

# Membership Guide



**GREEK ORTHODOX  
LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY**

# PHILOPTOCHOS MISSION STATEMENT

In all that we do as Philoptochos Members, it is important that we not lose sight of our Mission, which addresses four areas as follows:

1. To aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fundraising effort
2. To promote the charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and each Metropolis, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources
3. To preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs
4. To promote participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council

The charitable work of the Society shall be performed with discretion, courtesy and kindness.



In November 1931, Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I, who was serving as Archbishop of North and South America, established the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc. as the duly accredited women's philanthropic Society of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

# GUIDELINES FOR INCREASING MEMBERSHIP

## I. Always keep in mind the basics for attracting new members.

- A. A new member needs to feel welcome and wanted.
- B. A new member's ideas need to be heard and considered if they are in line with the mission of Philoptochos and the Bylaws that govern Philoptochos. New ideas are necessary for continued growth.
- C. A new member needs to feel involved in the Philoptochos. Ask new members to join committees to learn about Philoptochos and how committees work.

## II. Help your Chapter take a fresh look at itself.

### A. Hold a brainstorming session and ask the following questions:

1. Is Philoptochos attracting new members? If not, why?
2. Have we reviewed our goals and priorities?
3. Does our Philoptochos Chapter offer worthwhile activities?
4. Do the programs help members with their own lives and help them reach out to others?
5. Do Chapter members enjoy each other's company and welcome others into the group?
6. Is Philoptochos projecting an image that will attract new members?
7. Is the community informed about Philoptochos – its varied and challenging programs and philanthropic and educational endeavors?
8. Does the Chapter grow and change with the times to attract younger members?

## III. Create a survey of women who are not active members of your Philoptochos.

- A. Obtain a list of female parishioners from your Church Office and determine which of them are not Philoptochos members.
- B. Make a list of prospective members. Ask all current members to contribute the names of five women in the community who are prospective members for Philoptochos.

- C. Prepare a list of questions to identify the needs and interests of prospective members. Some suggested questions:
  - 1. Are you a member of this parish?
  - 2. Do you participate in any other church activities?
  - 3. What kind of activities or programs would interest you?
  - 4. What subjects would you enjoy hearing about at Philoptochos meetings?
  - 5. Is the time of our meetings convenient for you?
- D. Ask the Parish Priest to encourage inactive women in the parish to join Philoptochos.
- E. Schedule meetings open to the entire parish.
  - 1. Have more than one meeting a year open to all parishioners, to encourage them to find out what Philoptochos does. Make everyone feel comfortable and welcome. Serve refreshments. Ask everyone to introduce themselves. Have an interesting program!

#### **IV. Conduct a Membership Drive**

- A. Plan your Membership Drive.
  - 1. Prepare a list of prospects from your survey and brainstorming sessions.
  - 2. Prepare an attractive flyer about upcoming events.
  - 3. The Membership Committee should be enthusiastic, dedicated Chapter members who reach out to nonmembers and encourage them to join.
- B. Designate at least one or two dates in the year that will be Membership Nights.
  - 1. Invite prospective members to the meeting. Provide transportation if needed.
  - 2. Present Philoptochos information to prospective members.
  - 3. Ask all prospective members to introduce themselves and tell a little about their work, education, experience, skills and interests.
  - 4. Encourage prospective members to sign up. Make them feel welcome.
  - 5. See if there is need for changes to accommodate prospective members.
  - 6. Take note of prospective member's skills and experience for future projects.

#### **V. Welcome New Members into the Group**

- A. Welcome new members and show interest in them as people. Have greeters available to sit with new members for the evening.

- B. Plan activities to get acquainted with your new members. Build a Chapter where everyone cares about each other.
- C. Provide informative, well-planned programs and meetings.
  - 1. Come to the meeting well organized.
  - 2. Start on time and conclude at a scheduled hour.
  - 3. Keep business sessions brief and to the point. Don't drag out meetings; no business meeting should go beyond one hour.
  - 4. Explain the background behind everything that is discussed, since new members may not know what is going on.
  - 5. If it is necessary to explain information in both Greek and English, be prepared to do so. Have someone who is bilingual present to explain things in both languages.
  - 6. Delegate responsibilities to lots of members; but be sure they are given their choice of committee and program assignments.
  - 7. Do not continuously delegate or assign committees and responsibilities to your favorite people. Choose others who will bring new insight to the group and give everyone an opportunity to take on responsibility.

Remember that diversity is our greatest asset! Everyone has talents! Each of us comes from a different background even though we share the same Orthodox Faith.

## VI. Reaching Younger Women

- A. How can we begin to reach younger women?
  - 1. A young woman of today leads a busy life with multiple demands.
  - 2. She is technologically savvy and interested in helping her community.
  - 3. Whether she is employed or not, she is a working woman. No one works harder than the mother of a preschooler, a college student with a part-time job, or a woman who volunteers in community organizations.
  - 4. Interesting, on-topic, and on-schedule meetings will be of interest to her.
  - 5. She may be less tied to tradition and can offer a different point of view or a different insight.
- B. The needs of younger women:
  - 1. A woman may need guidance in her understanding of her personal role in serving God and humanity.

2. She wants to be a member of a Christian group of women such as Philoptochos – women who care for one another and pray and work together toward a common goal – the results of which can be known and understood.
3. She needs to be accepted by the Chapter without reservation and to work toward bringing others into the Chapter's fellowship.
4. She needs to be able to make decisions about programs/projects for the Chapter with the aid and encouragement of all Philoptochos members.

#### C. Suggestions for working with younger women

1. Listen to the younger women in your Chapter - their concerns, problems and needs.
2. Accept their ideas and show them that you care about them.
3. Work with younger women and make it possible for them to express their ideas freely without feeling that they must only accomplish goals developed by others.
4. Provide materials and resources so that they will be able to learn about and discuss their Orthodox Faith, Philoptochos and the problems in their lives.
5. Help them to find practical projects they can support, not only in Philoptochos, but also in the Church community. They may be busy women, but they feel the need to be of help to others through specific projects.
6. Urge your Chapter to invite the newly married, newly moved, the separated, new parents and any others who are going through a change in their lives. Being part of a group can go a long way in easing this stress.
7. Help them to find a place in the program that is of interest to them.
8. Encourage younger women to suggest interesting ideas for programs. Urge them to give suggestions to the chair and offer to help implement the programs.

### VII. The Working Woman

Working women, whether they are paid or volunteer, are very busy people. Recruiting them for membership will be difficult unless the programs are stimulating and meet their needs. Ask them for their suggestions.

1. Help each working woman to feel a part of the group even if she does not attend every meeting.
2. Assign an active member as her partner to visit her and solicit her ideas for the group's work.
3. Keep a talent list of the skills and interests of these women.
4. Invite each to participate in at least one meeting a year where her skills can be used or her interests met.
5. Plan a time for the women who work to meet annually. Help them to feel supported and recognized as a part of Philoptochos.
6. Give special recognition to women in your Chapter who have made outstanding service contributions.
7. See if there are assignments that can be done at home and allow her to participate in her own free time.

# DEVELOPING A MEMBERSHIP PLAN

## WHAT IS A PLAN?

Planning is a way to organize actions that will hopefully lead to the fulfillment of a goal. How? By providing clear direction and an approach to follow. Developing a plan for increasing membership will spur your Chapter to ask some very important questions:

- Why do we want or need members?
- What kind of members do we want or need?
- Who is going to find and pursue them?
- Where are the new members?
- When is a good time to look for them?
- How should we approach potential members?
- What happens if you get a yes, a maybe, or a no?
- What are some obstacles we may encounter? How do we get around them?

## WHY DEVELOP A PLAN?

- To give your Chapter direction on how to get from point A to B in enrolling new members.
- To make your search for new members more efficient and effective. A plan is important because it focuses on the set of steps you will need to go through to achieve your ultimate goal of enrolling members. The planning stage is the time to decide what actions the Chapter will take to achieve its goal.

A planned effort will be more successful than a disorganized attempt. Write your plans down!

## HOW TO DEVELOP A PLAN?

### 1. Why do we want or need members?

It is not only enough to want to get members for your Chapter, you must think of why you want them. You must ask yourself, "Why am I looking for new members in the first place?" Your Chapter may need members to:

- Coordinate Chapter activities
- Manage Chapter programs and projects
- Give general support to the Chapter
- Do many, many other things

## 2. What kind of members do we want or need?

Chapters have a need for many different kinds of members. Some members will be leaders and some will take supporting roles.

Members function at different levels. Some show up more frequently than others; some are more committed than others; and some have other things going on in their lives that will take priority over the Chapter now and again. Chapters should seek members who have various skills. Sometimes a project will come up in which members with specific skills will be needed.

## 4. Who is going to find and pursue them?

Determining who finds and pursues the new members is essential to your planning. Together as a Chapter, determine the approach you will use.

Don't be shy about delegating responsibility. If you have people available to help you recruit, make those people as useful as possible. Assign different recruitment tasks to different people. Don't just tell everyone to go out there and get members. That will waste your time and potential members' time.

Divide up the Membership Committee so each of person has a different task.

Make sure you break up the recruiting. You need to ask your members for help, with consideration for their time. Decide which Chapter members will approach each new potential member.

## 5. Where are new members to be found?

Truthfully, EVERYWHERE. Determine what skills you are looking for and target where you will look.

Now that you have this information, USE IT.

**DON'T FORGET. YOU WON'T KNOW WHO WANTS TO GET INVOLVED UNLESS YOU ASK.**

Figure out who your Chapter would like as members, then... make a list and WRITE IT DOWN.

## 6. When is a good time to look for new members?

How about now? Chapters should always be looking for new members. Sure, some times are better than others. It is easier to recruit members when your Chapter is working on a particular project or issue. Find something to attract people to your specific issue, cause, or program. There are also many special times for an organization to look for new members, including when you are:

- Taking on a new initiative
- Wanting to become more significant in the parish and community
- Starting a publicity/fundraising campaign



If your Chapter is waiting for a good issue or event to start a membership drive, consider one of these areas:

- Children
- Equality
- Health
- Women's Issues
- Jobs

What other issues can you think of to gain support?

For your plan, you must decide when you will start. Develop a timeline. Set goals.

Develop your plan for attracting new members before starting work. Make sure your plan is organized. Write down your plan.

### **7. How should you approach potential members?**

It's important to design an approach carefully, for example:

"A group of us are going to get together Sunday and having a potluck at Demetra's house, would you like join us?" Personalize your invitations.

Remember when you are trying to convince people to join they need to feel that they are going to get something out of it? Satisfaction, new skills, personal fulfillment, etc. You want to make potential members feel the Society will benefit them too.

This is another reason why a plan is especially important, new members do not want to become involved with a disorganized organization.

### **8. What to do if you get a yes, a maybe, or a no.**

If you get a "yes," great! Just make sure you tell your new member what they need to do to become a part of your Chapter.

A "maybe" is pretty good too. A maybe shows you that this person is not completely without interest. Keep in touch with those who say "maybe." They may be interested in joining at a later date or becoming involved in a different way now.

A "no"...well, you can't win them all. You should also try to distinguish a "no" from a "not right now." You may have asked at a bad time; after all, you don't know everything that is happening in everyone's lives. If you didn't get the door shut in your face, you might want to try again later. You never know when someone may have a change of heart.

### **9. Obstacles**

Anticipate obstacles that may occur. Things don't usually run perfectly, and anything can happen. Be prepared to overcome possible obstacles by brainstorming possibilities and devising a plan.

## 25 WAYS TO INCREASE PHILOPTOCHOS MEMBERSHIP

1. With membership enrollment, include comments and suggestions to be returned to the Board. Ask for their feelings on programs and activities. Implement a survey sheet asking what hours they are available for meetings and events as well as their areas of expertise. Ask for their participation and membership. People who feel a part, take a part!
2. Meet early with membership committee to set membership goals. Make them realistic, and do not give up until you reach and surpass the goal.
3. If you have a real need in your community, identify it. A cause around which people can rally is likely to increase membership.
4. Sponsor a Philoptochos "open house" after Church Services every September before the New Ecclesiastical Year. Develop an information sheet to be distributed to potential members at the open house.
5. For those who do not have time, ask them to sign a 'CALL ME ONCE' sheet. Ask members or potential members to volunteer just once during the year. They can relax about the time commitment and still be part of Philoptochos. Being called for help for only a few hours, one time, seems manageable for even the busiest person.
6. Ask for a 5 minute time frame to speak at a Parish Council meeting to address the good works of Philoptochos. Have a liaison on the PC who is a member of Philoptochos.
7. Contact new families and brides as they move into your community. Welcome them with a personal phone call and invitation. A letter of welcome, materials and membership envelope should be mailed out to new Parish families (always include a self-addressed envelope). Have a "welcome wagon;" a representative can offer a gift such as an icon for their new home.
8. Send home an invitational letter to Greek School and Sunday School parents with a self-addressed membership envelope. Have a representative attend Greek School/Sunday School events with a table of membership material and snacks for the kids.
9. Challenge each Board member to recruit one new member who has never been a Philoptochos member.
10. Use every talent available to help with membership. Put a "help wanted" ad for talent in the Philoptochos newsletter of your Chapter.
11. Thank your members and list their names in your newsletter throughout the year.
12. Keep accurate record of membership. Check last year's membership against the current year. Email, call or send a reminder note to members who have not renewed their membership. Perhaps they have a problem that needs to be heard. **ONE ON ONE CONNECTION!!**

13. Philoptochos mailings and emails should reach all female members of the Parish and keep everyone informed of activities. Produce a calendar with Philoptochos events early on in the year so members can plan accordingly.
14. Personal calls are the most effective productive way to win new members. A call shows interest in the individual, and it provides you a chance to learn how that individual feels about Philoptochos.
15. Always complement members for a job well done. Advertise their accomplishments in the Philoptochos newsletter.
16. Sponsor a family event in your Parish. Incorporate family concerns such as the Loukoumi book on bullying and so on.
17. Divide your Board into membership teams and give them specific assignments for getting new members. Explain to every Board Member that they ARE a part of the membership committee.
18. Do not overlook any potential member. All members of the community have a stake in the future of Philoptochos. Tell them how they can help by joining Philoptochos.
19. Have the Parish Priest ask all women on the Parish Council to join Philoptochos and have the wives of the men of Parish Council become members.
20. Print in the monthly newsletter (on different months) the National, Metropolis and Chapter commitments and the monies that are given out by each.
21. Explain to Philoptochos members what each National Philoptochos Ministry Commitment is and who it serves. Include the information in a Chapter brochure or informational letter.
22. Assign members and non-members to chair an event together.
23. Make contact with Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) Chapters and invite the young women to attend events or activities that would be of interest to them. Ask them to assist with service/outreach projects and use as an opportunity to invite, embrace, involve. Have Philoptochos sponsor an OCF Sunday to raise awareness in young women as to the mission of Philoptochos. Perhaps offer a discounted membership while in college, to 18 to 22 year olds.
24. Create an Instagram account with a corresponding #hashtag.
25. Chapters should seek out young members of the Parish that are technologically savvy so at the very least all Chapters are online, have a Facebook page and will be able to tweet on behalf of Philoptochos. (Great community service credit for students).



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