.

Youth ministry needs to begin early, even before the child begins to participate in HOPE Ministry. It begins with the family in the home and it needs to continue in the home as the child grows in the Church. As youth workers, it is important to keep in mind that the single greatest influence on how children develop a “sense of self,” is their parents. It is therefore critical that we not only minister to the children, but also to their parents. We should consider our ministry a supplement to this vital “home ministry.”

#### **PATRON SAINTS OF YOUTH MINISTRY**

*Great are the achievements of faith! In the fountain of flame, as by the water of rest, the Three Holy Children rejoiced. And the Prophet Daniel proved a shepherd of lions as of sheep. By their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls.*

*Apolytikion of Daniel the Prophet and the Three Holy Youths*

The Three Holy Youths (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego) are the patron saints for all Youth Ministry programs of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. During that time, King Nebuchadnezzar created a law stating that all those in the land were to bow down and worship his golden idols. If anyone chose not to, they would be thrown into a furnace and burned to death.

It came to the attention of the King that three children were refusing to worship these idols. Enraged by their refusal, the king brought the three youths before him, commanding them to bow down before the idols. The youths, steadfast in their faith, would not bow down, and King Nebuchadnezzar had them thrown into the furnace. God sent an Angel into the furnace with the youths in order to protect them, cooling the flames. The youths danced and sang praises to God, the very praises we sing on Great and Holy Saturday: *"Praise the Lord and exalt Him to all the ages!"* The king, amazed that they had not been harmed, declared their God to be the True God. They are commemorated each year on December 17<sup>th</sup>. This account from the Old Testament can be found in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the book of Daniel.

#### **PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO MINISTER TO YOUTH**

O Lord our God, You who said, “Let the little children come to me,” bless us who faithfully minister to Your children. Guide us, O Lord, as Your youth workers and teachers in the vineyard of the Faith, so that we may provide a fruitful ministry to the young people we serve. Help us to speak to their hearts in both our words and deeds, so that You may dwell in them. Assist us to effectively communicate Your love to them so that they may comprehend and know You, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Strengthen us O Lord, as we continually direct them toward You, and that through You, they may be unified by the love of Christ and be filled with Your loving kindness.

We thank You O Lord our God, for the rich and abundant blessings You continually bestow on us. May these blessings be a source of inspiration, hope and love to us. We lift up our prayers to You, O Christ our God, the light of our souls and bodies, together with Your all holy good and life giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages, Amen.

# THE HOPE CHILD

The span from Kindergarten to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is a large one, and within it there are great variances in maturity. A 2<sup>nd</sup> grader is at a completely different stage of development than a Kindergarten, however, there is much that they share in common. A well-balanced HOPE Ministry program will provide activities that meet the needs of all children in the ministry.

The following are some general observations that apply to most elementary school children:

- ✦ They are very enthusiastic, responsive, and appreciative of youth group activities.
- ✦ They very much respect and look up to adults and are eager to please them.
- ✦ They have short attention spans coupled with an inherent curiosity.
- ✦ They have a tendency for separation between males and females.
- ✦ They have limited ability for abstract thinking.

These children are making great gains in their intellectual development. They have an increased capacity for both short and long term memory. They are now able to focus on several aspects of a problem at a time, and have a greater ability to solve different types of challenges. During these years, children can categorize past, current, and future events, but may have difficulty understanding and organizing timelines. Children are now able to consider and plan out their own thinking processes. Engaging children in conversations about different topics that interest them helps them to build on their ability to communicate and understand.

Emotionally, children in these primary grades are beginning to empathize with others. They enjoy humor and become more interested in telling jokes. Children this age love finding things that are wrong. They begin to understand the limits of their own abilities, and they also become more prone to social comparison. Experiences that shape self-concept are especially important during these early school years, as the children often swing between feelings of mastery and inferiority. In the course of these years, children are developing their first truly reciprocal friendships. These friends begin to explore concepts of give and take, negotiation of differences, shared experience, and mutual trust.

# THE FOUR CIRCLES

It is recommended that HOPE Ministry integrates the following elements into all aspects of their programming: worship, fellowship, service, and witness. An exceptional program will see these elements not only as four separate entities, but as four interlocking circles that overlap and build on each other. A healthy HOPE Ministry keeps these aspects in balance.

## **WORSHIP** (*LITURGLIA*)

*“Ob come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.”*

*Psalm 95:6-7*

As Orthodox Christians, we believe that God reveals Himself through Holy Tradition and Scripture. *Worship* is the living expression of these, and is therefore an important element in ministering to our children. It is necessary for them to be active participants in the liturgical life of the church.

The foundation for worship is prayer, that is, communion with God. Teaching children to develop

an active prayer life will help them participate in the liturgical cycle of the Church. Prayer must be at the center of a Christian's life, and it is at this early age when healthy habits can be formed. HOPE children are ready to build on their experiences with both private and corporate prayer.

Every event should begin and end with group prayer. Active participation should always be emphasized. Take time to explain the prayers before praying them. Provide children with texts that can be easily followed and read. As some children in the ministry are not yet readers, it is recommended that a variety of techniques be used to ensure all children are able to participate in the prayers:

- ✦ Recite each line of the prayer, having the group recite it back.
- ✦ Use regular prayers at each gathering so that the children can work towards memorizing them.
- ✦ Teach them to chant hymns of our Church.

Create prayer books with the children so they can use them at home in their daily prayers (make sure the prayers are age appropriate with words that the children will understand). Also, have the children add an area for their own personal prayers (for people, for thanks, for help, etc.). If they cannot yet read, have them draw pictures of things they want to pray for, but also include written prayers, as they will still be helpful to their families. Send information home about prayer so that parents can assist their children in developing regular prayer lives.

Teach the children how to participate in the services of the Church (making the sign of the cross, bowing their head, receiving Holy Communion appropriately, singing the hymns, etc.). Start off small—explain the Liturgy in simple, meaningful sections. As always, send supplemental information home to the parents so that they can support the lesson at home.

*The Church's Festal cycle of worship presents us with many opportunities for learning:*

- ✦ Tell stories each day from the Bible, about the lives of the Saints and Feast Days of our Church.
- ✦ Celebrate Name Days.
- ✦ Plan activities or events around the Feast Days, especially Lent, Pascha (Easter), Christmas and Theophany (Epiphany).
- ✦ Teach them the relevance of scripture readings. Be sure to provide them with an easy-to-understand translation of the Bible.
- ✦ Use role-playing to bring to life many of these stories (Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, Publican and Pharisee, etc.).

#### **FELLOWSHIP** (*KOINONIA*)

*"Behold how good and pleasing it is when brothers dwell in unity."*

*Psalm 133:1*

*Fellowship* is the way Orthodox Christians integrate their faith with daily life. It is sacred when Orthodox Christians gather together in the Lord's name. The relationship of the Holy Trinity is the perfect model of Fellowship—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share perfect communion and exist in perfect love with each other. By gathering together in *fellowship* and experiencing this love, we emulate the relationship of the Trinity and develop our life in Christ.

*Fellowship* encompasses every aspect of the child's life—how he or she relates to others, within the family, at school, with friends, at Church, etc. This is a crucial time for the development of relationships. Children are learning about friends, enemies and differences. Activities that help

nurture healthy relationships should be emphasized. Teaching children about Christian *fellowship*, and how Christ calls us to love all as He loved, is critical.

At this age, the principles of Christian fellowship that are taught will define how children interact with others as they mature. If teasing is tolerated on a small level, it will just increase as children grow. They should be taught to treat all people equally with patience, kindness and Christian love. This should not only be taught, but modeled as well.

Children will need many different opportunities to put what they learn about fellowship into action. Allow time for small group work; mix these groups up so that they are not always the same children. Plan family activities to encourage mixed-age fellowship.

**SERVICE** (*DLAKONIA*)

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve . . .”*

*Mark 10:45*

Christ came to serve, not to be served. Young people are urged to do the same. They can honor and glorify God by loving and serving humanity in His name. Young people can use their God-given gifts to serve. For Orthodox Christians, *service* to God and community is a way of life; the way of living one’s Faith. As Jesus Christ said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). *Service* is an integral part of the Orthodox Christian’s life.

Too often, we look at our children and wonder how we can help them. We need to inspire them toward a life of *service*. How can our children use their God-given gifts for *service* to the needy and *service* to those less fortunate? How can they be the people of God who respond to His call in Matthew 25:31-46, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison? Responding to these human needs is the true meaning of *service*.

At this age, children are eager to serve others, and there are many direct, purposeful ways to help them accomplish this. It is important that they are properly prepared before given the opportunity to serve. They need to know what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what is to be expected of them.

Children experience *service* by beginning to learn about personal stewardship—giving of time, talents, and treasures—to both the church and their local community charities. Even though they are young, there are still many ways they can serve others: visiting nursing homes, making cards or care packages for those who serve in the military, planting flowers at the church, baking prosforo, conducting food or toy drives, etc. Check with your parish priest or local volunteer agencies to find out the needs of your community.

**WITNESS** (*MARTYRIA*)

*“For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.”*

*Acts 22:15*

Man is both a spiritual and physical being. Unfortunately this spiritual reality is not always expressed in the material world. In order to be true to oneself and to the Orthodox Christian Faith, children should strive to exemplify the teachings of the Church. We are witnessing our faith when we are living as Christ taught us to live, letting Christ shine in all that we do to those around us. This is the true meaning of *witness*.

Witnessing the Faith can be a difficult concept to explain to children at this age. To make it easier for

them, emphasize relationships, how we interact with others, and the example we set through our words and actions. Friendships, faithfulness, disagreements, and good deeds all offer examples that can be used to teach Orthodox Christian *witness*.

Role-playing can be a powerful tool for children this age. Use stories from the Bible and Saints to relate it to their lives. When you tell the story, have the children think about how they can try to be more like (or not like, depending on the situation) the person in the story. Have them think about what someone who is not a Christian might think about the Faith. Also, emphasize that what we do and how we live our lives, shows others about our Faith.

## **HOPE MINISTRY MODEL**

The structure of HOPE Ministry will depend on the specific needs of each individual parish. The following recommendations not only take into consideration what is developmentally appropriate for this age group, but also suggest a HOPE Ministry model based on that information. Flexibility exists within this model so that adjustments may be made to best meet the needs of each individual ministry. If you are just starting a HOPE Ministry in your parish, be sure to read the *How to Organize HOPE Ministry* Section in these guidelines.

For a HOPE Ministry to be effective, there needs to be a high adult to child ratio. The ideal ratio is 1 adult for every 5 children. While this may sound high, these adults will provide the appropriate direction and supervision, which is so important at this age level. It is imperative that all assisting adults are working toward the common goal.

### **HOPE MINISTRY TEAM**

The HOPE Ministry Team will be responsible for planning and leading all ministry activities. This team is made up of the parish priest, youth director and advisor(s). If there is more than one advisor, it is helpful to have one designated as the lead advisor. This lead advisor is responsible for making sure all team members are well informed, and that all efforts are being coordinated toward the common goal of the ministry. All members of the team should have clear roles and responsibilities; these should be defined at least one month before the HOPE year begins.

In addition to planning and overseeing all activities, the HOPE Ministry Team should work to cultivate additional leadership within the other adults who participate in the ministry. Too often, youth programs are based on the leadership of one or two individuals. When these people move on or burnout, the ministry disappears. All ministry team members should take some responsibility for the group at one point or another. By setting this as a goal, the ministry will be constantly training new leaders and providing support for current ones.

### **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

A HOPE Ministry will need volunteers to assist with the children and the ministry. These volunteers can be parents, grandparents, young adults, and even mature teenagers from the parish. As with the HOPE Ministry Team, it is important that these volunteers have defined roles and responsibilities. These can be communicated through a meeting at the beginning of the year, ongoing meetings, or even by telephone and e-mail contact.

### **BUILDING LEADERSHIP**

When we think of leadership, we instinctively think of people in power. As Christians, Christ gave us a living example of leadership:

*“And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”*

*Mark 10:44-45*

Christ led by serving others, and we are called to do the same. This type of leadership, servant leadership, is key to the ministry.

A special effort should be made by the advisor(s) to find leadership opportunities for the children themselves. Even though they are young, they can still offer input about the ministry. This is a great age to build on their knowledge of leadership and responsibility by giving them opportunities to contribute.

*Below are examples of how HOPE children are able to assist with the ministry:*

- ✦ As a group, the children can choose a service project from several choices and later plan how to carry it out.
- ✦ As a group, the children can decide on a fellowship activity to do in addition to the regular meeting (bowling, go to a park, etc.).
- ✦ The children can draw/write “we missed you” pictures/letters for children that have not been able to come to the gatherings.
- ✦ They can assist with clean up. Have them plan it out and say, “We need to clean up this art project before we go outside. What do you think needs to be done?” Once they give you these tasks, assign specific tasks to specific children.

## **ROLES IN HOPE MINISTRY**

It takes many people to sustain a ministry: some people are leaders, others followers; some people have active roles, others have passive roles; some people are consultants, others implementers. Each role has its own set of responsibilities. In a strong ministry, responsibilities are clear and distributed amongst different people. Whatever the roles, all should be working towards the common goal of the ministry. Below are different roles which are vital for the success of the ministry. If the ministry is missing any of these roles, the HOPE Ministry Team should address how the responsibilities assigned to each role can still be fulfilled.

### **ARCHDIOCESAN DEPARTMENT**

The Archdiocesan Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries is located on the grounds of Saint Basil Academy in New York. The Department creates and distributes resources for parish ministry, as well as oversees the Office of Ionian Village and Camping Ministries. The Department coordinates the *Archdiocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team*, which is made up of the National Department and each Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. This team meets twice a year and collaborates throughout the year to coordinate national and regional youth and young adult ministries. For information on contacting the Archdiocesan Department, see the *Resources for Ministry* section of these Guidelines.

### **METROPOLIS OFFICES**

The Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries oversees all youth and young adult activities within their respective Metropolis. These directors are trained not only in Theology, but also in the basic tenets of youth ministry. They are an excellent resource for local parish programming and should be called upon for assistance. For information on contacting your

Metropolis Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, see the *Resources for Ministry* section of these Guidelines.

#### **PARISH PRIEST**

The parish priest is responsible for the spiritual well-being of the entire parish. Under the direction of the Metropolis Hierarchy, the parish priest ministers to all of the parishioners and groups of the parish. HOPE Ministry is a part of his overall ministry. It is imperative that the priest be active in this ministry by guiding and working with the advisors in all aspects of the ministry, as well as attending all activities.

#### **PARISH COUNCIL**

The parish council represents the parish as a whole. As HOPE Ministry is part of the overall ministry of the church, it is important that the parish council be kept informed of the ministry activities. The parish council should provide the necessary support through the parish budget and other resources to help sustain the ministry. It is best if one of the parish council members acts as a liaison between the council and HOPE Ministry, attending all activities.

#### **PARISH YOUTH DIRECTOR**

Under the direction of the parish priest, the parish youth director is responsible for all youth and young adult ministry in the parish. Specifically for HOPE Ministry, the parish youth director oversees the work of advisors, ministering to them so they might minister to the children. The youth director should guide the advisors to ensure a balanced program so that the best opportunity for ministry exists. The parish youth director should be trained not only in the Theology of the Church, but also in the field of youth ministry.

#### **HOPE MINISTRY TEAM**

Under the direction of the parish priest and youth director, the HOPE Ministry Team is responsible for planning and carrying out all ministry activities. Guiding children to a deeper understanding of their Orthodox Christian faith, these advisors directly minister to the lives of the children and their families. Every advisor should participate in the youth ministry training program. This program strengthens faith and develops techniques for Orthodox Christian Youth Ministry (see *Training for Ministry* section).

#### **HOPE CHILDREN**

The true role of the children is to actively live their Faith. HOPE Ministry should be a vehicle in which they can develop their lives, faith and morals. The children should feel a sense of ownership for the group and be excited about participating in ministry activities. They should be encouraged to help with planning for the ministry in a manner that is appropriate for their developmental level.

#### **PARENTS**

Parents are crucial to the success of any youth ministry program. As youth workers, it is important to keep in mind that the amount of time we spend with the children pales in comparison to the time they spend with their families. Parents need to be brought on board from the very beginning, and should be kept aware of the goals and activities of the ministry. Parents can build on HOPE Ministry objectives in their home, and likewise, the ministry can reemphasize these same objectives at gatherings.

#### **GOYA MENTORS**

An often-overlooked source of assistance in HOPE Ministry are GOYA Ministry participants, or GOYA Mentors. Their involvement in the ministry can be a great help, while providing the teenagers with a means to serve. They can also be positive role models for the children to follow as they grow. It is important to remember that GOYA Mentors themselves are still minors; they should not be left in charge of the children without adult advisors present. The teenagers who are assisting

with the ministry should participate in an orientation before they begin working with the children. This interaction will be a very healthy and positive experience for the children and the young people of GOYA Ministry alike.

### **OTHER VOLUNTEERS**

It is appropriate to have the same volunteers at every activity for continuity, but equally beneficial to welcome new volunteers for specific assistance. Using different volunteers to assist with small, but meaningful tasks will get people involved that might otherwise be hesitant to make larger commitments. Additionally, these task volunteers will provide support to those who are there regularly. Consider the needs of the ministry and the talents of the volunteers when delegating responsibilities. All those who are assisting with the ministry should participate in an orientation before they begin working with the children.

## **SELECTING YOUTH WORKERS**

Youth workers are charged with the important task of sharing the Gospel of Christ and the Holy Traditions of our Faith with our young people. Finding dedicated and qualified individuals to do this can often be a challenge. These positions should never be taken lightly. Taking time to properly screen and select youth workers ensures that our youth ministry teams are made up of qualified, responsible, and Christ-centered individuals. A youth worker is anyone who works with the children of the ministry, whether they are paid or volunteer, part time or full time.

### **QUALITIES OF A YOUTH WORKER**

The adults working with HOPE children should be people who have a love of children and a genuine commitment to serve the Church. They must be Orthodox Christians who are active sacramental members of the Church. Through both their actions and their words, these individuals bring to life the love of Christ and the truth of the Gospel for the children to whom they minister.

*Above all, youth workers must...*

- ✦ Be honest! If you can't answer their question, tell them you'll get back to them—children can tell when you're not being honest.
- ✦ Be an icon! Your actions speak louder than your words, so make sure they are good ones. St. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words."
- ✦ Love each child! "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).
- ✦ Be there, and accept them for who they are. They are children of God created in His image and likeness, just as you are.
- ✦ Know their world—what shows they watch, music they listen to, and how they enjoy spending their time.
- ✦ Help them find the answers they are looking for. It's alright to question—when answers are found—faith will be stronger.
- ✦ Listen more than talk! Remember that effective listening will require you to use both your ears and your eyes. Look and listen for feedback.
- ✦ Treat them with respect. If you give them this, they will give it back to you!
- ✦ Know when they need more help than you can give. Unless you are a licensed counselor, you cannot help children with serious issues. Please refer to the *Legal Issues* section for additional information about this subject.
- ✦ Be patient! The fruits of your work may not blossom for years; growth is a slow process.

- ✦ Pray for them daily! Ask them to pray for you too!

### **SCREENING VOLUNTEERS**

The task of selecting volunteers requires a great amount of consideration. Screening volunteers is necessary in all youth ministry programs in order to manage risk and protect our young people. It is important to be systematic when choosing volunteers. **All** volunteers must fill out applications, provide references, and have a criminal background check performed even if the potential advisors are active members of the parish.

*When considering volunteers, keep in mind the following...*

- ✦ Is the individual an active sacramental member in good standing of the Church?
- ✦ Does this individual possess good organizational skills?
- ✦ Does this individual enjoy spending time with young people?
- ✦ Is the individual dedicated to working with young people and willing to continue in this position for an extended period?
- ✦ Does this individual have a “vision” for the parish youth ministry and are they motivated to work toward its realization?
- ✦ Is this individual active in other aspects of Church life?
- ✦ Will this individual serve as a good role model for young people?
- ✦ Does this individual possess leadership qualities?
- ✦ Is this individual willing to take direction from the parish priest?
- ✦ Is this individual a teacher of God’s word?
- ✦ Does this individual work well with other adults and youth workers?
- ✦ Will the individual employ appropriate means of communication, teaching, and discipline with the children?
- ✦ Does this individual speak to the children in a loving, respectful and nurturing manner?
- ✦ Does this individual have a criminal record or a history of offences toward children?
- ✦ Is this individual interested in spreading the message of Orthodox Christianity, or are they simply trying to re-live their own youth group experience?
- ✦ Is this individual aware of youth culture and willing to refresh him or herself continually with what is going on in the lives of the youth?
- ✦ Will the individual be able to integrate into an existing program or structure and/or will they need to create one?
- ✦ Are you confident in this individual’s leadership skills and the ability to make appropriate decisions?
- ✦ Will you be able to supply this youth worker with all the necessary resources or show the youth worker where to find resources (financial, educational, spiritual)?
- ✦ Will the individual be accepted and received by the parish?
- ✦ Are you willing to monitor the youth program and provide advice, guidance, and/or constructive criticism to the youth worker?
- ✦ Will this person follow through in their commitment?

### **ONGOING EVALUATION**

Ongoing evaluation of youth workers is critical to the success of the ministry. These evaluations are not only of benefit to the ministry, but also to the youth workers themselves. Evaluations should be a dialogue with the youth worker, parish priest, and parish youth director. They should focus on strengths, challenges, and needs. It is important that the evaluation process begin with a self-evaluation.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The Archdiocesan Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries has compiled a detailed packet

explaining the process of selecting youth workers and screening volunteers. This packet includes job descriptions, applications, and other vital details to assist you with this process. These tools are available by contacting the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries or visiting the website at [www.youth.goarch.org](http://www.youth.goarch.org).

## **TRAINING FOR MINISTRY**

Youth workers are entrusted with a sacred task: inspiring children's hearts toward God. For this reason, training is essential for each and every person involved in this effort. The parish priest, along with the parish youth director, should take the lead in the planning and implementation of this training. One month before the HOPE year begins, it is recommended that all involved in the leadership of children train for at least one or two days. If the training is for more than one youth ministry program, make sure to schedule time for age-specific breakout sessions. The training should include the following:

- ✦ Goal of HOPE Ministry
- ✦ The Four Circles
- ✦ What it means to be a Youth Minister and Leader
- ✦ Definition of Roles and Responsibilities
- ✦ Developmental Issues
- ✦ Ideas, Resources and Planning for Ministry
- ✦ Legal Issues of Ministry

### **PARENTS**

Parental support and involvement is a vital part of HOPE Ministry. Children, especially at the younger ages, are still open to having parents come and take part in activities. This presents the advisors with a great opportunity to take a truly "family approach" to his or her ministry, which is critical for the children. The ministry cannot be fully successful unless its lessons are realized in the home.

Parents should be invited and highly encouraged to attend the youth worker training at the beginning of the year. Additionally, hold a parent meeting at the beginning of the HOPE year. This will lay the foundation for your partnership in the spiritual education of their children. In order to encourage participation at this meeting, a few suggestions include: having a potluck dinner for the whole family, providing supervision and activities for the children as the parent meeting is conducted, and considering joint youth ministry/parent meetings when appropriate. The initial meeting should cover the following topics:

- ✦ Goal of HOPE Ministry
- ✦ Plan for the year
- ✦ Parental role in the ministry
- ✦ Questions, concerns, and ideas
- ✦ Plan for ongoing communication

In order to continue to build the parent-youth worker relationship, parent meetings should be held periodically throughout the year.

### **GOYA MENTORS**

GOYA Mentors who assist with HOPE Ministry should participate in youth worker training and

orientation prior to the beginning of the year. Specific focus of this training should include:

- ✦ Goal of HOPE Ministry
- ✦ Their roles and responsibilities in HOPE Ministry
- ✦ Practical strategies for working with HOPE children
- ✦ Legal issues and safety concerns
- ✦ Effective leadership skill development

#### **TRAINING RESOURCES**

Youth worker and leadership training is available from the Archdiocese Department and Metropolis Offices of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. In depth training for youth workers, parents, and leaders on a parish, regional, and Metropolis level is available on the following topics:

- ✦ How to start an Early Childhood, HOPE, JOY, GOYA, and Young Adult Ministry
- ✦ Orthodox Youth Ministry
- ✦ Building Bridges
- ✦ Relational Ministry
- ✦ “Nuts and Bolts” of Youth Ministry
- ✦ Family Ministry
- ✦ Creative Teaching
- ✦ Christian Leadership

For further information, contact the Archdiocesan Department or your local Metropolis Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

## **HOPE MINISTRY MEETINGS**

For children, a meeting should involve movement, discussion and more movement. It should be a fun experience that helps them grow in their knowledge as Orthodox Christians. Every moment is a teachable moment, from the instant the children are greeted to the closing prayer and departure. In everything, we need to keep the children active, involved and inspired!

It is recommended that HOPE Ministry have at least two meetings each month. Meetings should incorporate some of the following elements: prayer, icebreaker, lesson, arts and crafts, music, business, and refreshments. For a sample meeting schedule, please see *Appendix A*.

The family is the single, greatest influence on the faith development of a child. All meetings should take a family ministry approach. Consider occasionally having a parent discussion going on in another room during the meeting. On some occasions, have parents come to the meeting and have a special lesson planned for all. Every effort should be made to inspire the children and their families to integrate the Orthodox Faith into their daily lives. It is important that parents are viewed as vital and active partners in HOPE Ministry.

## **PRAYER**

Since HOPE is a ministry of the Church, the meetings (and all activities) should begin and end with prayer. Prayer should not be mechanical recitation, but rather a time of connection with God. Take some time before beginning to inspire the children's hearts toward prayer. Allow time to explain the prayer in order to encourage proper worship, that is, worshiping not only with empty words, but with one's entire being—mind, body and soul.

Put together different resources for parents on prayer, the Liturgy and other seasonal services so that they can continue to encourage prayer in the home. Parents are very busy, so keep the information short and simple and include further references if they want more information.

Making prayer an important and exciting part of gatherings will lay the perfect foundation on which to build the ministry. For additional assistance, speak with your parish priest and consult *The Four Circles* and *Resources for Ministry* sections of these guidelines.

## **ICEBREAKERS**

All meetings should begin with an icebreaker. Icebreakers can relate directly to the needs of the group or serve as an introduction to the theme of the presentation. Whatever their purpose, they should be fun and encourage full participation, helping to unify the group. At this age, icebreakers should focus on building group camaraderie through games and other activities. Be careful to plan icebreakers that do not divide the group, but work toward unity by keeping all children actively involved. Icebreakers should take place after the opening prayer and should take around 10 to 15 minutes. Examples of fun icebreakers include the following:

- ✦ The Song Game - Break the children into groups of 4-6. Give all the groups the same word (perhaps one related to your lesson that day). Allow them 2 minutes to think of a song that has that word and prepare to perform it as a group. Praise them for originality, creativity and group cohesiveness. Time permitting, do several rounds of this using different words. Choose words that are found in songs that children at this young age are familiar with already.
- ✦ Simon Says - Although this seems like a simple game, it can be great fun. It is a great way to get the young people in tune with listening to the person leading the lesson.
- ✦ Scavenger Hunt - Organize a scavenger hunt where the children learn more about the inside of the Church (i.e. how many crosses are there, who is the saint next to Jesus on the icon screen, etc.).
- ✦ Telephone - This is another classic that can get children ready to listen to the lesson. Have them sit in a circle and whisper a phrase (perhaps related to the lesson) in one person's ear; they in turn must whisper the message to the next person. This should continue until you come to the last person who says the phrase out loud to hear how much it has changed.

For more information on icebreakers, see the *Resources for Ministry* section of these guidelines.

## **LESSON**

The core of the meeting is the lesson which can take on many different forms. Keep the lesson timely, interesting, upbeat, and most of all, full of opportunities for interaction. The children need less talking and more activities; keep them active and moving! Children need to move; if you fail to meet this need, they will meet it themselves (at times you would prefer them not to). The goal of the lesson is to provide the children with the tools and knowledge to become active participants in their spiritual development. An activity followed by a brief discussion to emphasize the teaching is the ideal approach. This can be done in many different ways:

- ✦ Play a Game - Simple games can have wonderful lessons in them. Games such as follow the

- leader, hide and seek, and competitive activities can all be adapted to explore spiritual topics.
- ✦ Act it Out - Experience is the best teacher we have. Get the children involved in the lesson by having them act it out.
- ✦ View a Video - Unfortunately, there are not any Orthodox children's videos available at this time, but many nondenominational and even secular productions can be helpful to your ministry if the theme supports your lesson. Verify appropriateness with your parish priest and Youth Ministry Team before using.
- ✦ Hands-on Experience - There are many different activities that can help children "experience" the lesson: painting icons while learning about them, learning about the hymns while chanting, preparing a meal for the homeless while learning about charity, etc.
- ✦ Read a Book - There are many wonderful children's books, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, that can support your lesson. Read through all books thoroughly to make sure the message is in line with the teaching of the Orthodox Church (have your parish priest help with this).

Avoid trying to accomplish too much in one session. St. John Cassian writes, "Less is more. It is not the amount of learning that must be our aim, but the quality of learning. Better to learn two verses with understanding than a whole page with wandering thoughts." Keep the activity, and the message simple, concrete and clear.

Whatever direction your lesson takes, make sure there is ample time for the children to process what they have learned at the end of the lesson. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- ✦ Drawing - Have the children draw a picture of the lesson or something they learned from it. Keep a folder of their drawings from each lesson and have them review and take them home at the end of the year.
- ✦ Writing - Writing can help children make sense of what they have learned. At the end of the lesson, have them write 5 things they learned, something they want to do differently as a result of what they learned, or a letter to God. Be aware that some of the younger child will not be able to write yet so they can draw their reflections.
- ✦ Review Games - Fun games like charades and pictionary can provide a fun way to review the lesson.
- ✦ Charting - At the end of the lesson, have the group of children help you make a list of everything they now know about the topic presented. Even though some of them are just learning to read, this process will still reinforce the lesson.

Using one or several of these methods will increase the chances that the lesson will stay with the children after they leave. Additionally, revisit past lessons and don't be afraid to repeat lessons with a different twist. Repetition is the key to learning for children.

Finally, plan a simple family activity to send home with the children. Give parents an outline of the lesson from the day, including questions, bible passages, and ideas for building on the activity in the home. Keep handouts and activities as simple as possible, as families are very busy.

Above all, be creative! Constantly search for new and interesting ways to get your message across. Remember that you are building a foundation of faith, so pray and let the Holy Spirit guide you. For information to assist you in planning see the *Resources for Ministry* section of these guidelines.

## **ARTS AND CRAFTS**

Adding an arts and crafts activity to your meeting will give the children something tangible to take home that reminds them of the lesson. When planning arts and crafts, make sure all projects can be done regardless of talent or inclination. Art projects should be more than just crayons and paper; there are many creative projects that can be done. Whenever possible, have the arts and crafts project support the lesson of the day or create a lesson around the art project. For example, a wooden cross

from a craft store can be decorated in a variety of ways when you are doing a lesson on the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (September 14<sup>th</sup>). For ideas, search on the web or brainstorm with others in your community. See the *Resources for Ministry* section of these guidelines for additional information about arts and crafts.

### **MUSIC**

Singing can help unify and settle down a group. It can be a great thing to do when you think you are losing the children. Christian camp songs are always fun, but don't forget to also teach them the hymns of the Church. Go through the song or hymn line by line to help the children learn the lyrics, melody and meaning. See the *Resources for Ministry* section of these guidelines for suggested music.

### **BUSINESS**

While the children should be learning about leadership and involved in some planning for their ministry, there needs to be time to do business at the meeting. This portion of the meeting should not be more than 5 minutes long. The advisors should prepare an agenda so that they are prepared to guide the children. Things that might need to be covered in the business portion of the meeting include the following:

- ✦ Making plans and preparing the children for any current projects or activities that are coming up.
- ✦ Deciding on future activities and meeting topics (suggest three predetermined activities/topics and have them choose)
- ✦ General announcements (Type out announcements to hand out to all attending and mail it to those who were unable to attend. Consider also including this announcement page in the parish bulletin.)

### **REFRESHMENTS**

It is always nice to have some type of refreshments at HOPE gatherings. Assign each family a specific day so that the responsibility does not fall on a small group of individuals. Insist that the refreshments are kept simple no matter who is bringing them. Also, try to keep snacks healthy and low on sugar for most meetings (special occasions can be exempt). For a twist, have the children make the refreshments and build a lesson around it, like making fruit pizzas while teaching about the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

## **HOPE MINISTRY ACTIVITIES**

HOPE Ministry represents the Orthodox Christian Faith. All activities and interactions should be a witness to this. It is recommended that at least one activity be planned per month in addition to the regular meetings. Activities can be even more enjoyable if you invite youth groups from other Orthodox parishes in your area. Whatever the activity, allow enough time to plan all the details, making sure that there is proper support and supervision. Also, pay special attention to the church calendar, making sure the activities do not conflict with the feasts and liturgical life of the church. Consult with the parish priest when selecting dates for all activities.

### **RETREATS**

A great way to heighten fellowship and to begin living and learning the Orthodox Faith is through retreats. While serving as significant tools in enlightening lives, retreats set aside a special time for a change of pace, fellowship, reflection, growth, and bonding as a community of faith. Remember to keep lessons simple, concrete, and clear as well as fun, creative, and active. Participants of HOPE Ministry should attend retreats at least two times per year. If you are interested in holding a retreat at

your parish, contact your Metropolis Office of Youth and Young Ministries for assistance. For sample retreat schedules, see *Appendix B* and *C* in these guidelines.

### **SERVICE AND WITNESS**

HOPE children can learn to be stewards and witnesses of their faith by giving of their time, talents and treasures. It is critical that this be part of the ministry. It is recommended that the children participate in at least two service projects each year. Service projects can be short term, such as packing school kits for children in impoverished countries (see [www.iocc.org](http://www.iocc.org) for more information on this project), or more long term, like collecting food for a local shelter each month. There are so many opportunities to help them learn about giving and witnessing their faith. For additional examples, see *The Four Circles* section of these guidelines.

### **FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

Since HOPE Ministry is also a ministry to the family, consider hosting several family events throughout the year. When appropriate, partner with the other youth ministry groups in your parish to plan the activity. Be sensitive of all families (single, adoptive, grandparents, etc.) so that everyone feels included. There are many different activities that can be done with families to build on their relationships with each other and with Christ, for example:

- ✦ Host a potluck dinner and game night, ending with a brief prayer service.
- ✦ Have concurrent lectures for children and their parents, bringing the groups together and facilitating dialogue.
- ✦ Have a lesson for the entire family to attend and participate in.
- ✦ Host a family camp or family retreat.

Consider sending home activities that engage the whole family, especially after a family activity, encouraging parents to build on previous lessons.

### **INTER-ORTHODOX ACTIVITIES**

Our Orthodox Faith reaches far beyond our culture. It is recommended to plan activities and events with children from various Orthodox Christian jurisdictions. Attending services at other Orthodox churches with the group can help emphasize the oneness of the faith. If your HOPE Ministry does not have many participants, have your priest call another local Orthodox church in the region—join together!

## **PLANNING FOR HOPE MINISTRY**

Often times in youth ministry we fail to take the necessary time to plan. Planning may take extra work initially but it saves time in the long run. The most successful youth programs plan ahead not just by one week or one month, but a whole year in advance. Sit down with your HOPE Ministry Team and take the time to outline and set goals each year. Things to consider as you plan for the ministry are:

- ✦ What is of interest to the children?
- ✦ What issues are they dealing with in their lives?
- ✦ What will help them build on their concept of who they are as Orthodox Christian individuals?
- ✦ How will we make our lessons relate to their lives?
- ✦ How can we be sensitive to individual children in the group?
- ✦ How can we make everyone feel included?
- ✦ What problems might occur with each activity? (costs, logistics, safety, behaviors, etc.)
- ✦ What questions might arise during each lesson and how will we answer them?

- ✦ How can we schedule meetings and activities to fit into the busy schedules of children?
- ✦ How can we communicate and share information with the parents?

#### **BEFORE ANY HOPE MINISTRY GATHERING**

- ✦ Remember to pray for direction as you prepare to lead all activities and events.
- ✦ Make sure you have properly publicized the meeting (phone calls, e-mails, flyers, church bulletin).
- ✦ Have everything set up and organized with plenty of assistants to help the children.
- ✦ Be prepared—have an agenda.
- ✦ Make sure everyone knows what his or her role is (refreshments, discussion leader, etc.).
- ✦ Have a few children greet others at the door.
- ✦ Prepare handouts for discussion with appropriate materials.
- ✦ Remember to have fun.

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- ✦ Record and Review - Make sure to document every gathering's date, time and location. Review what went well and what did not at the end of each meeting and activity. Write full explanations of your lessons, activities, volunteers, snack, etc. Keep receipts for records. This will make future planning much easier (see *Appendix D: Activity Review Questions*).
- ✦ Cost - Be careful of the cost when planning gatherings. No child should ever feel excluded because an activity is too expensive. If you have an outing that is a little more expensive than others, find a discrete way to make arrangements for children whose families may be experiencing financial difficulty to participate. A group fundraiser is always good in this instance (see *Budgeting for Ministry*).

## **HOW TO ORGANIZE HOPE MINISTRY**

Starting HOPE Ministry where one has not existed is a difficult but worthwhile task. Through the guidance of the parish priest, organize a small committee of interested Orthodox Christians. This committee should consist of the priest, youth director, advisors, parents, young adults, a parish council member, and professionals that work with children (teachers, psychologists, educators, doctors, social workers, etc). This group should be diverse in its makeup but united in its mission, gathering initially to plan the first activity, and meeting regularly thereafter to determine goals as well as consider the needs of the ministry.

#### **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

It is important to take an inventory of your community and the children in it. Consider the following as you begin to develop your HOPE Ministry:

- ✦ How many children could this ministry potentially serve?
- ✦ What are these children already involved in that might conflict with HOPE Ministry activities?
- ✦ What do the children like doing with their family and friends?
- ✦ Where do they like going with their family and friends?
- ✦ What do the children want from this ministry?
- ✦ What do parents want from this ministry?
- ✦ How often should this ministry meet?
- ✦ What resources does the parish have to assist this ministry?

By understanding your needs and resources, you can properly determine the goals for HOPE Ministry. A good formula to follow is:

$$\text{Needs} + \text{Resources} = \text{GOALS}$$

### **GOALS AND PLAN**

After completing the assessment of your parish community, develop some preliminary goals. Be realistic and start small—you can build from there. Consider the following questions using information from your *Needs Assessment*:

- ✦ What purpose will this ministry serve?
- ✦ How will we meet this purpose? (meetings, activities, etc.)
- ✦ What resources are available to support the purpose of this ministry?
- ✦ When is the best time to hold activities?
- ✦ What do we want to do for our initial activity?
- ✦ What will be the different roles and responsibilities of people involved?
- ✦ How will we communicate activities?
- ✦ How will we plan activities?
- ✦ What obstacles might we encounter?

### **PUBLICITY**

This committee should organize a list of potential children. To compile this list, look through the parish directory, church school list, baptismal records, and consult with your parish priest. Send an introductory letter to all of these children and their parents letting them know about the formation of HOPE Ministry. Send an invitation to the first activity and follow up with a phone call or personal e-mail from the planning committee. Recruit other families in the community to assist in the personal contact so that the burden does not fall on one person. Make sure to also list the activity in your parish weekly and monthly bulletin.

As your group grows, have different families take turns calling about meetings. It is not necessary to call everyone all the time—but it is important to call new participants or those who don't come as frequently. E-mail is a quick way to send out meeting notices and quick reminders. An excellent resource can be *Evite* invitations [www.evite.com](http://www.evite.com) (*Evite* is a free service which sends event invitations and reminders). This service is invaluable, as it lets you know who has responded and who hasn't even opened the e-mail. The group will grow over time through consistent communication.

### **INITIAL ACTIVITY**

The initial activity should be an activity indicated by the *Needs Assessment* as something the children like to do (picnic, skating, etc.) and it should involve their families. The purpose of this activity is not only fellowship, but also to build interest—start off with a bang. The activity should be free, and having food is always a good idea. At the end of the activity, take ten minutes to go over what the plans are for the ministry, and get input from the families present. People support what they create, so really listen to what the parents and children tell you. Have a flyer for the next meeting ready to hand out at this time. Make sure to gather everyone's email address and contact information. It will most likely take a few activities to get the desired attendance; be patient and don't become discouraged.

### **YEARLY MAINTENANCE**

Participation in HOPE Ministry will vary from year to year. Special efforts should be made to keep the ministry vibrant and healthy. When it is evident that a certain individual is not participating, a special effort should be made to reach out to the child in order to bring them back to the group. Always consult with your parish priest first, as he may be aware of sensitive situations that may be preventing the child's participation.

*Ways to do this are:*

- ✦ Have the parish priest contact them
- ✦ Send a “we miss you” letter
- ✦ Make a home visitation

It is important to make sure that the ministry truly meets the needs of the children who participate. From time to time, and at least annually, evaluate the program to see if it is accomplishing its goals. While adults might think the ministry is meeting its goals, the children might disagree. Both groups need to be happy with the ministry for it to be successful. See *Appendix E: End of the Year Program Evaluation*.

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- ✦ Annual Events - When something works well, make it an annual event. It gives the children something to anticipate.
- ✦ Consistency - Be consistent! This will build your ministry. Hold meetings at the same time each month.

## **PROCEDURE AND PREVENTION**

It is very important that the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team spend time planning how to manage groups in order to prevent disciplinary problems. Creating basic procedures and conveying them clearly to the children will prevent discipline problems. Children need structure and guidelines to feel secure. If purposeful expectations are clearly communicated, children usually do their best to comply. Make the children partners in deciding standards for group behavior, consequences, and boundaries. Ask their help in suggesting ways to manage the group, creating useful procedures together.

*Things to consider...*

- ✦ Create a climate of respect. Rules should be centered on love and respect for self, others and the Church. Through fostering mutual respect between all who participate in your group, fewer problems will arise.
- ✦ Set rules (centered on respect) with the children. Phrase them in a positive way whenever possible (instead of “don’t tease others” say “always be kind”). Post and review them at the meetings.
- ✦ Before major outings, outline expectations. Review them with the group. If it is an overnight trip, you may want to have the children and their parents sign the form after reviewing.
- ✦ Remember this is a ministry for the children. They should have some control and ownership. If they feel like they have no control in the planning of activities and other decision making, they will let you know, sometimes in the form of defiance.
- ✦ Avoid power struggles at all costs. *No one ever wins.*
- ✦ Refrain from making threatening statements that you cannot or do not intend on keeping.
- ✦ Be consistent. Don’t look the other way when there is a problem. Addressing issues immediately even if it seems small will prevent future problems. Remember to follow up on these issues as well.
- ✦ Create a code of conduct not only with the children, but also with their advisors. Guide each group, then exchange and share these codes of conduct so that everyone involved understands the commitments made.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

Compose a code of conduct for HOPE Ministry that meets the needs of your community. This code reflects desirable behaviors of participants. Below is a sample *Hope Code of Conduct*:

As a participant of HOPE Ministry and the Greek Orthodox Church, I realize that I represent my parish and church in all activities. As a participant of HOPE Ministry I agree to meet all of the expectations below:

- ✦ I will come to HOPE Ministry activities ready to have fun, learn, and grow in my faith.
- ✦ I will honor my priest, parents, advisors, and fellow participants.
- ✦ I will listen to instructions given to me by my priest, parents, and advisors at all HOPE Ministry events.
- ✦ I will use kind words.
- ✦ I will give my time, talents, and treasures for the good of the group.

## DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

When things go wrong, how we deal with them is crucial. Above all, remember that the child is a member of the Church, and we must make sure that nothing we do drives them or their family away. The problem should be used as a springboard to bring them closer to Christ and His Church. Therefore, discipline should be approached with great consideration, love and respect.

Remember that no matter what they did, God still loves them. Likewise, no matter how hard it is, you must love them as well. That is not to underscore that what they did was wrong—but God can still love without liking a person's behavior. If you need assistance in dealing with this issue, read the Parable of the Prodigal Son. *Notice the love and forgiveness of the Father.*

*Things to keep in mind...*

- ✦ Never act in anger! Do not let your emotions get the better of you. If you need to wait to discuss the consequences until you can think logically, then wait.
- ✦ Focus on the behavior and address it directly.
- ✦ It is **never** appropriate to use any kind of physical punishment.
- ✦ Get others involved! Parents should be informed about any problems with their child. The priest should be involved and aware of disciplinary actions. In some instances, a peer review committee may be appropriate. In severe cases, it may be necessary to involve social or law enforcement agencies.
- ✦ Listen to the child closely before making any disciplinary decisions. Have the young person explain what he/she did and why. Have him/her tell you why he/she think it is wrong.
- ✦ Pray for and with the child as you consider the best way to deal with the situation.
- ✦ How you deal with a problem is going to depend on the severity of it. You must consider the spiritual well being of the child/children involved. Also consider how this problem affects the entire group.

*Consider the following...*

- ✦ Is this likely to reoccur?
- ✦ Is this child a danger to him or herself? (See the *Legal Issues* section for more information)
- ✦ Does he/she pose a danger to the group?
- ✦ Who needs to be involved in the disciplinary action? (Priest, other children involved, parents, as well as social and law enforcement agencies when necessary)
- ✦ Was anyone hurt physically or emotionally as a result of this?
- ✦ What is the best course of action to deal with this problem?
- ✦ How will we keep this child involved in the life of the church after this?

# LEGAL ISSUES

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Please take precautions when planning transportation, and whenever possible, hire a transportation service. Make sure parents know who will be driving their children. It is highly recommended that a permission form be filled out and signed prior to each event in which the young person will be transported. The Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries is currently developing standardized forms for all parishes to use. When available, they will be posted at: [www.youth.goarch.org](http://www.youth.goarch.org).

Your parish should develop a list of designated drivers. Drivers should be 25 years or older and should have their driving record checked. Parish vans should be checked regularly to assure that they are in good working condition. There should always be more than one adult in each van. For vans or buses, the 1:5 adult to child ratio is recommended for all activities.

## **MEDICAL INFORMATION**

It is also advisable to have medical forms for the children in your group. Collecting them at the beginning of the year is recommended, keeping them in a binder to take along on all outings. If you split the children up into different groups for an outing, make sure the adult group leaders have a copy of the medical forms for each participant in their group. The Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries recommends using the American Camping Association health forms which can be ordered at [www.acacamps.org](http://www.acacamps.org) (look for the Health History & Exam Form For Children/Youth/Adults Form FM08N in their online bookstore).

## **SAFETY**

In all that we do, we must consider the physical safety of the children to whom we minister. Things that seem like fun (like throwing someone into a swimming pool) can result in serious injuries. With all activities, consider the risks involved and ways to minimize them. In addition, prepare for emergency situations and always have a First Aid kit on hand. Host a First Aid/CPR training with all youth workers at the beginning of the year. When traveling, know where the nearest hospital is and keep a list of emergency numbers handy at all times (make sure your parish priest's number is on this).

## **REPORTING ABUSE**

Listening is a powerful way to get to know the children in your group. It is important to remember that as youth ministers we can listen to children but we cannot be their counselors. When serious issues arise, it is your obligation to help that child find professional help through the parish priest and local social agencies.

Deciding when a child needs more help than you can give can be a difficult decision. When in doubt, you should check with your parish priest and/or local social agency for the best course of action. As a youth worker, there are several situations that you are legally required to report to the local social agency. If the child has indicated that they want to harm themselves or commit suicide, a report must be made. You must make a report if a child tells of his/her intent to harm another. Finally, you must report if the young person tells you that they are or have been physically or sexually abused. If a child tells you any of these things, it is imperative that you take action, even if you think they are doing it for attention—leave that to the professionals to discern.

When reporting an incident that a child discloses to you, it is advisable in most instances to let them know you are making the call, and that you are doing so because you care about them. They may be upset with you, but you cannot let this affect your actions. Keep in mind that what you are doing is getting them the help that they desperately need, even if they don't appear to want it at the time.

## **CONTACT**

As youth workers, it is important to remember your role as an advisor to the group. Spending time with children can form close bonds between the advisor and child. It is never appropriate for a child to be alone with an adult advisor. If a child wants to talk privately during an activity, take them to the side where others will not hear your conversation, but where you will still be seen. By taking these simple precautions, you will ensure the safety and integrity of your leadership, the child, and the ministry.

## **INCIDENT REPORTS**

For any incident that occurs at a meeting or activity, a report should be filed. These incidents can include but are not limited to: minor and major injuries, seizures, anything that requires emergency services to be called (i.e. Fire, Ambulance or Police), harassment of one child by another, and chronic disciplinary offences, etc. These reports should be filed in the Church office and forwarded to your Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for their files.

# **BUDGETING FOR MINISTRY**

## **CREATING A BUDGET**

Creating a budget is necessary for every ministry of the church. A budget will help set short and long term goals, defining appropriate resources for the ministry. Below please find items for consideration.

### *Income*

- ✦ Allotted money from the parish funds
- ✦ Fundraising Activities
- ✦ Individual Donations
- ✦ Stewardship of HOPE children

### *Expenses*

- ✦ Charity
- ✦ Refreshments
- ✦ Postage and Printing
- ✦ Outings
- ✦ Transportation
- ✦ Supplies
- ✦ Miscellaneous

## **FUNDRAISING**

There are many simple fundraisers that the children can do to help supplement the expenses of their ministry. Be sure to involve participants in the planning and implementation of the fundraiser appropriately for their age. When the fundraiser is complete, have participants thank all of the necessary contributors to its success—especially the parish council. See the *Resources for Ministry* section for further information on fundraising.

# RESOURCES FOR MINISTRY

There are many resources to aid the development of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. This abbreviated list of resources can assist you in your ministry. For a more complete list, see the *Youth Ministry Resource Guide* available from the Archdiocesan Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE DEPARTMENT

### GUIDELINES

Guidelines are available for Young Adult Ministry, GOYA, JOY, HOPE, Early Childhood and Altar Boy Ministries. These guidelines include information on starting and sustaining a ministry, as well as other invaluable information. These resources will assist you in your parish programming.

### YOUTH MINISTRY RESOURCE GUIDE

Do you need ideas for an activity, information on child abuse, or just a basic book on youth ministry? This resource guide lists helpful books, videos, websites, organizations that will assist those who work with young people.

### THE CHALLENGE

The *Challenge* is the monthly youth and young adult ministry supplement of the Orthodox Observer. This featured section offers articles for young people, parents, and youth workers, as well as upcoming events, youth worker tips and family sessions. Current issues and archives can be found online at [www.youth.goarch.org](http://www.youth.goarch.org).

### TEEN VIDEO SERIES (video and resource guide)

These videos can be used with teenagers, families, parents and youth workers. The resource books contain vital statistics, additional information pertaining to the topic, as well as youth group sessions and retreats to assist both clergy and youth workers. Currently available: *Substance Abuse: Our Kids Are Not Immune*, *Sexual Purity: Purity of Mind, Body, and Soul*, and *Teen Violence: Fight the Good Fight*.

### MINISTRY CURRICULUM

Each curriculum binder provides twelve complete session plans that follow the cycle of the Ecclesiastical Year. Youth Workers will enjoy monthly session plans in complete outline form, with objectives, discussion prompts, questions, activities, resources, and ideas.

### WHERE DOES GOD GO FOR SUMMER VACATION?

This creative book helps breathe life into summer youth programs. It is a workbook written for young people of all ages. The author takes the concepts of faith and fellowship, creating some wonderful activities that are sure to entertain and engage young people while they learn about their Orthodox Faith. The resource book also includes a youth worker/parent's guide.

### THE PLANNER: ORTHODOX DAILY CALENDAR AND RESOURCE GUIDE

Use *The Planner* to keep track of all your schedules. Keep a daily focus on Christ with Scriptural readings, fast days, prayers, saints of the day and inspiration from the Fathers. The Planner follows the Ecclesiastical (church) year beginning in September and ending in August. Spiral bound and PDA versions available.

### EMAIL MINISTRY

*Youth Worker Pulse* provides resources, ideas, and activities for both parents and youth workers. Sent weekly via email, the information offers support for youth ministry following

the monthly themes of The Planner. To sign up for *Youth Worker Pulse*, send an e-mail to [listserv@listserv.goarch.org](mailto:listserv@listserv.goarch.org). Leave the subject blank and in the body of the e-mail type in “subscribe youth” (without the quotation marks). You will receive a confirmation of your subscription shortly thereafter.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE

- ✦ *Our Church and Our Children* by Sophie Koulomizin
- ✦ *Conversations with Children* by Sister Magdalen
- ✦ *The Unschooled Mind* by Howard Gardner

### CURRICULUM AND ICEBREAKERS

- ✦ *Children's Worker's Encyclopedia of Bible Teaching Ideas (Old and New Testament)* by Group Publishing ([www.grouppublishing.com](http://www.grouppublishing.com))
- ✦ *Indoor Action Games for Elementary Children* by Foster, Overholt, and Schultz

### ARTS AND CRAFTS

- ✦ *Bible Story Crafts and Projects Children Love* by Kathy Ross
- ✦ *Crafts and More for Children's Ministry* by Karen Henley & Lois Keffer
- ✦ *Craft Handbook for Children's Church* by Leslea Stringer Lea Bowman

### PRAYER

- ✦ Online Chapel of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America ([www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org))
- ✦ *Daily Prayers for Orthodox Christians* edited by N. Michael Vaporis ([www.hchc.edu/bookstore](http://www.hchc.edu/bookstore))
- ✦ *My Daily Orthodox Prayer Book* edited by Anthony Coniaris ([www.light-n-life.com](http://www.light-n-life.com))

### MUSIC

- ✦ Liturgical Music by Eikona ([www.eikona.com](http://www.eikona.com))
- ✦ *Fruits of the Spirit* by Gigi Shadid
- ✦ *Living in an Orthodox World* by Fr. Michael Shanbour

### FUNDRAISING

- ✦ *Youth Ministry Handbook* Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA ([www.ukrainianorthodoxchurchusa.org/offices/OYM/](http://www.ukrainianorthodoxchurchusa.org/offices/OYM/))
- ✦ *20 Something Ideas for Fundraising* by Orthodox Church in America Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries ([yya.oca.org/TheHub/Activities/20SomethingWays/Fundraising.htm](http://yya.oca.org/TheHub/Activities/20SomethingWays/Fundraising.htm))
- ✦ *Fundraising for Youth: Hundreds of Wonderful Ways of Raising Funds for Youth Organizations* by Dorothy M. Ross

### MAGAZINES

- ✦ *Praxis* published by the Department of Religious Education of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America ([www.religioused.goarch.org](http://www.religioused.goarch.org))
- ✦ *Little Falcons* published by the Serbian Orthodox Archdiocese ([littlefalcons@owc.net](mailto:littlefalcons@owc.net))
- ✦ *Children's Ministry* published by Group Publishing ([www.grouppublishing.com](http://www.grouppublishing.com))

### FOR CHILDREN

- ✦ Orthodox Children's Books Published by Light and Life Publishing ([www.light-n-life.com](http://www.light-n-life.com))
- ✦ Orthodox Children's Books Published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press ([www.svspress.com](http://www.svspress.com))

✦ Orthodox Children's Books Published by Conciliar Press ([www.conciliarpress.com](http://www.conciliarpress.com))

**ARCHDIOCESAN YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY TEAM**

As youth workers, it is important for us to realize that the greatest resource we have is one another. While books, videos, and magazines are helpful to your ministry, creating a network of Orthodox Youth Workers in your parish, region and Metropolis is critical. Reach out to your Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries or the Archdiocesan Department for ideas and further resources. Additionally, they can put you in touch with other youth workers who are involved in the same ministry.

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
83 Saint Basil Road  
Garrison, NY 10524  
Tel: (646) 519-6180 ☎Fax: (646) 519-6191  
[youthoffice@goarch.org](mailto:youthoffice@goarch.org) ? [www.youth.goarch.org](http://www.youth.goarch.org)

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA  
OFFICE OF IONIAN VILLAGE AND CAMPING MINISTRIES  
83 Saint Basil Road  
Garrison, NY 10524  
Tel: (646) 519-6190 ☎Fax: (646) 519-6192  
[ionianvillage@goarch.org](mailto:ionianvillage@goarch.org) ? [www.ionianvillage.goarch.org](http://www.ionianvillage.goarch.org)  
[camp@goarch.org](mailto:camp@goarch.org) ? [www.camp.goarch.org](http://www.camp.goarch.org)

DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
83 Saint Basil Road  
Garrison, NY 10524  
Tel: (646) 519-6183 ☎Fax: (646) 519-6192  
[nyyouth@goarch.org](mailto:nyyouth@goarch.org) ? [www.ny.goarch.org](http://www.ny.goarch.org)

METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
2480 Clairmont Road, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329  
Tel: (404) 634-9345 ☎Fax: (404) 634-2471  
[youth@atlmopolis.org](mailto:youth@atlmopolis.org) ? [www.atlanta.goarch.org](http://www.atlanta.goarch.org)

METROPOLIS OF BOSTON  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
162 Goddard Avenue  
Brookline, MA 02445  
Tel: (617) 277-4742 ☎Fax: (617) 739-9229  
[youthministry@boston.goarch.org](mailto:youthministry@boston.goarch.org) ? [www.boston.goarch.org](http://www.boston.goarch.org)

METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
40 East Burton Place  
Chicago, IL 60610  
Tel: (312) 337-4130 ☎Fax: (630) 654-3514  
[gochicagoyouth@aol.com](mailto:gochicagoyouth@aol.com) ? [www.chicago.goarch.org](http://www.chicago.goarch.org)

METROPOLIS OF DENVER  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
4550 East Alameda Avenue  
Denver, CO 80246-1301  
Tel: (303) 333-7794 ☎Fax: (303) 333-7796  
*denveryouth@goarch.org ☎www.denver.goarch.org*

METROPOLIS OF DETROIT  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
2560 Crooks Road  
Troy, MI 48084  
Tel: (248) 823-2411 ☎Fax: (248) 823-2401  
*youth@detroit.goarch.org ☎www.detroit.goarch.org*

METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
215 East Grove Street  
Westfield, NJ 07090  
Tel: (908) 301-0500 ☎Fax: (908) 3011397  
*youth@nj.goarch.org ☎www.nj.goarch.org*

METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
5201 Ellsworth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15232  
Tel: (412) 621-8543 ☎Fax: (412) 621-1522  
*youth@odpgh.org ☎www.pittsburgh.goarch.org*

METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO  
OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES  
245 Valencia Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Tel: (415) 753-3075 ☎Fax: (415) 753-1165  
*sfyouth@sanfran.goarch.org ☎www.sanfran.goarch.org*

#### **FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT**

As we develop and update our resources and website regularly, we welcome your feedback. If you have questions, ideas, suggestions, or need resources not yet provided, please e-mail the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at [youthoffice@goarch.org](mailto:youthoffice@goarch.org). Let us know how we can better support you and your efforts in Youth Ministry.

It is our fervent prayer that the provided resources, especially these guidelines, offer Youth and Young Adults the opportunity for growth in the faith, development of personal relationships with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and continued strength to strive toward Salvation.

## **APPENDIX A: SAMPLE MEETING SCHEDULE**

5:30 pm	Opening Prayer Icebreaker Music
6:00 pm	Lesson
6:30 pm	Arts and Crafts
7:00 pm	Clean Up Announcement and Business Closing Prayer Fellowship and Refreshments

## **APPENDIX B: SAMPLE DAY RETREAT SCHEDULE**

9:00 am	Arrival and Light Refreshments
9:30 am	Morning Prayers ( <i>involve the young people in the service</i> ) Private Reflection Time: Alone with God
10:00 am	Icebreakers
10:30 am	Session 1
11:00 am	Arts and Crafts
12:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm	Session 2
2:00 pm	Music
3:00 pm	Wrap-Up and Reflection
4:00 pm	Vespers ( <i>involve the young people in the service</i> )

*Other Possible Retreat Activities: Service Projects and Games*

## **APPENDIX C: ACTIVITY REVIEW QUESTIONS**

*If lesson is typed out, please attach and file with this form:*

Meeting/Activity Date:

Time:

Location:

Chaperones:

Designated Drivers:

Participants:

Describe Activity or Lesson: *What was the objective? Was it met? How was the lesson received? What should we do different in the future? Are there any questions that need to be followed up on?*

Materials Needed: *Who brought them? How much were they? If we need any for the future where can we find them?*

Opening and Closing Prayers: *Which ones did we do?*

Icebreakers: *What did we do? How was it received?*

Music or other Multimedia: *What did we use? Where did we get it? Where can it be found for the future? How was it received? Were there any costs associated with it?*

Arts and Crafts: *What was it? How was it received by the children? What would we do different next time? What were the expenses associated with the project (reflect even if someone donated the money)?*

Refreshments: *What was it? Who brought it? Were there any expenses to the ministry? Who will bring the next one?*

Business: *What did you discuss and decide?*

Setup and Cleanup: *How did it go? Did we allot enough time for each? Are there things we should consider more closely when doing this activity again?*

Total Expenses for Activity: *Does anyone still need to be reimbursed? Does anyone need to be thanked for their donation?*

Overall thoughts on the activity: *What worked? What did not work? What would you do differently?*

## **APPENDIX D: END OF THE YEAR PROGRAM EVALUATION**

How often did we have activities this year?

How many people did we have on average?

What children were involved? Who wasn't involved and how can we bring them into the ministry next year?

Did we have activities that incorporated worship, witness, service and fellowship?

What activities did people enjoy? Why were they successful?

How can we expand on these for next year?

What activities did not go so well?

- ✦ What went wrong?
- ✦ How can we change that for next year?

What would we like to see in the future? Brainstorm ideas for:

- ✦ Worship
- ✦ Witness
- ✦ Service
- ✦ Fellowship

What resources and strengths supported the ministry?

- ✦ How can we expand on these?
- ✦ What resources and strengths did we not tap into this year?
- ✦ How can we use these next year?
- ✦ What resources and strengths did we over use this year?
- ✦ How can we avoid this next year?

What problems did we face? How can we solve these and avoid them in the future?

How is our current structure (communication, planning) supporting the ministry?

- ✦ What changes do we need to make?
- ✦ What changes in leadership will we be making?
- ✦ How will we transition for these changes?

## **APPENDIX E: ARE YOU HEADED FOR BURNOUT?**

*Group Magazine (www.groupmag.com)*

July-August, 1996

By Mike Gillespie

I've logged 18 years as a youth minister-18 years learning to outsmart a ministry Nemesis that's claimed many of my friends. That enemy is burnout. Two decades ago, I scoffed at the possibility; now I don't. That's because I've paid a high price for ignoring the warning signs of burnout in my ministry. As you read my story, take a moment to evaluate your ministry. Remember, if you think you're safe from burnout, you're probably its next victim.

### **WARNING SIGN #1: THE SUPERSTAR SYNDROME**

Early in ministry, I was sure hard work was all I needed for success. I felt confident because I already had a good work ethic. Because of my naiveté I didn't realize the church will let you work as many hours as you want. There's always something more to do. A 45-hour week quickly stretched to 50, then to 60, then...I thought I could be everything to everybody. I was particularly vulnerable at youth council planning sessions. We scheduled retreats, lock-ins, and trips with little recognition on my part of what it'd take to pull them off. The kids loved that about me, so I succumbed. My favorite refrain: "Sure, we can do that." One summer, I committed to participate in five group trips and lead two weeklong children's camps. "Sure, I can get it all done." BUNK! I'm learning to work smarter, not longer.

*Ask Yourself: Am I obsessed with getting it all done? Is hard work a sign of successful ministry to me?*

### **WARNING SIGN #2: THE FATIGUE FACTOR**

How many times in the last six months has a church member said, "You look tired." Hey, there's no hiding it. All those all-nighters, retreats, program planning meetings, and visitation trips add up. It surfaces in your posture, your eyes, your energy, and in your enthusiasm. It roars out at people you work with in the form of irritability, sarcasm, and cynicism.

I've learned to appreciate people who tell me when I look tired. I take it as grace. I get some rest, lighten my calendar, and recommit to my exercise routine. I understand that I'm no good to anyone when I'm tired. Excuses such as "That's what ministry is all about" are simply dumb. Recently, a youth group member bluntly told me, "Hey, you look tired. Get some rest." I did. It helped. I'm psyched again.

*Ask Yourself: Do people notice that I'm tired a lot? Have I looked in the mirror lately and moaned, "I'm tired"?*

### **WARNING SIGN #3: MISHANDLING DIFFICULT PEOPLE**

All of us work with difficult people. Every church and every denomination has them. Sometimes I think God has "over blessed" me with them. Difficult people demand a lot of attention. They're high maintenance people. It takes patience and energy to respond well when they come at you with another passionate agenda. How you deal with them can indicate impending burnout. I recall an intense father who had demanding views and a biting, sarcastic attitude. I worked with his two daughters. I monitored how I reacted to him. Sometimes I was highly effective and could work through his criticisms positively. Other times I was poisoned by his attacks, and lingering bitterness got the best of me. What did I discover? It all had to do with ministry energy. When I was in "martyr" mode, I was much less effective with him. When I was energized, I never took his stuff

personally.

*Ask Yourself: Do difficult people often get the best of me? Do confrontations linger and absorb me emotionally?*

#### **WARNING SIGN #4: SPIRITUAL LETHARGY**

When we balance our emotional, spiritual, and physical needs, we set in place a foundation for more effective ministry. Experience has taught me that spiritual needs are easy to neglect. That's why I started taking a yearly hiking vacation in the Colorado Rockies. God has worked on me powerfully on those back-country trails. As ministers, we're always praying for kids, preparing Bible studies, preaching, and so on. And we expect we'll find nourishment by spiritual osmosis. That just isn't true.

To meet my spiritual needs, I must pursue prayer, reading, and quiet time apart from my ministry. If I don't, my kids know. How? I lead Bible studies like a dictator instead of a facilitator. I preach at people instead of with them. Group prayer times are legalistic and boring. And I'm pharisaical—I mean I go through the religious motions while neglecting the Holy Spirit's power.

*Ask Yourself: Do I tend to overlook my own spiritual nurture? Am I feeding myself so little spiritual food that I'm unable to nurture others through my ministry?*

#### **WARNING SIGN #5: AVOIDING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH**

If we don't pursue opportunities for professional growth, we grow stale. And when burnout is lurking, we lose interest in upgrading our skills. Professional growth is important to me for two reasons: (1) I value professional relationships with ministry colleagues. When I plan activities or brainstorm ideas with friends, or when I join support groups, I stay fresh. (2) I appreciate good training opportunities. I use my continuing education allowance to upgrade my skills. I particularly like events that teach me new strategies, not just clarify what I already know. I've not always put an emphasis on professional growth. I realize those were times when the burnout bug was like a tick trying to burrow in. Don't neglect opportunities for professional growth. If you do, that's a burnout warning sign. (Or worse, you think you know it all already!)

*Ask Yourself: Do I see professional growth as just another impossible expectation that must be sacrificed for "the important stuff"?*

#### **WARNING SIGN #6: NEGLECTING PERSONAL NEEDS**

Have you learned that ministry needs always take priority over personal needs? Then you're in for troubled times. It's taken me too long to understand that God never asks me to sacrifice my personal life for professional ministry. I know you could use "take up your cross and follow me" as debate ammunition. But I also know that, at times, I've neglected myself, my family, and my friends. And I believe that's a sin. What a joke—we punish the people we love most to do God's work. That's stupid theology. If you make ministry your mistress, you'll fizzle quickly. I'm grateful I learned before it was too late that God's hopes for my ministry aren't the same as my own expectations. But I've paid dearly for neglecting myself, my family, and my friends.

*Ask Yourself: Do I neglect my personal needs because of ministry demands? Do I neglect my family or friends because the church needs me more?*

If you checked YES on all or most of these warning signs, you're headed for burnout. Please, before it's too late, take the necessary steps to prevent it. Many good people have left ministry because of burnout. You could be one of them.

**A NOTE FROM THE  
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES**

*If this article rings true to you, take some time for yourself before proceeding with your ministry. You cannot minister to others unless you minister to yourself first. Remember that the heart must first pump blood to itself before it can pump it to the rest of the body. If you need assistance or guidance, talk with your parish priest, a fellow youth worker or someone from the Archdiocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team.*