



OFFICIAL CAMPUS MINISTRY ORGANIZATION OF
THE COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

susoccm.org

Chapter Guidebook & Manual

2024-2025

“BUT IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT, WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN.” (1 JOHN 1:7)

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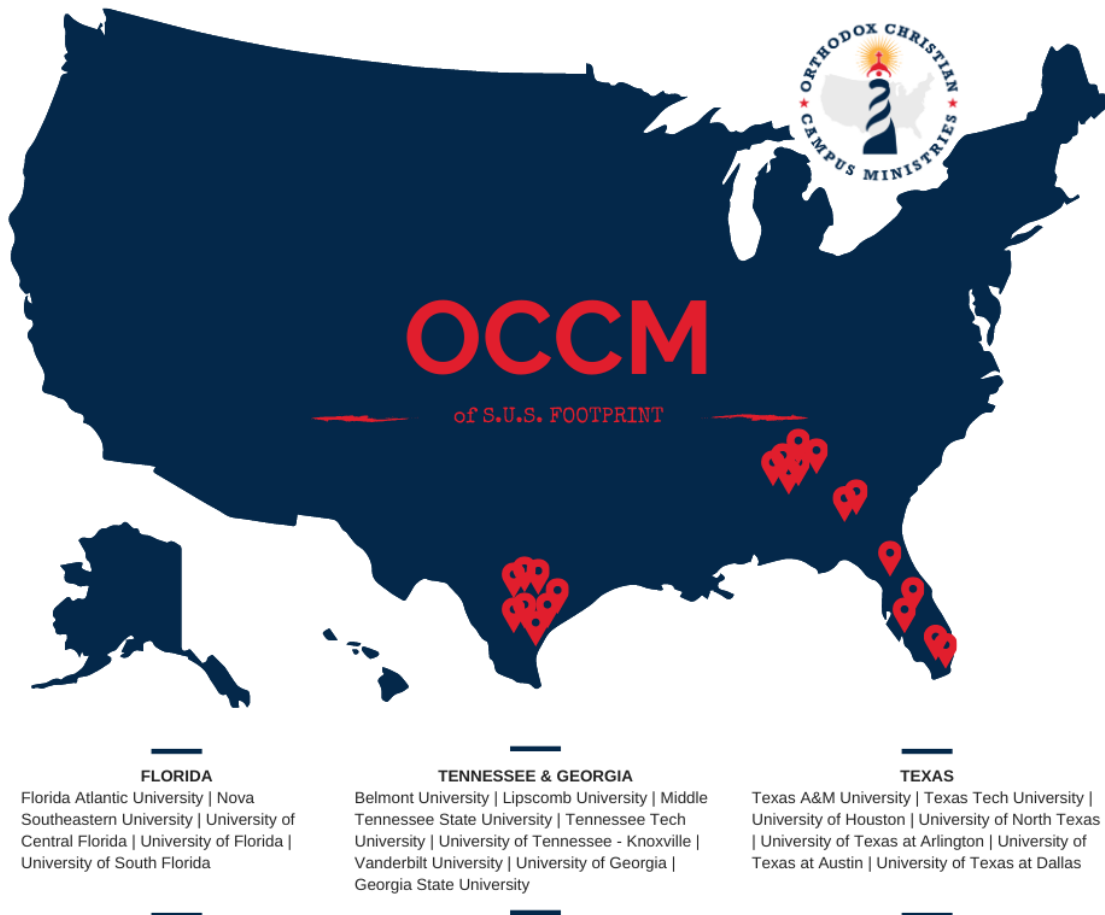


I. About Orthodox Christian Campus Ministries (OCCM)

Recognizing the need for a spiritual support system for young Orthodox Christians during their crucial college years, the [Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox](#)* Churches imparted its blessing to its official campus fellowship – Orthodox Christian Campus Ministries (OCCM) – to begin the work of uniting our youth under one banner where they can come together to meet, pray, learn from one another and to enjoy Christian fellowship. OCCM first rolled out in the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of New York & New England. The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern U.S. joined the national effort and adopted OCCM as the official campus ministry organization under the direct oversight of the diocesan Metropolitan and his designee.

* Oriental Orthodoxy is a communion of six autocephalous (self-governing) Churches: the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

The OCCM organization continues to work with students across the Diocese to establish new Chapters at college and universities where need is identified.



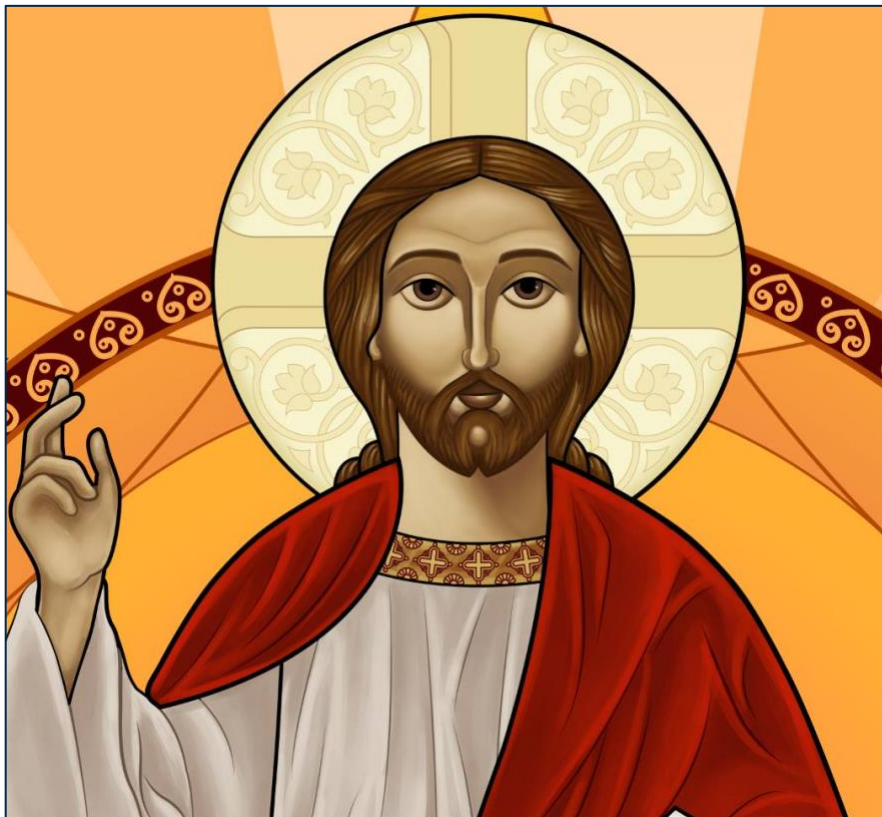
I. a. Mission and Vision

OCCM CONNECTS COLLEGE STUDENTS IN FAITH, PRACTICE, COMMUNITY AND VALUES WITH THE ANCIENT FAITH OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH THROUGHOUT THEIR COLLEGIATE JOURNEY.

Our mission stems from four pillars of the Orthodox Christian life: *orthodoxia*, *orthopraxia*, *orthokoinonia*, and *orthokrisia*. These are: the *correct* belief (faith), *correct* practice/conduct, *correct* community, and *correct* judgment and values.

The vision of OCCM is to:

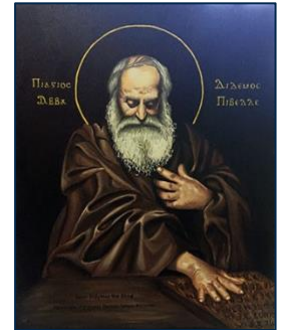
1. Be an integral part of students' spiritual formation during their collegiate journey by nurturing them spiritually, academically, socially, and even emotionally.
2. Inspire and instill in students the commitment to live an Orthodox Christian way of life daily.
3. Assist students who desire to start an Orthodox Christian campus ministry organization with the proper steps and support to achieve that interest successfully.
4. Support the chapters with programming and spiritual leadership to ensure growth in the five pillars of OCCM.
5. Provide the chapters with a forum to share ideas, programs, and events so as to better serve our brothers and sisters.



I. b. Patron Saint

Saint Didymus the Blind – Our Patron Saint

Saint Didymus is a role model for college-aged young adults. He was a self-motivated youth; he was educated, notwithstanding his disability, and he used his knowledge of the Orthodox Christian Faith to defend the Faith. Saint Didymus, being blind, persevered to overcome life and academic challenges. He paved a track of education and service, and he disciplined renowned scholars and historians. He held firm to the truth of the Orthodox Church through the substance of his teachings and works.



The Life of Saint Didymus the Blind

Saint Didymus the Blind (c. 313 – 398) was a Coptic Orthodox Church theologian of Alexandria. He was known as ‘the Blind Seer of Alexandria’ and was regarded as the foremost Christian scholar and influential leader of the 4th century. Didymus lost his eyesight at the age of four, but due to his ardent desire for learning, he invented the method of engraved writing for reading with his fingers, fifteen centuries before Braille. By this method, he learned by heart the Holy Bible and the Church doctrines and displayed such a miracle of intelligence as to learn perfectly dialectics and even geometry, sciences which especially require sight. He became dean of the Catechetical School of Alexandria at a very young age and he remained in that position for about 50 years. Among his disciples were Saint Gregory of Nazianzen, Saint Jerome, Saint Palladius, and Rufinus. During his time, the School was accessible for blind students as they could study through a system in which reading letters were engraved into the surface of wood.

Saint Athanasius highly esteemed him. Saint Jerome spoke of him not as “the blind” but as “the Seer”. The orator Libanius wrote to an official in Egypt: “*You cannot surely be ignorant of Didymus, unless you are ignorant of the great city wherein, he has been night and day pouring out his learning for the good of others.*” In his dispute with the Arians, he conquered them. Saint Anthony said to Saint Didymus: “*Do not be sad that you have no eyesight with which the animals, and even the insects, share, but remember that you have divine insight with which you can see the light of divinity.*”

He was extolled by his contemporaries and by the historians of the following century. Rufinus was six years his pupil. Saint Palladius visited him four times in ten years. Saint Jerome came to him for a month in order to have his doubts resolved with regard to difficult passages of Scripture. Saint Didymus wrote many works: Commentaries on all the Psalms, the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John as Against the Arians, and On the Holy Spirit, which Saint Jerome translated into Latin. He also wrote on Isaiah, Hosea, Zechariah, Job, and many other topics.

Saint Didymus stayed a layman and never became part of the clergy. He lived the life of an ascetic, although he remained in the city and did not live in the desert as other ascetics did. Saint Palladius narrates a story told by Saint Didymus: one day, while he was fasting and thinking about the persecutor of his time, called Julian, he fell asleep in his chair. In a dream, he saw white horses running in different directions, whilst the riders cried out, ‘Tell Didymus, today at the seventh hour Julian died! Arise and eat, and inform Athanasius the bishop, that he may also know it.’ Saint Didymus noted the exact time and it happened just as it was foretold in his dream.

He died at the age of 85. With his prayers, may our Lord watch over OCCM and its ministries.



I. c. Diocesan Leadership Structure

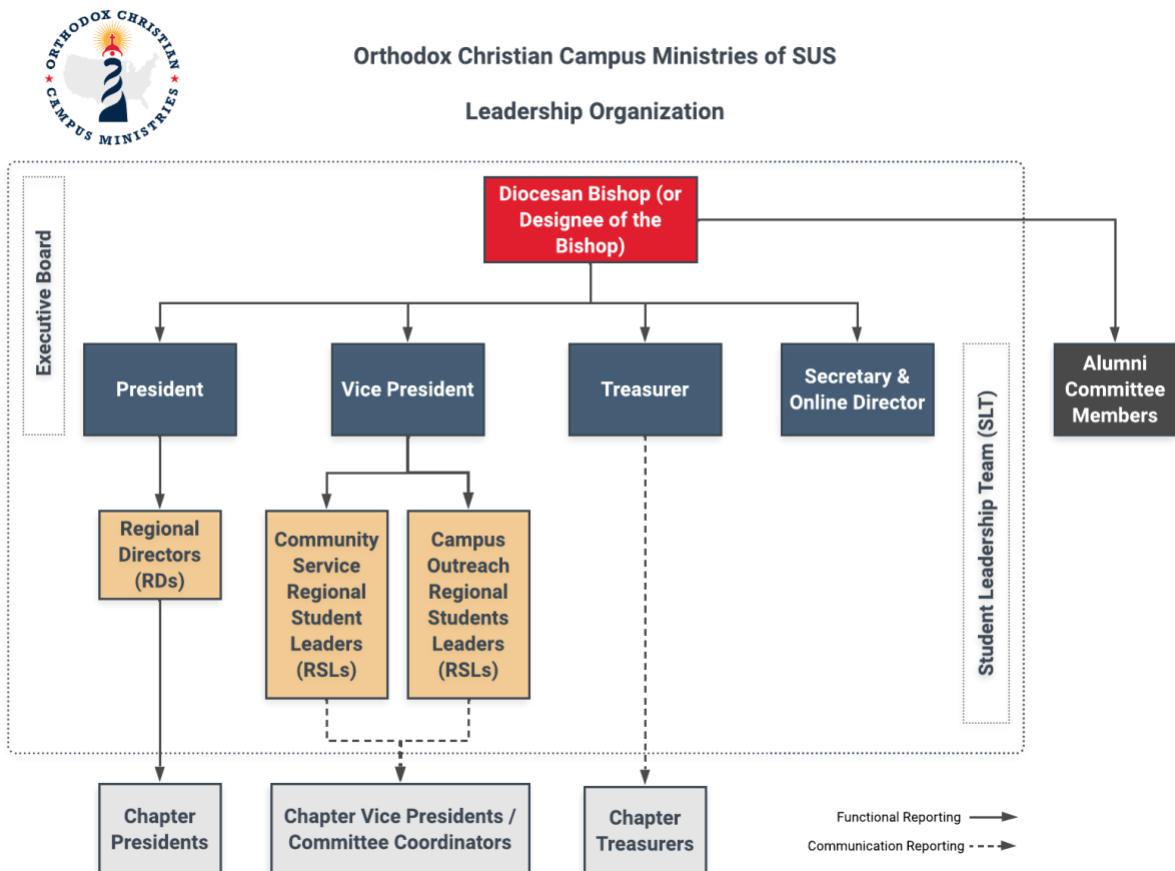
EPISCOPAL OVERSEER

His Eminence Metropolitan Youssef, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

OCCM CLERGY ADVISORY BOARD

Fr. James Gendi, St. Mary & Archangel Michael – Houston, TX; OCCM Designee of the Metropolitan
Fr. Jerome Maximous, St. Mary & St. George Coptic Orthodox Church – Tallahassee, FL
Fr. Daniel Ebrahim, St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church - Nashville, TN
Fr. Jacob Gendy, St. Philopateer Coptic Orthodox Church - Dallas, TX

Accordingly, Fr. Jerome is the Regional Clergy Advisor for Florida; Fr. Jacob is for Texas; and Fr. Daniel is for Tennessee and Georgia.





I. d. Student Leadership Team (SLT)

The Student Leadership Team comprises the OCCM Executive Board (President, Vice President, Secretary & Online Director, and Treasurer); the OCCM Regional Directors (Florida, Tennessee & Georgia, and Texas); and the OCCM Regional Student Leaders. For a current list of our SLT, go to www.susoccm.org.

Selection and Duties of OCCM Student Leadership Team

- The candidate is selected to serve a one- to two-year term.
- The selection process is facilitated through expression of interest by the candidate(s), a series of interviews, and final selection.
- Interested and qualified candidates for the position will apply to the Designee of the Metropolitan when an announcement is made publicly to the OCCM organization.
- Candidates shall complete an online application outlining their interest to serve this role.
- Qualified candidates will be offered an interview with the Designee of the Metropolitan and the sitting SLT member for the role. The selected candidate will be announced upon final selection.

Duties of the Executive President:

1. Oversee the Regional Directors and hold a Regional Directors leadership monthly call.
2. Hold a monthly conference call with the Executive Board and the Designee of the Metropolitan.
3. Represent OCCM before all entities.
4. Oversee all OCCM paperwork and meetings, and submit all business in writing, once per month, to the Designee of the Metropolitan.
5. Preserve the OCCM Constitution and Bylaws.
6. Oversee the activities and planning of the **OCCM Summit** program.

Duties of the Executive Vice President:

1. Work together with the OCCM President in the completion of duties.
2. Oversee each Committee and the Chairpersons of the Committees.
3. Ensure that a permanent record of all OCCM business be sent to all OCCM members, including information submitted to OCCM Leadership through the Designee of the Metropolitan.
4. Keep an accurate record of OCCM committee programming and event attendance.
5. Oversee the activities of the **OCCM Mission** program.
6. If the president is unable to fulfill their duties, the OCCM Vice President will assume the role of OCCM President.

Duties of the Executive Secretary & Online Director:

1. Schedule Executive Board monthly calls and other ad hoc meetings.
2. Take meeting minutes at all Executive Board meetings and submit them in writing to the Executive Board within 24 hours.



3. Maintain the OCCM Executive Board tasks list, follow up on progress with tasks owners, update the board on progress during meetings.
4. Maintain a database of all OCCM Chapter leadership contacts.
5. Draft all formal internal and external communications/letters.
6. Build and maintain a positive online image for OCCM and for expanding our social media presence and impressions.
7. Create content and rolling activity for OCCM's media channels (Facebook, Instagram, Blog).
8. Coordinate a pool of blog contributors to stage and boost blog contributions.
9. Maintain an integrated relationship with the Regional Directors, Committee Chairpersons, and other SLT members to highlight OCCM programs and initiatives and Chapter events.

Duties of the Executive Treasurer:

1. Maintain the integrity of the organization's EIN.
2. Update and maintain the OCCM ledger and keep a record of all Chapter bank accounts.
3. Provide training and maintain a flow of communication with Chapter Treasurers to ensure compliance with all organizational regulations.
4. Seek business sponsorships and spearhead donation efforts.
5. Work with the Secretary & Online Director to promote time-sensitive online fundraising campaigns: Facebook Giving Tuesday, eBay for Charity, PayPal Giving Fund.

Duties of the Regional Director:

1. Oversee all OCCM activities of the Chapters in their respective region and ensure they abide by the OCCM guidelines.
2. Hold a monthly call with the Chapter Presidents of the region and maintain communication with them, keeping them up to date with concerns, initiatives, activities, events, retreats, etc.
3. Preside a team of officers across the region and plan the regional Spring Break retreat.
4. Ensure the adoption and enforcement of OCCM Constitution and By-laws in the Region.
5. Maintain contact with the Secretary & Online Director to promote regional events and highlight success stories through social media.

Duties of the Regional Student Leaders:

1. Participate in respective committee meetings for planning the strategy for the year.
2. On a regular basis, check in with the Chapters on their progress with the Committee's goals while providing support as needed and inform them of the Committee's ongoing activity.
3. Keep an accurate record of OCCM Committee and OCCM event attendance.

Please see the “*OCCM SLT Role Description*” document for full description of duties.

Attendance of Conference Calls for the Student Leadership Team

All OCCM leadership are expected to attend OCCM General Business Meetings as well as their assigned meetings. The assigned meetings and their respective members are outlined below. If a member of any meeting cannot attend the meeting, they shall contact and notify in advance the individual presiding over the respective meeting. Three (3) unexcused absences will result in the removal of the member from their role. The runner-up for the role may be notified to take the position, or an election may be conducted to fill the position.

1. OCCM Executive Board Conference Call

The Executive President shall lead this call.

- Designee of the Metropolitan
- Executive President
- Executive Vice President
- Executive Treasury
- Executive Secretary & Online Director

2. OCCM Regional Director Conference Call

The Executive President shall lead this call.

- Designee of the Metropolitan
- All Regional Directors

3. OCCM Community Service Committee Conference Call

The Executive Vice President shall lead this call.

- Designee of the Metropolitan
- CS Regional Student Leaders (RSLs)

4. OCCM Campus Outreach Committee Conference Call

The Executive Vice President shall lead this call.

- Designee of the Metropolitan
- CO Regional Student Leaders (RSLs)

5. OCCM Regional Leadership Conference Call

The respective Regional Director shall lead this call.

- Regional Clergy Advisor
- Chapter Presidents of the region
- Campus Outreach RSLs and Community Service RSLs of the region





I. e. Committees

Community Service Committee

The Community Service Committee is a team of three dedicated Regional Student Leaders (RSLs) that serve to guide the OCCM chapters to make a difference in our communities. Each RSL is responsible for a region (one or more states), in which he/she maintains communication with the Chapters of the respective state. The purpose of the Community Service Committee is to ensure that OCCM is doing community service in a unified approach that will serve OCCM's mission. The Committee assists Chapters that need help in finding ways to serve and give back to the community.

Campus Outreach Committee

The Campus Outreach Committee is a team of three dedicated Regional Student Leaders (RSLs) that guide the OCCM chapters to establish outreach efforts on campus, raising awareness on the Orthodox Christian Faith and expanding the OCCM footprint on campus. Each committee member is responsible for one region (one or more states), in which he/she maintains communication with the Chapters of the respective region.

The mission of the Campus Outreach Committee is to cultivate the message of the Orthodox Christian Faith on campus by fostering a community of discipleship and equipping laborers to raise awareness of the Orthodox Christian Faith through participation in campus initiatives. The Campus Outreach Committee aims to expand the footprint of OCCM through supporting the greater university population in developing awareness on the Orthodox Christian Faith, fostering an edifying environment of discipleship through small groups, and upholding OCCM as a pillar in supporting non-collegiate activities/campus initiatives for the average student.

Alumni Committee

The Alumni Committee is a team of 3-4 dedicated OCCM alums that serve to be the main aid to the OCCM Organization in supporting its goals and to strengthen the ties between alumni, the community, and OCCM. This is to foster a spirit of loyalty and to promote the welfare of OCCM throughout the generations of OCCM alums.

The goals of the Alumni Committee are set to serve OCCM Alums and OCCM Members:

1. Connect alums with each other and with current OCCM communities.
2. Foster a spirit of networking and mentorship amongst alums to serve each other and to serve current OCCM members.
3. Innovate the methods of Orthodox Christian learning on campus and in the chapters.
4. Establish a sustainable stream of charity giving to provide scholarship opportunities.



I. f. Programs

OCCM Summit

Orthodox Leadership Training

OCCM Summit is a leadership training for Orthodox Christian college students. OCCM Summit is focused to train elected OCCM student leaders and OCCM members interested to learn what it means to be an Orthodox leader and run for leadership positions in OCCM, the Church, and the professional world. More info at www.susoccm.org/summit

OCCM Summit is under the leadership oversight of the OCCM President.

OCCM Mission

Orthodox Service from the Heart

OCCM Mission is our global mission outreach arm. OCCM Mission partners with existing mission groups to plan annual mission trips where participating OCCM students learn the work of a missionary, participate in ministry, and mission efforts, and bring many encouragements from this ministry back to their local Chapter and parish. More info at <https://www.susoccm.org/mission>

OCCM Mission is under the leadership oversight of the OCCM Vice President.



I. g. Organization and Committee Goals

Annually over the summer, the Executive Board, the Regional Directors and the Committees hold a series of meetings to review OCCM's accomplishments over the year, areas of improvements and focus, and thus develop the goals for the following year. In addition to specific goals we develop in annual planning, OCCM's core goals are as follows.

Organization Goals

1. Foster an environment of fellowship in the Chapter through member outreach, social events, and community involvement.
2. Seek out fellow youth distanced from the church and foster a welcoming environment amongst the members.
3. Cultivate efforts for campus outreach and engagement with youth of the sister Oriental Orthodox Churches.
4. Raise the standards of learning in Chapter meetings through strong biblical education and church perspective on modern issues.
5. Secure sustainable channels of donations through charitable contributions and sponsorships.
6. Maintain a pristine social media presence aligned with OCCM's vision and mission, and set ongoing social media programming to increase awareness, drive traffic to the website and social media outlets, and boost engagement through blog contributions.
7. Actively work on identifying and preparing new student leaders to succeed exiting Student Leadership Team (SLT) members.

Campus Outreach Committee Goals

1. Train the Chapters on how to properly impart the message of Orthodox Christianity through campus outreach efforts including discipleship small groups, tabling, and approved collaborative campus initiatives.
2. Develop a comprehensive plan for campus outreach that extends not only to campus engagement but also to our disconnected youth and youth of the Oriental Orthodox Church.
3. Develop annual campus outreach programming and goals for the Chapters and equip them with the tools and resources to be successful in this journey.

Community Service Committee Goals

1. Chapter-Level: Serve the community by setting a target number of service hours per Chapter each semester. Chapters will have individual goals based on a variable number of hours increase compared to the previous year.
2. All Chapters: Select a diocese-level service project per semester to unite all Chapters to share in one specific service.
3. Plan the annual mission trip for the summer.



II. Starting a New Chapter

II. a. Getting Started

The very first step to start a new Chapter at a university is to take initiative and get a headcount of potential members. Find out the requirements for starting a student organization from the university's student organization center and ensure that the group can meet those requirements. Contact will then need to be made with the OCCM Regional Director that is accountable for the region and this information will need to be relayed to them.

II. b. Chartering Your Chapter

The Regional Director will then relay this information to the OCCM Executive Board who may then contact you in order to gather more information and walk you through any additional steps necessary to get chartered.

II. c. Registering on Campus

Once you are chartered, you may then proceed with registering the organization with your university. Each university has a different procedure, so you must follow the procedure outlined by your university. You may download the Constitution template [from the [Chapter Resources](#) page, under "Managing Your Chapter"], and edit it to fit the guidelines of your university. **Any edited form of the constitution must be sent to the OCCM President at president@susoccm.org for approval prior to being presented to the university.**

II. d. Engaging Your Members

Once you have finished setting up your Chapter, you have to make sure your members are engaged. Make sure you set a meeting time that is consistent and that is favorable for members' availability; that way members are aware of what to expect. Including socials and team-building events along with your normal meetings goes a long way in keeping members engaged. If you need help coming up with ideas for these socials, feel free to reach out to your Regional Director.

Try to engage with the student body at your university by tabling and inviting students to the meetings. Joining a well-established group can be intimidating, so make sure new members feel welcome by introducing them to the group and remembering their names.



III. Chapter Management

III. a. Chapter Leadership

The group of students in an OCCM Chapter is the nucleus of the OCCM life on campus. The group is facilitated and guided by a team which includes elected student leaders, a clergy (spiritual) advisor, and a faculty advisor (may not be required for all universities).

Chapter Leadership Roles & Responsibilities

The role of the OCCM Chapter President is to provide inspiration and leadership to fellow students and guide the direction of their Chapter as prescribed from the OCCM diocesan organization, through the active participation of their fellow members. The Chapter President is the main contact for students on campus and should direct, with the input of the other Chapter members, the decisions made regarding all aspects of the group's activities and life.

Duties of the Chapter President:

1. Seeks the spiritual direction and input of the Chapter Clergy Advisor regarding the spiritual life of the Chapter.
2. Engages the Chapter Faculty Advisor with hopes of expanding awareness of OCCM in the larger campus community and seeking opportunities for Orthodox Christianity to have a voice on campus through seminars, lectures, and participation in panels.
3. Responsible for weekly announcements to the chapter for upcoming meetings or events.
4. Leads officer meetings, ensuring that all tasks are completed by the officers.
5. Supports, encourages, and helps with anything the officers may need.
6. Holds regular meetings with Chapter Officers and the Clergy Advisor to stay on track with the Chapter's spiritual, service, and outreach plans.
7. Must attend all OCCM chapter and regional events and meetings.
8. Participates in a monthly conference call with the Regional Director and other Chapter Presidents of the region, as well as the Regional Student Leaders for CO and CS of the region.
9. Represents the OCCM Chapter before all entities.

Duties of the Chapter Vice President:

1. Responsible for coordinating the weekly meeting: a) contacts and confirms speakers; b) reserves meeting rooms/space for meetings and events; c) upkeeps chapter calendar with events detail; d) plans Tasbeha nights (if applicable).
2. Promotes member involvement in community service and campus outreach events.
3. Oversees the Campus Outreach and Community Service Coordinators and their activities.
4. If the President is unable to fulfill his/her duties, the Vice President will assume the role of the President.



Duties of the Chapter Treasurer:

1. Must read and follow the OCCM Financial Policy as outlined in the *OCCM Guidebook & Manual*.
2. Works diligently to obtain funding from the University.
3. Works with the President to create the budget plan for the semester and upcoming events.
4. Coordinates buying food for the meetings (if applicable) or delegates to one of the members.
5. Responsible for keeping track of all finances in detail, keeping record in a ledger of all income and expense, and making them available to the OCCM Executive Treasurer upon request.
6. Works with the OCCM Executive Treasurer to identify best solution for the chapter in keeping the income collected. Absolutely, no personal bank accounts to be used.
7. Ensures fundraising activities are in full compliance with diocesan guidelines as outlined in the *OCCM Guidebook & Manual*.
8. Submits the ledger to the President and OCCM Executive Treasurer at the end of each academic year.

Duties of the Chapter Secretary & Social Media Coordinator:

1. Records meeting minutes in the Chapter Officers meeting, assigns action items, and follows up to ensure closure of tasks by the set timeline.
2. Maintains a database/list of chapter members including full name, phone number, email, program of study, and year in college and provide to the Youth Outreach & Fellowship Coordinator.
3. Responsible for taking attendance at each meeting and event.
4. Monitors the allocation of points per member, if such a system is in place for the Chapter.
5. Carefully follows and enforces the Social Media Policy as outlined in the *OCCM Guidebook & Manual*.
6. Upkeeps social media, ensuring awareness on chapter meetings, events, and highlights of completed events, and creates related advertisement material (i.e., flyers, posts).
7. Manages online presence, including but not limited to social media, and ensure that all officers and representative figures for the organization maintain a good Christian image online.

Duties of the Campus Outreach Coordinator:

1. Responsible for coordinating and executing campus outreach events per the outlined OCCM annual plan.
2. Reports and records chapter events in the respective Google Form for the OCCM Campus Outreach Committee.
3. Stays in regular communication with the Regional Student Leader for Campus Outreach, provides updates as necessary, and seeks assistance when needed to ensure fulfillment of the semester plan for Campus Outreach.
4. Reports directly to the Chapter Vice President.



Duties of the Community Service Coordinator:

1. Responsible for coordinating and executing monthly community service events to reach the target goal hours for the semester.
2. Reports and records chapter events in the respective Google Form for the OCCM Community Service Committee.
3. Stays in regular communication with the Regional Student Leader for Community Service, provides updates as necessary, and seeks assistance when needed to ensure fulfillment of the semester plan for Community Service.
4. Reports directly to the Chapter Vice President.

Duties of the Youth Outreach and Fellowship Coordinator:

1. Works closely with the President and Secretary & Social Media Coordinator to encourage members to attend chapter meetings and events.
2. Responsible for setting up a system for chapter officers to reach out to less active members.
3. Develops small groups of invested members to build fellowship with disconnected members.
4. Responsible for planning chapter events and social gatherings to promote member outreach.
5. Reports directly to the Chapter President.



Nomination and Election Process of Chapter Leadership

1. The OCCM Chapter Leadership is elected to a one-year term.
2. The nomination-to-election process shall start in the month of March. Campaigning is not permitted.
3. The Chapter President will announce the start date of the process with plenty advance notice to the members of the Chapter.
4. Nomination is through **self-expression only**. A *Self-Expression Questionnaire Google Form* is sent out to all chapters to kick off the process. There will be one unique form per region.
5. A vetting process is then conducted to examine the qualifications of the applicants.
 - a. Step 1: The Regional Director and Chapter President along with the Chapter Clergy Advisor to vet the applicants to ensure qualifications are met.
 - b. Step 2: The Clergy Advisor will vet the applicants with their parish priest and their Father Confessor.
 - c. Step 3: The final list is sent to the Regional Clergy Advisor for final sign-off.
6. The ballot for the Chapter is then created and the election date is announced to the Chapter with ample time ahead of the election date.
7. The election is then conducted online per the announced date.
8. The results are sent to the Regional Clergy Advisor and Clergy Advisor.
9. The new officers are announced to the Chapter.

Qualifications to Run for Chapter Leadership

- Must be an active OCCM member for at least one semester; that is, a member who has actively attended meetings and participated in Chapter events and initiatives.
- Must be an active member of one of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, with regular attendance of the Divine Liturgy.

Voting

- All registered and active OCCM Chapter members are eligible to vote.
- The voting member must be an OCCM member for at least a semester to participate in the voting process.
 - Non-OCCM members are not permitted to participate in the election. If someone votes who is not an OCCM member, the voting process shall be repeated.
- The voting process is to be overseen by the Regional Clergy Advisor and Regional Director.

Unplanned Vacancy: Should one of the members of the Chapter Leadership team be deemed unfit to serve by the other members of the leadership team during their term, or steps down from their position, a replacement is to be appointed by majority vote of the Clergy Advisor.



Chapter Clergy Advisor (Spiritual)

As it is generally required to have a Faculty Advisor for a student organization to be registered with a university, likewise an OCCM Chapter must have a Chapter Clergy Advisor. The role of the Clergy Advisor is to guide the spiritual growth of the students and connect them to the Church life.

The Clergy Advisor must be a priest of the Diocese, or otherwise approved by the Metropolitan or his designee, should a diocesan parish not exist in the university's town. The Clergy Advisor is usually a priest from a local church nearby the college/university. Priests from the six Oriental Orthodox Churches may, and are encouraged to, participate in the ministry of the established OCCM Chapters in the Southern Coptic Diocese and by signing a memorandum of understanding. The local SUS Diocese Clergy can coordinate this effort by contacting the Designee of the Metropolitan.

The Clergy Advisor shall work to integrate the college experience into the life in Christ:

1. Actively seek the input of the students and encourage them to take responsibility for the planning and execution of Chapter events, and mentor the student leaders to become fully responsible for themselves and their peers as grounded Orthodox Christians.
2. Oversee and ensure the lectures, speakers, and activities are in line with the Faith and Traditions of the Coptic Orthodox Church.
3. Attend frequently the OCCM Chapter events (i.e., Bible study, discussion, meals, volunteering, social events), as well as regional events, confirming the Church's commitment to the students' growth and success.
4. Approve and attend the retreats planned by the Chapter.
5. Advise on spiritual matters; provide spiritual counseling and sacramental confession.
6. Liturgical services when no local parish is available.
7. Create a home in the local parish for college students (e.g., involving the students in established ministries, recognizing new students and new graduates, connecting parishioners / OCCM alumni to students).

Communication and Awareness

It is necessary for all Clergy to be on-board with OCCM, its mission and its presence in the Diocese. As the Clergy is aware of their youth graduating from high school, it is the perfect opportunity to promote OCCM, connect the youth and encourage them to be involved with their local Chapter on campus.

There is no term commitment for a Clergy Advisor. However, should the Clergy Advisor wish to withdraw from his role in OCCM, it is kindly requested to:

- a. Discuss the matter with the Designee of the Metropolitan;
- b. Check with other local priests that may be interested to take on the role; and
- c. Transition information and history of your role and oversight to the new Clergy Advisor to ensure a smooth transition.



III. b. Communication

College students live busy lives, and one of the most common problems OCCM leaders face is how best to communicate with their Chapter. Clear, consistent communication can be the difference between a struggling Chapter and a thriving community that makes a lasting impact on their university and their youth community. We suggest you adapt the following three steps with your OCCM members.

1. Create a Contacts List

It's crucial to have a spreadsheet (roster) where you keep updated information on every student that is part of your Chapter—even the students who rarely attend meetings. A good way to do this is to set up a simple form where students enter their name, year in school, email address, and phone number. You might also consider asking their major or their hometown!

Tip: During the summer, it is a great time to start collecting contact information from students you know on campus or that are incoming in the Fall.

2. Create a Facebook Group and/or an Instagram Account

You may have a couple students in your Chapter who aren't on Facebook or Instagram, but chances are most of your members are. Social media is a great way to give any student the ability to start a conversation online, and it's pretty simple to publicize events on Facebook or Instagram. Please be sure to adhere strictly by the **OCCM Code of Ethics** for all social media.

3. Set up a Communication Schedule

Whether it's just you or a team of volunteers contacting students in your Chapter, you need an intentional communication schedule so that you know when to contact each student. Consistency also benefits the students in your Chapter, because they have regular meeting reminders to rely on. Here are some suggestions:

- **Email your Chapter.** A quick email five or six days before your next meeting will let your members know what's coming up next and gives them plenty of time to plan ahead. Try not to send more than one email a week on average, because it makes each email come across as a little more important.
- **Create a Facebook Event.** Make sure the event is created through your group, so group members are automatically invited. If you do this a couple of days after you send the email, the event invitation serves as a friendly reminder to your Chapter members about your next meeting. You're also likely to reach many students who may not yet be on your email list.
- **Send a Text Reminder.** If you do this about six hours before your meeting starts, it serves as a great personal reminder and encourages last-minute planners to attend. You can even use apps, such as [GroupMe](#), to easily connect all your Chapter members using just their cell number.

Commit to a strategy that you think you can maintain and see what effect it has on your attendance.



III. c. Funding Your Chapter

Funding OCCM Chapters relies on charitable contributions and acceptable means of funding. OCCM is a 501(c)(3) non-profit incorporated under the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States. Efforts to generate income for OCCM must comply with the teachings of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the guidance of the Diocesan Metropolitan. Therefore, we have compiled a list of ideas to appropriately raise funding. Should have any questions, send them our way at treasurer@susoccm.org.

#1: University Funding

You can find out if student activities or the campus ministry department at your university offers funding options for recognized organizations. SGA and Senate offer many opportunities for student organizations to request funding. Be sure to check out your university's SGA website for the criteria and the process to request funding. It's usually a process, so get on it early on!

#2: Setting up Donation Streams

Chapters are encouraged to establish donation streams and student tithing to help support their Chapter ministry. Chapters will not set a minimum amount for donation but reserve this decision to the members. **Member donations/tithing are by no means mandatory for participating / remaining a member of the Chapter.** It is the Chapter treasurer's responsibility to make this known to the Chapter members. Student tithing and/or donations give undergraduate and graduate students alike the opportunity to donate and give a portion of their income to the service for the benefit of all.

Will God really bless me if I tithe?

Yes! *"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of Hosts 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.'" (Malachi 3:10).*

Does my giving make a difference? What if I do not give very much? I am just a student and don't make much money?

Yes, it absolutely does! The Holy Bible is filled with examples of people who could only give a little that God miraculously blessed and magnified: *"And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.' So she said, 'As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.' And Elijah said to her, 'Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.'" So she went away and did according to the word of*



Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:11-16).

Also,

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood." (Mark 12:41-44)

You can also work with the local parish to set up a fund through the parish. **This is totally at the parish priest's discretion.**

#3: Ideas of Appropriate and Approved Funding Opportunities

- **Sponsors:** Cold calling people to ask for donations/sponsorships. (Similar to how people go about raising money for mission trips.) Donations can either be monthly or a one-time special gift. Follow-up with 'thank you' letters, monthly newsletters, etc. to make sure the sponsor feels included and appreciated.
- **Recycle:** Recycle Place collects ink cartridges (both ink-jet and laser) and pays up to \$4.50 for each. Once you register your organization online, the company helps you with the collecting process by providing you with brochures and guidelines. Once you have collected at least eight to 10 lasers or 30 inkjet cartridges, you send them to the company, which will later send money to your group or organization. Create a drive within schools, businesses, churches, campus, libraries, etc. to collect ink cartridges.
- **Percentage Nights:** Get your local Chapter to tell family/friends/share on social media about percentage nights. Partner with your restaurant of choice and collect a certain percentage of sales for your organization. (Example: partner with Chipotle for 10% of all sales between 5-7 pm if you mention "OCCM" or show them a flier.)
- **Donation Jar:** Ask businesses to sponsor your event by allowing you to set up a donation jar at their place of business. Place them in several local businesses. Collect your donations once a week or more until your group has reached its' fundraising goal.
- **Shoe Drive:** In a shoe drive, individuals can donate gently worn pairs of shoes to local Chapter. Then, an organization like Funds2Orgs can pick the shoes up from your location. With Funds2Orgs in particular, the shoes your nonprofit collects are sent to small business owners in developing nations to support their small businesses. After the shoes are sorted, they'll write a check that can go right back to the local Chapter.



III. d. Finance and Treasury Policy

Background and 501(c)(3) Guidelines

- There are different types of entities that qualify for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. OCCM of SUS is registered as a “religious organization”. Therefore, all financial activity should relate to the religious organization’s purpose. No one’s private interests should benefit from any financial transaction. No one should be compensated, nor should there be any advocacy of political parties.
- The IRS has very clear guidelines on how the organization’s tax-exemption status should be maintained. The IRS describes a 501(c)(3) as a “charitable organization” in the colloquial. Thus, members must perceive OCCM as such.
 - “The term *charitable* is used in its generally accepted legal sense and includes relief of the poor, the distressed, or the underprivileged; advancement of religion; advancement of education or science; erecting or maintaining public buildings, monuments, or works; lessening the burdens of government; lessening neighborhood tensions; eliminating prejudice and discrimination; defending human and civil rights secured by law; and combating community deterioration and juvenile delinquency.”
- Before any transaction of money takes place, OCCM must make sure this transaction would be described by the IRS as *charitable*. **The transaction cannot be operated for the benefit of private interests.**
- In the instance of an IRS audit, all of OCCM’s transactions may be scrutinized to make sure all transactions are under the 501(c)(3) guidelines. Our organization will operate in a way that will always be prepared for an audit.
- Improper handling of money specifically includes overcompensation or misuse of organization assets. In these cases, the IRS can fine organization members up to 200 *per cent* of the benefit received. It is vital that these guidelines are understood and respected.

Finance and Treasury Policy: Executive Framework

- A single regional bank account has been set up for each region of the Diocese. That is: a single bank account in Florida will allow the Executive OCCM Treasurer to responsibly track all transactions and keep things under one umbrella. Likewise, a single bank account in Texas and another in Tennessee.
- These accounts are created with OCCM’s EIN; thus, strict financial controls must be exercised to protect the OCCM entity legally and financially.
- Each regional bank account is accessed by its Treasurer and with the Regional Clergy Advisor, who are the authorized signers on the account.
- The OCCM Regional Treasurer will keep track of every transaction made with Chapters in their region using a standardized ledger in Microsoft Excel.



- Wire transfers, PayPal, or Venmo will be used to exchange money between the Regional OCCM account and individual Chapter accounts, depending on the stage the individual Chapters are in throughout the process (more info in next section).
- The OCCM Regional Treasurer must submit a monthly financial report to the Executive Treasurer, whether there have been or have not been financial transactions during the month.

Finance and Treasury Policy: Chapter Framework

- We encourage Chapters to grow their treasuries to suffice their needs, so that it can be efficiently managed. Chapter Treasurers should research how their individual school's funding system works to take advantage of the school's support.
- Initially, Chapters shall not have their own bank accounts. Until Chapters determine that they do in fact need their own accounts through OCCM's EIN, Chapters will merely need an account agreed upon by their officers (Chapter President and Treasurer) to receive money from, and to send money to, the main Executive OCCM bank account.
- Should there be a need for a Chapter in the future to open a bank account, this is to be discussed and assessed with the OCCM Executive Treasurer and the Designee of the Metropolitan.
- The Executive Treasurer will keep track of each Chapter's evolution should the need arise, as a Chapter grows, to open a standalone bank account. This process will allow Chapters to grow at an appropriate, safe rate. It will also allow us to help States open accounts using OCCM's EIN on an as-needed basis only with the appropriate financial controls over the account.
- Bank accounts are not to be opened through the school, in order to avoid the IRS registering a different EIN than the one OCCM already has. Please contact the Executive Treasurer before opening a bank account.
- All Chapter treasurers are to coordinate with the Executive Treasurer to establish an initial fundraising goal before each semester, and to exercise all of their means to meet this goal by the end of the semester. Please note, according to Diocese's guidelines, all fundraisers must strictly be donation based. (Check '*Funding Your Chapter*' section of this guidebook.) This budgeting exercise will be specific to the means and resources of each individual Chapter.
- Any leftover funds, remaining with a Chapter by the end of the year, are to be transferred to the OCCM main bank account and held in a reserve fund until the following year. Under no circumstances shall a Chapter's funds be transferred to a member's bank account or be spent/wasted to exhaust the funds. Please coordinate the transfer with the Executive Treasurer.

Note: For an account to be opened locally for a Chapter, the OCCM organization must be registered as a 'foreign non-profit' in the respective state of the Chapter. Filing fees for such registration vary by state. Currently, OCCM is filed as such in Florida, Tennessee, and Texas to receive the benefit of sales tax exemption. We do not encourage opening a bank account for your Chapter.



IV. Chapter Life

IV. a. Planning Your Year

Planning Early: It's important to plan ahead. Whether you plan to meet weekly or bi-weekly, make a commitment to keeping regular meetings. People appreciate consistency, and if they know that meetings are on a regular schedule, they can plan around that or choose to come to an occasional meeting when they are unable to attend everyone. Make sure you involve your leadership team in the planning process, so that everyone has a chance to voice their thoughts before the new academic year begins.

Planning Concisely: As you plan meeting content, it's best to include elements that relate back to the **five pillars** of OCCM: **Education, Worship, Fellowship, Service, and Outreach**. The most successful OCCM Chapters include a good mix of all these elements. Make a list of concise goals for your Chapter during the coming semester or year, and revisit these frequently to make sure your Chapter's activities align with your goals.

Planning Timely: When planning your calendar for the academic year, take major events from your university or local parish calendars and map out the coming Fall and Spring semesters. Fill in known dates for OCCM events at the Region or Diocesan level and make notes on months where you do not know specific dates, but you have a rough idea of what will go on around that time. **Chapter events (trips, retreats, etc.) must not conflict with regional retreats.** Outline when your meetings will be and what format you would like them to have. Be open to adjusting this plan as the year goes on and you learn what works and what doesn't work but try to be consistent whenever possible.

Planning Compliantly: Service is an honor with an inseparable responsibility. Therefore, we comply with the following:

- You must obtain **approval** from your Clergy Advisor before inviting a guest speaker, whether clergy or laity, from outside of the SUS Coptic Orthodox Diocese.
- Each OCCM Chapter is an *embassy* of the Orthodox Church on campus; therefore, we are bound to observe what the Church teaches and expects of us without exception. If these teachings are not in line with a personal lifestyle—that an Officer/Member is not willing to sacrifice, a clear choice should be made to be excused from his/her role.
- Such matters that are not in accordance with the Church teachings include playing secular music at OCCM events, serving non-fasting food during a fasting period, etc.
- Please refer to the **OCCM Code of Ethics** which is required to be read and signed by every Student Leadership Team member and Chapter Officer.

V. b. OCCM Life

Orthodoxy is a way of life, and our campus ministry endeavors should always reflect this way of life. Therefore, OCCM has five pillars, known as ‘OCCM Life’ by which our OCCM meetings and activities should revolve around: **Education, Worship, Fellowship, Service, and Outreach.**

Education includes lectures, book studies, and other similar learning, educative activities. These activities stimulate discussion and allow students to delve deeper into the Orthodox Faith or share it with their campus community.

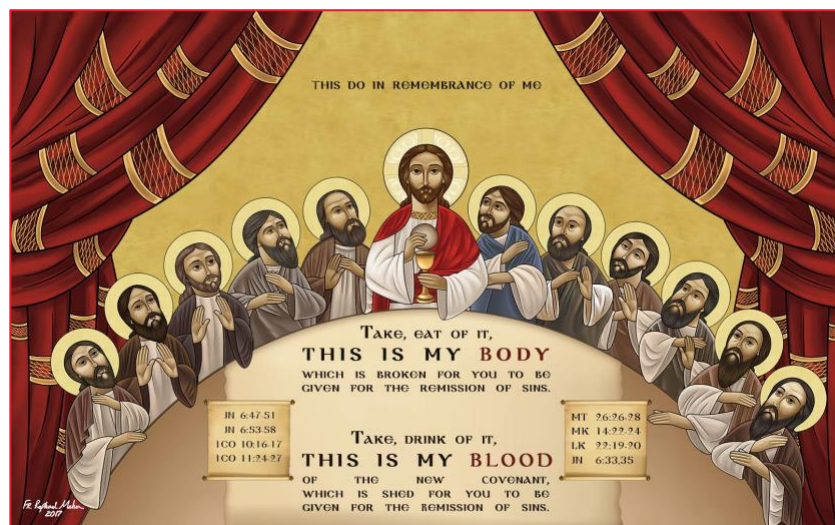
Worship includes services at a local parish, or even prayer services on campus. This is foundational to the Orthodox way of life. We join each other to praise and give glory to God together!

Fellowship includes potlucks, game nights, and the like. This is foundational to ‘building’ a community of the OCCM Chapter because this is where relationships are formed.

Service includes helping out with the local soup kitchen, homeless shelter, orphanages, volunteering to help new students move into the dorms, or otherwise offering aid wherever you can!

Outreach includes participating in tabling events to raise awareness of OCCM, inviting friends to attend the Chapter meeting; even participation as an OCCM Chapter in service and community events is a means of outreach. Ever heard of Mother Theresa of Kolkata? The ministry of Mother Theresa and the nuns did not include preaching the word, but it was through their serving of caring for others that brought many to Christ and made them hungry to know His word.

Find the “**OCCM Life**” booklet on the [Chapter Resources](#) page of our website with ideas to implement the five pillars of OCCM Life in your Chapter.





IV. c. Regional Retreats and Events

Interacting with surrounding Chapters is a great way to get to know students at other Chapters.

The **Regional Director** is responsible to plan regional retreats whether in the Fall or the Spring, in cooperation with member/officer representatives from the Chapters across the region s/he oversees.

The **first step** is to develop proper communication with other Chapter presidents. Let them know of your Chapter, and your desire to cooperate in such activities. This needs to be done through the Regional Director of that state since his/her service is to communicate among all the presidents of their state. After meeting with the Chapter presidents and getting to know each other, and expressing the desire to work together, the **next step** would be to discuss such activities and the likelihood of your members to participate in such plans. The key here is to try to break the ice among the students and get them out of their comfort zone so that they are willing to travel and meet new students. Upon agreement of the *where/when/what/why and how*, the **third step** would be to consult with one of the Clergy Advisors in the region to sponsor the event.

Once these critical steps have been defined and are well established in communication and structure, the presidents can **then proceed** with the planning, setting the agenda, looking for a potential location to host the event, and seeking a speaker.

Having a shared event or retreat brings lots of joy and challenges. Joy in getting to meet new people of the same faith and same club; challenges in getting to work with new people. Therefore, the **Regional Director** of that state shall be the overall person in charge of the retreat, including the following responsibilities:

- Developing a strategy to get every president involved.
- Setting up meeting times according to the majority, leading the meetings, tracking of tasks.
- Reporting updates to the advising priest and the OCCM President of the plans. The OCCM President is responsible to report the updates to the Designee of the Metropolitan.

The joint retreat/event is the work of all the presidents and their committees; it's not a single-person task! The success of the joint retreat is dependent on the cooperation of the presidents and their willingness to work together to provide an atmosphere where Christ is present with His youth!!



V. Contacts

OCCM Clergy Advisory Board

Fr. James Gendi, OCCM Designee of the Metropolitan

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**RSL: Regional Student Leader*



VI. Amendments

Proposed amendments will be reviewed at the last meeting held by the Executive Board each academic year, in the Spring Semester. In order for a change to be proposed, it must be emailed in its exact wording to the OCCM Secretary during the Fall and Spring semesters through the month of March.

Any member may propose a change. The member that proposes the change will have a chance to discuss the proposed change at the annual review. In order for a change to pass, at least 2/3 of the members of the OCCM Student Leadership Team (Executive Board, Regional Directors, and Committee Chairs) must approve the potential amendment. If the amendment does not meet this threshold, then it shall not pass. The proposed amendment can be made again if the author so chooses at the following annual review.

All guidelines in this guidebook are subject to amendment and approval by the Metropolitan of the Diocese or his designee.

Version History Log

A log of version history shall be maintained to document the history of revisions of this guidebook.

Version #	Date	Explanation of Change	Modified By
v1.0	30-Nov-18	Initial Document Creation	Fr. Jerome Maximous Abanoub Henry
v1.0	15-Dec-18	Review and approval of H.G. Bishop Youssef	Fr. Jerome Maximous
v1.1	10-Jan-19	Amended to include instructions for mid-term leadership team vacancy	Abanoub Henry
v1.2	26-Aug-19	Revisions of various SLT role descriptions, involvement of Oriental Orthodox Clergy, Finance and Treasury Policy, 2019-2020 Goals	Fr. Jerome Maximous Abanoub Henry
v1.3	03-Jul-20	Revisions of various SLT role descriptions, 2020-2021 Goals	Fr. Jerome Maximous
v1.4	25-May-21	Updates to Chapter I., sections C, D, E, G; Chapter IV; Chapter V	Kirillos Mikhail Fr. Jerome Maximous
v1.5	24-May-22	Various updates to pgs. 6-16; 26	Fr. Jerome Maximous
v.1.6	24-Aug-22	Various updates to pgs. 7-8; 14-16; 26	Fr. Jerome Maximous
v.1.7	20-May-23	Various updates for the year 2023-2024	Fr. Jerome Maximous
v.1.8	07-Feb-24	Various updates to STL and chapter officer roles and duties; updates to Clergy Advisory Board	Kevin Mikhaiel Fr. Jerome Maximous

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