

Parish Missions & Evangelism Ministry Inspiration

This is a list of possible practices that C.O.M.E. has identified and collected to inspire the parish-level Missions & Evangelism Ministry. Please contact the C.O.M.E. Office if you would like examples of anything described here or information about getting in touch with a parish where these practices are already in play. Also, please let us know about ideas not listed here. C.O.M.E. is committed to collecting and sharing efforts that are bearing fruit in our parishes for everyone's benefit.

For more resources and to subscribe to regular updates, please visit www.come-sf.org.

Welcome Ministry

An active Welcome Ministry is ready to respond to the most obvious evangelistic opportunity--people who have found their way to our church services. The greeters, along with all parishioners, can do many things to make this new experience less intimidating, answer questions and help visitors make personal connections during fellowship time.

1. Recruit volunteers to serve as greeters for Sunday mornings and other service.
2. Define responsibilities (i.e. what time to arrive by, what to hand out) and create a schedule and substitution system.
3. Provide training for greeters as needed (i.e. how to answer difficult questions).
4. Create a parish specific brochure to tell your story. **Contact us for sample copy.**
5. Create materials to describe parish ministries and invite participation, as well as communicating the basics of how to join the parish/become a steward.
6. Create a Welcome Packet for guests.
7. Capture visitor contact information with a traditional or electronic guest book, plus a system for getting the names and contact information to the clergy and follow-up volunteers by the end of coffee hour on Sunday.
8. Create a system for clergy to formally acknowledge guests by name during announcements.
9. Seat visitors next to parishioners ready to help them find their way in the service book.
10. Invite guests to stay for coffee hour.
11. Follow up with visitors during coffee hour.
 - Introduce visitors to clergy and other parishioners during coffee hour.
 - Create a welcome table in the fellowship hall and staff the table during coffee hour. Keep it stocked with appropriate brochures and parish information.
 - Create a culture of teaching parishioners to greet new people with a warm smile and a handshake.
12. Make follow-up phone calls with visitors within two days after their visit.
13. Routinely evaluate Welcome materials and systems for improvement.

In-Reach & Adult Education

The number one way that people come to Christ is through relationship with Christ and sincere Christians. This has been the case since Christ began His ministry with the apostles and at His Ascension said these words, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... (Matthew 28:19)."

To make disciples, we must first be disciples. The evangelistic work begins with a commitment to know and live our Faith. We hope and expect that when we allow Christ to work in us, we will have the opportunity to point others to Him and His Holy Church.

1. Establish a morning and/or evening weekly Bible Study.
 - Advertise Bible Study through parish communications and verbally encourage attendance.
 - Individually invite parishioners to attend.
 - Encourage inquirers and catechumens to attend as part of their catechumenate process.
 - Consider breaking the year into several 5-7 week themed studies.
2. Inquirers' Classes
 - Offer a catechism series at least once annually. [Contact us to request a Powerpoint slide deck of 12 90-minute Basics of Orthodoxy classes.](#)
 - Advertise the inquirers' series through parish communications and verbally encourage attendance. Emphasize that it is an important opportunity for all parishioners for "continuing education."
 - Create a mini-inquirers' class to be held 2-3 weeks after the parish festival, open house, or other fundraisers or events. Advertise this class heavily during the festival or event.
 - Develop educators/catechists in the parish to help teach or lead classes.
3. Record Sunday Sermons and offer them for download on the parish website (requires a dedicated volunteer to post them).
4. Enhance Worship Experience - A positive, prayerful and beautiful worship experience is a powerful outreach tool.
5. Encourage Parish Membership to see themselves as witnesses of the Orthodox Faith to the people around them.
6. Emphasize the importance of spiritual reading and routinely recommend books for parish-wide study.
7. Encourage adults to attend the parish's St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival.
8. Write educational articles for the monthly newsletter and parish website.
9. Personal Stories - see [Sharing Your Journey](#) document in our online Resource Library.
 - Ask parishioners to reflect on their faith journey and write it for publication in the parish newsletter.
 - Encourage members to create their own "elevator speech" on the topic "Why I am Orthodox" and share it in small groups or with the parish at large.

Parish Visibility

If "Orthodoxy is America's Best Kept Secret" our goal is to let everyone in on it.

Improving your Parish Visibility means making sure that people in your community know that your parish exists. It means putting time and effort into creating a meaningful online presence. It also means increasing your parish's street appeal with landscaping and attractive signage. Whether your building is temporary or a traditional Byzantine structure, you can ensure that passersby know "walk-ins are welcome."

Parish Website

Consider the website's two main purposes: a hub of information for parishioners & an inquirer's first introduction to the Church. See a basic overview of the [Evangelistic Parish Website](#) in C.O.M.E.'s online Resource Library.

1. Make sure essential information is prominently featured on the homepage:
 - location
 - service times
 - visitors are welcome
2. The website should strive to be:
 - Up-to-date and organized
 - Easy to navigate and user friendly
 - Attractive and fresh
 - Well-linked for easy Google searching
 - As complete a reflection of parish-wide activities as possible
 - A resource for information on Orthodox theology, history, traditions and answers to basic questions
 - A place where the virtual visitor receives an invitation to visit the physical parish
3. Consider creating a Facebook page with a regular publication schedule (requires a dedicated volunteer)
4. Record and offer Sunday Sermons as downloads on the website (requires a dedicated volunteer)
5. Make sure your parish listing is accurate in each of the following directories:
 1. GOA parish directory
 2. [Orthodoxy in America](#)
 3. [Get To Know the Original](#)

Parish Physical Location

1. Install a clear, easy to read sign with the parish name
2. Make sure the sign is adequately illuminated at night
3. Take proper care of parish landscaping
4. [Design & Order Banners](#) to welcome visitors and highlight liturgical seasons.
5. Consider how your parish might be able to offer its location to the neighborhood--as a meeting place, a safe place for an afterschool tutoring program, etc.

Parish in the Community

1. Submit press releases to local news outlets about parish events.
2. Offer to write articles for the local newspaper by clergy and other lay people.
3. Work with the local radio station to broadcast a show or advertisement.
4. Partner with a local charity. For example:
 - Serve a monthly meal at the soup kitchen or shelter.
 - Do an annual diaper drive for the pregnancy resource center.
 - Collect nonperishable food for the food bank.
5. Connect with Philoptochos, FOCUS and/or other ministries to participate in additional almsgiving activities to benefit the local community.

Mochas for Missions - Spring Fundraising Campaign

This campaign, a main source of funding for C.O.M.E., is a way of getting people involved in the Metropolis effort to fulfill the Great Commission. It is also an opportunity to educate the parish about what C.O.M.E. does to establish new parishes, mentor those that are poised for growth and support local Missions and Evangelism efforts.

1. First, choose a leader for the campaign.
2. Make sure leader receives materials from C.O.M.E. in a timely manner. The packets are sent out about 3-4 weeks prior to Forgiveness Sunday, which is the official start date of the campaign. Additionally materials are available for viewing and download at www.come-sf.org.
3. Organize a brief meeting between Missions & Evangelism chairperson, parish priest and campaign leader to confirm start and end dates, how materials will be used, and set a fundraising goal that is both challenging and realistic.
4. Create a visual display in the parish hall with materials about C.O.M.E.'s ministry and the work of the parish's Missions & Evangelism Ministry. Also use this campaign period to recruit new members to the parish Missions & Evangelism Ministry.
5. Publish C.O.M.E.--provided newsletter articles in the monthly newsletter.
6. Collect monies weekly.
7. Provide weekly updates (i.e. in parish bulletin or verbal announcements) regarding how much money has been collected towards the goal.
8. After the campaign is complete, send total donation to C.O.M.E. at 14485 SW Walker Rd, Beaverton OR 97006.

Bookstore

Whether it is a rolling cart of books that comes out at coffee hour or a designated room and online store, the bookstore is a launch pad for both in-reach and outreach.

The Bookstore Ministry

Most likely your bookstore already has a dedicated volunteer or team whose role it is to manage inventory and bookkeeping, staff the store, and become familiar with everything offered in order to assist customers and make recommendations. Many of these ideas are familiar to bookstore management:

1. Display items in creative ways. For example, set up a sample prayer corner.
2. Offer hospitality--coffee and/or tea--for patrons while they browse.
3. Create a "Basics of Orthodoxy" display with introductory books about Christianity and Orthodoxy.
4. Create a "Book of the Month" or "Author of the Month" display with staff/volunteer reviews.
5. Establish a Summer Reading Program and use a theme or goal to motivate parishioners to plug into Orthodox literature during vacation months.
6. Create a children's corner, where children can sit and color or read while parents browse.
7. Bring in art and gift items that portray an Orthodox Christian culture, such as paintings of churches, carved crosses, or prayers to hang in the home.
8. Consider enlisting volunteers to open the bookstore during the week and advertise expanded hours--on parish signage, in the local paper and on the website.

Role of the Missions & Evangelism Ministry

Your team can assist the bookstore team to reach a wider audience, recruit additional volunteers and subsidize or promote specific programs.

1. Market bookstore and hours on external parish signage and website.
2. Ask the bookstore team for permission to hold small meetings or book studies in the bookstore, if possible. This brings potential customers into the bookstore and takes advantage of the pleasant atmosphere provided by icons and liturgical items.
3. Offer book reviews to the bookstore team and for publication in monthly newsletter.
4. Recruit additional volunteers for reading and reviewing books.
5. Set up a system allowing the bookstore director or clergy to freely give certain books or pamphlets, as appropriate, to inquirers and catechumens.
6. Open the bookstore during retreats or guest lectures with a corresponding display.

Book Lists

We asked several clergy to name books that they frequently recommend to inquirers and faithful and provide this list, called 15 Books to Inspire, on our website. You can use it as a jumping off point for your core inventory, if you're just beginning or if your parishioners are currently more accustomed to visiting the bookstore for icons and gifts.

Shelf Talkers

Print or handwrite brief recommendations of bookstore offerings on small cards and place next to the book on the shelf. Alternatively publish reviews one by one in your monthly bulletin to highlight a book of the month. Also consider making a display in the bookstore each month highlighting a particular topic, saint or author.

Bookstore Grants

Each year C.O.M.E. has a limited number of \$500 bookstore grants available for Metropolis of San Francisco parishes working to start or, in some cases, improve their bookstore. Please contact us for more information.

Outreach Activities

1. Parish Festival
 - a. Emphasize importance of the festival as an outreach event
 - b. Offer Church Tours, promote the bookstore and promote Orthodoxy in creative ways
2. Church Tours
 - a. Create a template of points to cover and train additional tour guides.
 - b. Work with the choir director to include 10-15 minute mini choir concerts
 - c. Demonstrate or exhibit liturgical arts and items such as vestments, iconography, and church music.
 - d. Bring bookstore materials into the church or in a booth outside where guests will be able to browse after a church tour.
 - e. Schedule a 1 to 3-part inquirers'/basics class 2-3 weeks after the festival; hand out fliers to advertise it during festival church tours.
 - f. Capture visitor contact information and create a system for follow-up.
3. Organize lectures, talks, presentations, retreats and opportunities to introduce and educate the outside community about Orthodoxy. These presentations may take place at the church or at other public venues.
4. Market outreach activities in parish and community media. Send updates to free community events calendars.
5. Create a parish Facebook page, Twitter account and/or Instagram for promoting parish events and inviting friends of members. (requires a dedicated volunteer to maintain)
6. Bring in speakers who can address current issues or needs from an Orthodox perspective. For example, find qualified experts to lead a series of parenting classes or a marriage retreat.
7. Consider offering an Open House or a Spiritual Festival.
8. Offer an Outreach Vespers with an introductory homily to Orthodox worship. Provide hospitality or a light reception.
9. Contact local colleges and university departments, professors and instructors (i.e. Religion, Christian Formation, Theology, Art History) to offer clergy and other trained parishioners as lecturers on various aspects of Orthodox Christian Faith and practice.
10. Establish and support an Orthodox Christian Fellowship, OCF at a local college or university.
11. Participate in Orthodox Prison Ministry, OPM, locally.

O.C.M.C. [Foreign Missions] Ambassador

The Orthodox Church has missionary efforts all over the world. Much of this work is coordinated through OCMC, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, located in St. Augustine, Florida, which is a Pan-Orthodox ministry of the Assembly of Canonical Bishops. OCMC sends missionaries and mission teams to serve in diverse locations, such as Tanzania, Albania, Guatemala, Alaska and the Philippines.

We encourage every parish to have a Foreign Missions Ambassador and to [apply with OCMC](#) and use their program as a guide. OCMC and C.O.M.E. agree that this ambassador's role is to increase awareness and support for international missions in general, whether the parish has a special connection with Project Mexico or supports an OCMC missionary, and help parishioners connect these efforts with our calling to be missionaries in our own communities.

1. Recruit an Ambassador, perhaps someone who has served on an OCMC mission team or had other foreign mission experience.
2. Register with OCMC as the parish's primary contact at www.ocmc.org.
3. Work to further OCMC's five goals for parish missions ministry:
 - Raise awareness about international missions
 - Be a resource for international mission opportunities
 - Develop mission opportunities for the parish to participate in (i.e. lead a group to Project Mexico)
 - Raise funds for international missions
 - Encourage support of international missions through personal giving.
4. Create a Foreign Missions Ambassador mailbox for missions-related mail.
5. Create a bulletin board or display space reserved for international missions news.
6. Dedicate a Sunday to Missions Awareness, both domestic and international. Ideas for how to promote Missions Sunday:
 - Write a newsletter article about current international missions activities.
 - Highlight international missions activities in the weekly bulletin.
 - Offer coffee hour refreshments on this Sunday.
 - Ask for a free will offering for OCMC or another missions project.
 - Invite an OCMC representative or missionary to speak.
7. Connect Sunday School teachers with OCMC curriculum found at www.ocmc.org. Each year a new set of Sunday School lessons is produced.
8. Host OCMC missionaries to speak when they come to the area or put together a Skype call with a missionary in the field.
9. Encourage the parish to sponsor an OCMC missionary or participate in the SAMP (Support A Mission Priest) program.
10. Be an active part of building the culture of missions, a right hand to the local priest, bringing articles and related materials to his attention.
11. Write articles about missionary saints for the parish newsletter.
12. Encourage studies or talks inspired by the life and work of missionary saints and/or specific missionary themes.