



Worship



Witness



Service



Fellowship

# SOYO Essentials Manual



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# Introduction

We are excited for you and your youth to begin experiencing SOYO and all it can offer. It is our hope that this manual will allow every parish the opportunity to build a rich and vibrant SOYO.

This guide is your road map to the steps you need to take in order to start or strengthen your SOYO. You will find a section focused on Starting a SOYO, one on Growing and Strengthening a SOYO, and additional Resources that will help you in planning and coordinating a SOYO.

In addition to this manual, your Diocesan leaders will periodically deliver supplemental resources and downloads for your parish. This includes several programs such as: OCCHY, YOUTH MONTH, and PVC/SGL (all these programs are detailed under the *Resources – SOYO Programs* section of this document). They will send letters explaining how to implement these programs in your parish and what steps you need to take. These documents are also available at [www.teenSOYO.org](http://www.teenSOYO.org).

This manual was written for teens and for teen leaders, especially for new leaders who may have limited understanding of how to lead a SOYO ministry. For those parishes and leaders who are running an active SOYO, you will find this manual as a profitable resource to complement your current work.

We thank you for allowing us to guide you through this wonderful experience that is SOYO. Please feel free to contact the Department of Youth and Parish Ministry ([www.antiochian.org/youth](http://www.antiochian.org/youth)), any of the NAC Officers or Advisors ([www.teenSOYO.org](http://www.teenSOYO.org)), or your Diocesan Leaders for further clarification and help. The SOYO Diocesan Officers and Advisors will also be happy to make time available at Fall Gatherings, Parish Life Conferences, and at Archdiocesan Conventions to help individual parishes in a one-on-one setting.

Yours in Christ,

NAC SOYO

[www.teenSOYO.org](http://www.teenSOYO.org)

What is SOYO?

1 Peter 1:20-21



# What is SOYO?

SOYO (Society of Orthodox Youth Organizations) is the Youth Movement of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. SOYO was established as the Archdiocese Youth Movement by Metropolitan PHILIP in 1969. SOYO Members strive to live the Orthodox faith, daily, in Christ, through Worship, Witness, Service and Fellowship.

## The Mission Statement of SOYO



### Living the Orthodox Faith in Christ Through Worship, Witness, Service and Fellowship

#### Statement of Purpose:

**We believe that** the SOYO Movement seeks to integrate each young person fully into the Total life of the Church. SOYO brings its members to a deeper devotion to the Holy Orthodox Church, its faith, canons and worship. SOYO creates and fosters ministries to encourage Members to commit themselves to living the Orthodox Faith daily. The combination of Worship, Witness, Service and Fellowship are the natural expressions of that commitment. We define these expressions as follows:

**WORSHIP** - Corporate worship is the sacramental expression of and participation in Holy Tradition, and is the indispensable foundation of SOYO at all levels. Upon this foundation is a cultivation of daily personal prayer life and reading of Holy Scripture.

**WITNESS** - Christ calls us to be His witness in the world. SOYO must enable fellow members to express their faith for themselves and to others in order to be true witnesses to Christ and the Orthodox Faith.

**SERVICE** - Christ came not to be served, but to serve. SOYO seeks to emulate Christ in this and honors and glorifies God by loving and serving mankind in the name of Jesus Christ, using our God-given gifts and talents.

**FELLOWSHIP** - The Holy Trinity is the perfect model of fellowship; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit share perfect communion and exist in perfect love as a community. By gathering together in fellowship, and by showing love for one another in Christ, we emulate the life of the Holy Trinity in our daily life.

**The ultimate goal** of SOYO is to fully integrate each teen into the full life of the Church, to create a safe and nurturing environment for teenagers to grow in Christ, and to form spiritual and social bonds between each individual so that a profound and life giving relationship with Jesus Christ and His Holy Church can be realized.

SOYO: [www.TeenSOYO.org](http://www.TeenSOYO.org)

Antiochian Archdiocese Youth Ministry: <http://www.antiochian.org/youth>

Antiochian Archdiocese Home Page: <http://www.antiochian.org>

Starting a SOYO

Starting a SOYO



# Starting a SOYO

## The First Step – Gather the Teens

Taking the first step always often seems a very hard thing to do. If there is not an established SOYO chapter in your parish, you may have an idea, you may have the willingness to work hard, but you don't know where to start. There's good news! There are many resources (starting with this document), websites, social media outlets, your diocesan SOYO leadership and other SOYO chapters that are there to support you. All you need is at least a couple of teens, faith in God, and enthusiasm! It's ok to start with a small group; remember Christ's words: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

With the blessing of your parish priest, plan a SOYO kickoff gathering by following the steps below (depending on the size of your church and the number of teens, some of the items below may not apply):

- **Plan a teen gathering** at a convenient time (Sunday after Liturgy usually works for most people, or plan a social event such as pizza night).
- **Advertise the gathering** to as many teens as possible. Be creative – pass out flyers during church school, publish an announcement in the church bulletin, or ask the clergy to give an announcement at the end of Liturgy.
- **Plan ahead.** Give the teens 1-2 weeks advanced notice so that they can plan accordingly.
- Ask the teens that are interested in attending to **spread the news** to other teens from the church and bring them to the gathering.
- **Make it fun!** The goal of the first gathering is not to have a formal "meeting". The goal is to give the teens the opportunity to know one another and feel more comfortable with each other, and to get them excited and willing to start a SOYO chapter.
- **Have an icebreaker** or a fun activity that will get the teens to know each other or learn new things about each other. Ice breakers and games are a good way for the teens to open up and adjust to the environment.
- **Explain what SOYO is.** Talk about the four pillars of SOYO, and why each one is important in their life (see *The Mission Statement of SOYO* section of this document).
- Get the teens **excited and committed!**



- Schedule a formal meeting to officially establish the SOYO chapter and elect or appoint officers.

Congratulations! You took the first step, and now you are on to the second step!

## Step 2 - Have a SOYO Kickoff Meeting

Now that you “planted the seed”, you can plan a formal SOYO kickoff meeting

- Schedule the kickoff meeting for a convenient time (usually Saturday after Vespers or Sunday after Liturgy).
- Advertise the meeting to as many teens as possible. Be creative – pass out flyers during church school, publish an announcement in the church bulletin, and ask the clergy to give an announcement at the end of Liturgy.
- Send emails and text messages to all the teens that attended the initial gathering.
- Plan ahead – give the teens 1-2 weeks advanced notice so that they can plan accordingly. Send a reminder a few days before the meeting.
- Prepare a meeting agenda (see the *Resources* section of this document for a sample agenda).
- Prepare a binder that will be used for all the meeting minutes. They should be stored at your parish meeting space.
- Have a designated teen to take minutes of the first meeting. After the officers are elected, the secretary will take minutes at every meeting, and will have the minutes ready for reading and approval at the following meeting.
- Keep it relatively short – 30 minutes is a good rule of thumb for formal meetings.
- Ask the teens in attendance for the types of activities they are interested in. Decide on a few activities (2-3) based on their recommendations – they will be more eager to participate in events that interest them. Get teens to volunteer to help in the planning of these activities.
  - See the *Resources – SOYO Activities* section of this document for event ideas

- Schedule regular SOYO meetings. It is a good start to schedule a monthly meeting/gathering. Consistency is important in creating stability. Set a certain day and time each month and keep that day consistent - for example, the first Saturday of each month after Vespers. A consistent schedule will make it easier for the teens to plan and attend the meetings.
- Set up an interim Executive Committee made up of a few teens. For a new SOYO, an interim Executive Committee or interim officers can be chosen with approval of your pastor. Make sure to set a time for an official election.
- Give the teens time to know each other and give them the opportunity to help plan a few events before holding elections. It may take some time for a teen to know if they want to be in a leadership position. Encourage them and offer them your support!

## The Next Steps

There are a few important steps you need to take to ensure a strong start and a solid foundation of your SOYO:

- **Hold regularly scheduled meetings** as explained in Step 2.
- **Schedule and plan activities** suggested by the teens.
  - Get the teens involved in the planning of these activities – they will have a vested interest in the success of the event and in getting other teens to participate.
- **Schedule an official election of officers.**
  - Encourage teens to get involved by running for an officer position.
  - See the *Resources – Elections* and *Resources – Duties of Officers* sections of this document for more information related to selecting officers, nomination forms, and responsibilities of officers.
- **Create a contact list** of all teens and pre-teens in your parish.
  - The list should include the name, age, address, email and telephone number of every teen in your church.
  - Whether they show up once a year, or twice a week, EVERY TEEN should be on this list. This will be key in communicating with the teens.

- Keep the contact list current and continually add new people to the list.
- Ask the teens to get emails and phone numbers of other teens, and ask the clergy to gather contact information of teens they meet at house blessings, weddings, baptisms or other events.
- Ask the clergy or Parish Council for the names and addresses of teens from the Church mailing list.
- **Establish strong communication** and a strong Social Media presence.
  - Create email, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts to advertise your events and communicate with the teen and parish community.
  - See the *Resources – Communication Methods* and *Resources – Online Resources* sections of this document for more details.
- **Establish a SOYO Calendar.**
  - You can start small by planning a few months at a time, or you can plan an annual schedule.
  - See the *Resources – SOYO Programs* and *Resources – SOYO Activities* sections of this document for more details and for programs and activities you can incorporate in your calendar.
- **Write a SOYO Chapter Constitution.**
  - Each SOYO chapter is responsible for the government of its membership, and has the right to form a Constitution and/or By-Laws which needs to be consistent with the Constitution and By-laws of the Diocesan SOYO.
  - Each Parish Constitution and/or By-Laws must be approved by the Pastor, the Parish Council, and the Chairman of the Archdiocese Department of Youth and Parish Ministry.
  - The model parish Constitution is available online in the resource section of the SOYO website: <https://teensoyo.org/constitutions>. You may want to use this document as your starting point, since it has already been approved by the Department of Youth and Parish Ministry of our Archdiocese.
- **Diocesan SOYO Dues.**
  - All SOYO chapters are required to pay annual dues to their Diocesan SOYO.

- See the *Resources – Diocesan Dues* section of this document for more details.
- **Establish Your SOYO Presence in the Parish.**
  - Your parish needs to know that you are an organization and movement of the parish. This will help you promote SOYO.
  - Create a Bulletin Board where you can post information on upcoming events, post photos and diocesan events. Ask the clergy or the Parish Council for a prominent area to display the bulletin board. The bulletin board should be displayed in an area where teens and their parents can easily see it.
  - Ask your Parish if SOYO can be added to the Parish website. You can create an online calendar, post photos in an album, and add links to the Archdiocese website and other Youth Department information.
  - If possible, with the permission of the Parish Council or the clergy, set up a space dedicated for SOYO – a SOYO room, office, or a table in the fellowship hall that is dedicated to SOYO.
- **“Encourage participation, and make it come across as a fun activity.” – Gabriel**

## Don't Forget!

- **Having a SOYO is not about numbers.**
  - Do not be discouraged if you only have a small number of participants. All it takes is for someone willing to put in the effort.
  - Whether there are 2 or 20 teens present, there is something to be gained as long as we are gathered in Christ's name. A SOYO may start out with only a few active members, but over time it will flourish with new members who want to strengthen their relationship to Christ.
  - Remember the Parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7) – Jesus left the ninety-nine sheep to save one. If SOYO makes a positive impact in the life of one teen, it has accomplished its mission.
- **Incorporate the four pillars of SOYO - Worship, Witness, Service and Fellowship.**

- **WORSHIP:** Worship is the foundation of our faith as Orthodox Christians. Attending services together is a great way to build upon the spiritual foundation that is laid for us in the services of the Church.
- **WITNESS:** As Orthodox Christians, we must bear witness to Christ and the Orthodox Faith. That means we must be living examples of Christ in word and deed.
- **SERVICE:** As doers of Christ's ministry, it is important to reach out to those less fortunate than us. This includes anyone in need, whether it is the homeless man in the street or the elderly woman in your parish. We are here to serve our neighbor.
- **FELLOWSHIP:** By gathering together and showing love for one another in Christ, we follow the example of the Holy Trinity, which is the perfect example of fellowship: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit share perfect communion and exist in perfect love as a community.
- These pillars are the essence of our spiritual growth as the youth movement in the Archdiocese and as the future leaders of the Orthodox Church in North America.

### **IMPORTANT!**

Youth contact information should only be shared internally amongst the clergy, youth workers and SOYO leadership; at most you should share the name, address, birthdate and contact information, for the purpose of communicating events and activities, and getting the youth involved. Do not publish any of that information on the internet, other than e-mail addresses.

Photo sharing policy - photos taken in public may be published, but avoiding using names and contact information online with those photos.

*Growing and  
Strengthening an  
Existing SOYO*

*Existing SOYO*



# Growing and Strengthening an Existing SOYO

Once you have your SOYO started and have some activity, it is time to start thinking about growing that activity in your parish. Here are some ways to help grow and strengthen your SOYO.

## **Create a SOYO calendar for the year.**

Sit down as a group of officers and plan the future SOYO events. You can either plan events for an entire year, or for a few months at a time. Once you have those dates planned, you can advertise them out in advance to your teens.

## **Keep adding events to your SOYO calendar.**

Once your SOYO holds regular events, don't be afraid to expand the frequency of coming together. If you are doing monthly events, you may want to consider evolving to having weekly events.

## **Promote what you are doing.**

Share with your fellow parishioners what you are doing as a SOYO. This encourages more teens to want to be active and more adults to help support your ministry. One way to do this is to take a lot of pictures and post them on your church website or on your Parish SOYO social media. You can even submit a report to your Parish Council of all you have been doing.

## **Reach out to teens who are not active and involved**

There are so many teens that are part of the parish that may not come often or that you don't even know of. Don't be afraid to use the clergy as a resource to help you expand your roster of teens you can reach out to.

Ways to bring more people in:

- Creating committees as your SOYO is growing
- Have a leadership training workshop for your officers
- Have teens plan and organizing events
- Plan events with other parishes located in the same area
- Plan or attend Pan-Orthodox events
- Invite teens from other surrounding churches to your events
- Hold an annual teen retreat
- Get more involved in diocesan events, such as sending a group of teens to the Parish Life Conference, basketball tournaments, and deanery retreats
- Participate in the Bible Bowl and Oratorical Festival

# SOYO Programs

## **Sacred Gift of Life**

Each January on the Sunday closest to the Supreme Court ruling legalizing abortion - Roe vs. Wade (January 22), teens across the Archdiocese hold discussions and give sermons presenting the Church's teaching on the Sacredness of Life.

While people may have failed to make good choices in the past on this most important issue of life, SOYO chooses to help educate a generation of teens to make good choices with how they use their body and how they treat life - given as a gift from God.

Additional resources for this topic are available at [www.TeenSOYO.org](http://www.TeenSOYO.org).

## **Purity, Virginitly, Chastity (PVC)**

Teens struggle daily to try to live a life of purity in relation to Jesus Christ. Though life may present many struggles and even failures to each of us, teens look to live a life rooted in Christ. Even when one fails to emulate the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, teens struggle daily to stay on or get back on the path of Salvation through Jesus Christ. This program is designed to help in the struggle.

Additional resources for this topic are available at [www.TeenSOYO.org](http://www.TeenSOYO.org).

## **Holy Friday Vigil-Good and Holy Friday**

Teens from across the Archdiocese gather in their parishes to watch over the tomb of Christ and to read from the Scriptures, keeping vigil from the end of Holy Friday Vespers until the Resurrection Services of Pascha.

Additional resources for this topic are available at [www.TeenSOYO.org](http://www.TeenSOYO.org).

## **SOYO Day of Service**

On the third Saturday of March, the Annual NAC SOYO Day of Service is hosted by SOYO chapters across the United States and Canada.

In reverence to the fundamental virtue of love, NAC SOYO has asked that its chapters across the country dedicate this common day to the service of their local communities. SOYO members are



being encouraged to organize an event on this date that will enable you to show Christ-like charity to your neighbors.

We want to see what you are doing, so tag @NACSOYO and use the hashtag #SOYOservice in your posts on social media! Enter your local SOYO in a contest to win a beautiful icon by simply including your parish's name in one of your posts.

### **Youth Month - October**

October of each year is celebrated as Youth Month in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese. During this month, teens help in the Church by singing in the choir, chanting, reading the epistles, taking the collections, hosting the coffee hours, etc.

### **Special Olympics Awareness Day**

Each year on the 3rd Sunday of October, each parish in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese is asked to take a special collection in order to raise money for the Special Olympics Sports Camp held each year at the Antiochian Village.

### **OCCHY**

SOYO, as an active participant in the work of the Orthodox Christian Coalition for Healthy Youth (OCCHY), strives with other coalition members to reduce the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use and abuse amongst young people, so that they may live healthy and long lives.

### **Youth Workers Fund**

Teens across the Archdiocese have committed to raise funds to help educate Orthodox Christian Youth Workers for work within parishes of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. To date teens have raised over \$200,000 towards their \$200,000 goal.

\*\*\*Resources for each of the programs can be found at [www.TeenSOYO.org](http://www.TeenSOYO.org) under "Programs"

# SOYO Event Ideas

## Humanitarian Ideas

- Visit nursing homes
- Lunch searches
- Volunteer at a local soup kitchen or shelter
- Take a clothing collection to donate to a shelter
- Participate in a local Special Olympics event
- Attend SOYO trips
- Sponsor a child in a needy situation
- Visit and assist the elderly in your parish

## Fundraising Ideas

- Have a bake sale
- Host a coffee hour
- Put on a luncheon
- Do a car wash
- Have a basket sale/suction
- Make and sell T-Shirts
- Candy sales

## Other useful ideas

- Visit a monastery
- Plan a weekend or day retreat
- Hold a Vigil on Great Friday
- Attend Diocesan Conferences and Delegates Meetings
- Attend the Archdiocesan Convention
- Participate in the Bible Bowl and/or the Oratorical Festival of your Diocese
- Encourage participation in summer camps at the Antiochian Village or the diocesan camps

**Incorporating the Platform of SOYO** - Living the Orthodox Faith in Christ through:

- **WORSHIP**
  - Daily Personal Prayer Life
  - Reading the Scriptures
  - Attending all the services of the Church including the Twelve Great Feast Day Liturgies, Lenten mid-week services, Great Vespers on Saturdays and Orthros Service prior to Liturgy on Sundays.
  - The Antiochian Archdiocese website has many resources at <http://www.Antiochian.org>
  - Another very good resource online is <http://www.orthodoxyouth.org>
  
- **WITNESS** - How you express your faith in order to be a witness to Christ and the Church outside of the Parish:
  - Special Olympics Camp and Special Olympics Awareness Day
  - Y.E.S.
  - F.O.C.U.S.
  - I.O.C.C.
  - Project Mexico
  - Clothing drives
  - Help seniors and shut-ins get to church
  - Help seniors at their houses
  - Work at local shelters and soup kitchens
  
- **SERVICE** - How you express your faith while in the Parish:
  - Choir
  - Chanting
  - Serving in the Altar
  - Attending Church School
  - Helping at Coffee Hour or cleaning up after church events
  - Serving as a SOYO officer
  - Helping your parish priest
  
- **FELLOWSHIP**
  - SOYO Meetings and outings
  - Bringing all teens together and not excluding anyone
  - Spending time with the younger children in the parish
  - Reaching out to older members in the parish



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## Planning out the SOYO year

### Living the Orthodox Faith in Christ through

Worship	Witness	Service	Fellowship
<p>Place your "Worship" events here such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage other teens to attend Vespers and Divine Liturgy with you as a group.</li> <li>• Great Friday All Night Vigil</li> <li>• Attending Lenten and Holy Week Services together as a Youth Group and participating by singing, chanting and or reading.</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Place your "Witness" events here such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding a Bible Study for the Parish.</li> <li>• Providing Books on Orthodoxy to the local schools and libraries</li> <li>• Sharing your faith with your friends and inviting them to join your Bible Study or to come to a discussion with your youth group</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Place your "Service" events here such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving lunch as a group at the local Soup Kitchen</li> <li>• Helping as a group at a local orphanage</li> <li>• Cleaning the Church</li> <li>• Offering Tutoring to younger and peer students from the Church community, as well as those outside the community, as part of your youth groups community service.</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Place your "Fellowship" events here such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing basketball, Volleyball, or bowling together.</li> <li>• "Hanging out" at the Church Hall together on a specified evening with the Women's Organization and learning how to cook or make Holy Bread</li> <li>• Visiting another Orthodox Youth Group as a the teen Group of your parish to foster friendships and cooperation with sister parish(es) in the local area.</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>

# Social Media and Communication

You have a SOYO, now the important thing is to keep in contact! Here are some steps and tips to maintain a strong social presence:

- Create a SOYO website, email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Reference the Online Resources section of this document for additional help.
- Collect social media accounts and phone numbers of teens (and parents) in your church.
- Add teens on these communication outlets.
- Call, text, and email teens with SOYO news and events.
- Constantly update the SOYO social media outlets with:
  - Events
  - Encouragement to participate in church services
  - Iconography
  - Youth of the month
  - SOYO Highlights
  - Church Feasts, etc.
- Ask you Parish if SOYO can be added to the Parish website. There you can:
  - Create an online calendar
  - Post photos in an album
  - Add useful links to the Archdiocese website and other Youth department information

All in all, using social media is a great way to keep in contact with SOYO members. Not only does it keep them up to date, but it's a fun way to share what you are doing in SOYO and to encourage others to join!

## **IMPORTANT!**

Do not publish any youth contact information on the internet, other than e-mail addresses.

Photo sharing policy - photos taken in public may be published, but avoiding using names and contact information online with those photos.

# Online Resources

- NAC SOYO
  - Website: <http://teensoyo.org/>
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nacsoyo>
  - Instagram: [@nacsoyo](#)
- Diocese of the Eastern Region:
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/4336671649/>
  - Twitter: [@DOWNYDCOMA](#)
  - Instagram: [@downydcoma](#)
- Diocese of Worcester and New England
  - Email: [newenglandteensoyo@gmail.com](mailto:newenglandteensoyo@gmail.com)
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/downesoyo/>
  - Instagram: [@downesoyo](#)
- Diocese of Miami and the Southeast:
  - Email: [miamisoyo@gmail.com](mailto:miamisoyo@gmail.com)
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/265851040095435/>
  - Twitter: [@miamisoyo](#)
  - Instagram: [@miamisoyo](#)
- Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America
  - Website: <http://www.dowama-soyo.squarespace.com/>
  - Email: [dowamasoyo@gmail.com](mailto:dowamasoyo@gmail.com)
  - Facebook: <facebook.com/groups/dowamasoyo/>
  - Twitter: [@DOWAMASoyo](#)
  - Instagram: [@dowama soyo](#)
- Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest
  - Website: <http://www.midwestsoyo.org/>
  - Email: [midwestsoyo@gmail.com](mailto:midwestsoyo@gmail.com)
  - Facebook: <facebook.com/groups/midwestSOYO/>
  - Twitter: [@MidwestSOYO](#)
  - Instagram: [@MidwestSOYO](#)
- Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York
  - Website: <http://doecunysoyo.weebly.com/>
  - Facebook: <http://facebook.com/groups/4095043625/>
  - Twitter: [@DOECUNYSOYO](#)
  - Instagram: [@DOECUNYSOYO](#)
  
- SOYO: [www.TeenSOYO.org](http://www.TeenSOYO.org)
- Antiochian Archdiocese Youth Ministry: <http://www.antiochian.org/youth>
- Antiochian Archdiocese Home Page: <http://www.antiochian.org>

## **SOYO Diocesan Dues**

All SOYO chapters are required to pay annual dues to their Diocesan SOYO.

The amount and due date of the dues varies from Diocese to Diocese. Please contact the SOYO diocesan treasurer for the amount due.

# SOYO Elections

For many, the SOYO election cycle starts with nominations in April and elections in May so that the new officers can participate in the Diocesan Conference. This allows the new officers (as opposed to the outgoing officers) to get to know the new diocesan and NAC leaders, find out about upcoming events, and participate in leadership and training sessions.

## **Eligibility:**

Any teen who is at least 15 years of age and not yet 20 as of the election, an official member of their Parish SOYO, present at the election, and having turned in a properly completed and signed Parish Nomination form, shall be eligible for nomination to any elected office of SOYO with the blessing of their pastor.

## **Nominations process:**

Have each potential officer fill out the parish SOYO Nomination Form found in the resource section of the SOYO website: <https://teensoyo.org/nominations-elections/> - receive appropriate signatures and submit the form prior to your elections in May (or at the time you create your new SOYO) remembering to have elections the following year at the same time. The Nomination Form is also listed in the Resources section of this document.

## **Election Process:**

The election process is detailed in the SOYO constitutions <https://teensoyo.org/constitutions/>

Voting must be by secret ballot. All members of SOYO are entitled to no more than one (1) vote. There shall be no voting by proxy (SOYO members must be present to vote).

Election for each office shall be determined by a simple majority of votes cast. In the event of a tie, there shall be a second vote with only the tied candidates eligible for election.



# Duties of SOYO Officers

## **Duties and Responsibilities of President:**

- Preside over all meetings.
- Make an annual presentation at Parish Feast Day Celebration.
- Ensure that there is at least one monthly SOYO meeting.
- Have authority to execute decisions made by SOYO.
- Work closely with the Youth Director in planning upcoming meetings and events.
- Attend all Diocese meetings (Fall and Spring Delegates Meetings and Parish Life Conference) and make a presentation at each meeting on behalf of the Parish SOYO.
- Ensure that other officers have the tools they need to perform their duties and keep them on task.
- Other duties as assigned by the Youth Director or Priest.
- In some parishes, the SOYO President is a member of the Parish council, and may have a vote. If the local parish Council requires it, President must attend and participate in Parish Council meetings.

## **Duties and Responsibilities of the Vice President:**

- Act in absence of the President and perform such duties as delegated by the President.
- Be an ex-officio member of all SOYO committees.
- Attend all Diocese meetings and assist President in making presentations.
- Assist the President in performing his or her duties if necessary.
- Other duties as assigned by the Youth Director or Priest.
- Attend all Diocese meetings (Fall and Spring Delegates Meetings and Parish Life Conference) and make a presentation at each meeting on behalf of your Parish SOYO, along with the President.

## **Duties and Responsibilities of the Secretary:**

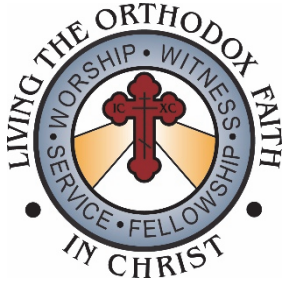
- Maintain all records of SOYO and archive them with the church office.
- Sign all documents as necessary.
- Assist the President in conducting all business affairs of SOYO.
- Keep records and books accessible at all times for the inspection of SOYO members.
- Take minutes at all Regular, Special, Joint and Executive Committee Meetings.
- Distribute minutes of the most recent Regular Meeting no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the next Regular Meeting.
- Work with the historian to keep records of meetings and events.
- Other duties as assigned by the Youth Director or Priest.

**Duties and Responsibilities of the Treasurer:**

- Maintain an efficient system of accounting.
- Receive all general operating funds paid to SOYO and deposit the same in official depositories designated by SOYO within five (5) business days.
- Make disbursements, as approved and ordered by SOYO, within ten (10) business days.
- Submit a financial statement at all General Meetings and at such times, as SOYO may require.
- Submit an annual Financial Report of SOYO to the Parish Council and General Parish Meeting, as designated by the Parish Council.
- Ensure that Diocese dues are paid in a timely fashion.
- Other duties as assigned by the Youth Director or Priest.

# Resources





# SOYO Officer Nomination Form

## Local Parish

**Running for office:** Any person, who is at least 15 years of age and not yet 20 as of the election, an official member of their Parish SOYO, present at the election, and having turned in a properly completed and signed Parish Nomination form, shall be eligible for nomination to any elected office of SOYO with the blessing of their pastor.

**Office(s) you intend to run for: (see duties on page 2 of this form)**

President

Vice-President

Treasurer

Secretary

First Name

Middle Name

Last Name

Street Address

City

State/Province

Zip/Postal Code

( ) - ( ) -  
Home Phone Cell Phone

E-Mail Address

I understand that running for a Parish SOYO office requires me to:

- Accept the responsibilities of my office as is outlined on page 2 of this form.
- Be a role model to the youth of my parish. This includes physical and online (social media presence)
- Work closely with my parish youth director and/or parish priest.
- Uphold the goals of SOYO namely helping the youth of our parish to grow and learn in their faith, have fellowship and fun together, worship together, and help others in the community through service.

I have read and understood the duties and responsibilities of the position I am running for as outlined on page two of this nomination form. I also understand that if elected, I may be required to step down from my position if I fail to perform the duties required of me. I understand that SOYO has a zero tolerance policy when it comes to tobacco, alcohol and other illegal substances and inappropriate behaviors.

**Teen Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby grant permission for my child to run for office and agree to support him or her in their endeavors, including but not limited providing them with the support necessary to help them to fulfill all their duties and to travel to diocese meetings when necessary.

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Telephone Number:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Write a brief statement explaining why you would like to run for this office, what you can bring to this office, and how you expect to grow from doing so. \_\_\_\_\_

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*Please read and understand the Duties and Responsibilities of the position you plan to run for prior to submitting your nomination.*

**Duties and Responsibilities of President:**

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# SOYO Meeting Template

Having SOYO meetings are just as important having a SOYO. These meetings allow you to facilitate and better organize your youth group, plan events, make key decisions, have elections, etc. Ideally you want all members to be able to participate. Meetings should be held at the very least once a month. The following will illustrate how to plan meetings and organize the agenda.

## Hosting the Meetings:

For the initial meetings, it may be best to hold them Sundays after church for convenience. Afterwards, the meeting time and day can be changed to the discretion of each SOYO. To set up meetings get in contact with your members. Prior to the meeting send constant reminders. Utilize social media, technology, and church announcements/bulletins.

Don't limit yourself; meetings can be held anywhere and at any time. The point is to be able to get together and make key decisions, but that doesn't mean you can't have fun!

## Meeting Agenda:

An agenda should be prepared before the meeting. Have the secretary make minutes ready for reading and approval beforehand. They should be stored in a binder at your parish meeting space or online. Try to limit your meetings to 1-2 hours.

Meeting Template:

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>xx/xx/xx</b>
<b>Opening Prayer (Priest or Chaplain)</b>	<b>SOYO Prayer and Troparion</b>
<b>Minutes (Secretary)</b>	<b>Read and Approve</b>
<b>Treasurers Report</b>	<b>Read and Approve</b>
<b>Old Business</b>	<b>Discuss ongoing events, or past outings etc. List each one in its own line item.</b>
<b>New Business</b>	<b>Discuss any upcoming events, outings, SOYO programs, etc. List each one in its own line item.</b>
<b>Pastor's comments/talk</b>	<b>Allow your pastor time to make remarks</b>
<b>Next Meeting</b>	<b>Discuss the date of the next meeting</b>
<b>Closing Prayer (Priest or Chaplain)</b>	<b>Troparion of Your Church and SOYO Dismissal Prayer</b>

## Key Points to remember:

- Find a meeting time that works well for all of your SOYO members
- Use social media, phone calls, and email to send meeting reminders
- Use time wisely and plan ahead
- Store and keep track of your minutes in a safe place
- Have fun!

# SOYO Troparion and Prayers for SOYO Meetings

## Opening Prayers for SOYO Meeting

Priest: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Priest: Glory to thee, our God, glory to thee.

Priest: O heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art in all places and fillest all things; Treasury of good things and Giver of life: Come and dwell in us and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O good One.

*(During the Paschal time replace "O Heavenly King and Holy God...." with "Christ is Risen...")*

*(From Ascension to Pentecost replace "O Heavenly King..." with the Troparion of Ascension)*

People: Holy God; Holy Mighty; Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (Three times)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy God, visit, and heal our infirmities for thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Priest: For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

## Apolytikon of Saint John Chrysostom (Tone 8)

*Patron Saint of SOYO*

Grace shining forth from thy mouth like a beacon hath illumined the universe, and disclosed to the world treasures of un-covetousness, and shown us the heights of humility, but whilst instructing us by thy words, O Father John Chrysostom, intercede before the Word, Christ our God, to save our souls.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: "O Lord and Master Jesus Christ our God, the Great High Priest and Head of Thy Church, bless this meeting of SOYO with the guidance and presence of Thy Holy Spirit as we deliberate upon the work set before us, in a manner that is good for Thy Holy



Church and that is well-pleasing to Thee, and to the glory of Thy Holy Name, for Thou art blessed forever and ever.”

People: Amen

*Or this may be done instead of ““O Lord Jesus Christ our God, the Great High Priest ....*

Priest: O Lord, who blessest those who bless thee, and sanctifiest those who put their trust in thee; save thy people, and bless thy inheritance, preserve the fullness of thy Church, sanctify those who love the beauty of thy house, glorify them in recompense by thy divine power, and forsake us not who hope on thee. Give peace to thy world, to thy Churches, to the priests, to the civil authorities, to the armed forces and to all thy people; for all good giving and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from thee, the Father of lights, and unto thee we ascribe glory, thanksgiving and worship to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen

Priest: Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God have mercy on us and save us.

People: Amen.

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## Prayer at the end of the Meeting:

People: It is truly meet to bless thee, O Theotokos, who art ever blessed and all-blameless, and the mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, thou who without stain barest God the Word, and art truly Theotokos: we magnify thee.

*(If it is a great feast the Troparion of the Feast may be sung instead of the above)*

People: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Father, bless.

Priest: God is with us through His divine grace and love for mankind always now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

# Apolytikion of St. John Chrysostom

## Tone 8 (Plagal 4th Mode)

♩ = 95

Arranged by +BB 1998

Grace shin-ing forth from thy mouth like a bea - - -

5 -con hath il - lu - mined the u - ni-verse, and dis - closed to the world

9 trea - sures of un - cov - et - ous - ness, and shown us the

13 heights of hu - mil - i - ty; but whilst in-struct-ing us by thy

17 words, O Fa - ther John Chrys - os - tom, in - ter - cede with the

21 Word, Christ our God, to save our souls

# Dictionary of SOYO Terms and Acronyms

A  
B  
C  
D  
E  
F  
G

**GFV** - Great Friday Vigil

H  
I  
J  
K  
L  
M  
N

**NAC SOYO** - National American Council

O

**OCCHY** - Orthodox Christian Coalition for Healthy Youth

**OCL** – Orthodox Christians for Life

P

**PLC** – Parish Life Conference

**PVC** - Purity, Virginity, Chastity

Q  
R  
S

**SGL** - Sacred Gift of Life

**SOYO** - Society of Orthodox Youth Organizations

**SO Awareness Day** - Special Olympics Awareness Day

T  
U  
V  
W  
X  
Y

**YES** – Youth Equipped to Serve

Z

# Tips to Be Treasured by Teen Leaders

## 1. Have a new member's party at the start of the year.

- This will help integrate them and make them feel a part of the group from the beginning.
- Designate an existing member to secretly pay special attention to a new member. Don't attach yourself to existing members! If new members feel unwelcome at their first meeting, they may never come back.

## 2. Get younger children excited to join SOYO.

- Befriend younger children in the parish.
- Invite them to activities from time to time. For example: Christmas caroling, sports/field day, visiting elderly, etc.
- Help out with their programs. Show them that you love Christ and His Church and when they are teenagers, they will be as excited as you are!

## 3. Have one big group, not many little ones.

- Social pressures that exist in the school atmosphere are not compatible with the Orthodox Christian atmosphere the youth group aims to provide.
- Don't wear inappropriate attire to church or other activities. Body image should not be an issue when you're gathering together as the Body of Christ.
- Gossip, even if it's about people that are not in your youth group, is bad news! The behaviors you practice with each other should carry over into your school life, and not the other way around.

## 4. Encourage full participation in all church services and activities.

Make sure that what's going on is very clear and known to all:

- Make a Sept-Dec calendar, and a Jan-May calendar
- Have a phone chain the week before each event.
- Send e-mails, texts, mail notices, whatever it takes!
- Do not let transportation be an issue. Make sure teens know who lives in their area so they can let them know if they need a ride.

## 5. Express your ideas and come up with the best game plans. Utilize as many members as possible! Pick a chairperson for each event.

- Set goals together for the year with the officers and visit them regularly. It is important that the officers remember that your first priority in the group is to live a life of good

example.

- If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Keep on top of things!
  - The goals that you set in the beginning need to be frequently referenced.
  - As a youth leader, you should not be afraid to ask for help. Your Parish Priest and Youth Director are there to help you and your fellow teens.
  - Parents love to be needed and are great resources for drivers, host homes, and cooking, of course. Utilize people in your planning!
  - If you put something into motion, stick to it and complete it.
  - If you fall, get back up. If something doesn't work, it's not necessarily your fault. Don't be afraid to admit that something doesn't work for your parish. Just make sure that you've done all that you could have done.
  - Delegate! Delegate! Delegate! Share responsibilities and utilize your members! The more people you share leadership and credit with, the healthier your SOYO ministry will be.
- 6. Set at least one evening a week aside to discuss upcoming events with your Youth Director.**
- 7. Involve your Youth Director and Priest in your planning.**
- 8. Follow through with projects!**
- 9. Attend and support all deanery and diocesan activities.**
- Be an active part of deanery and diocesan projects. It is important to share resources with fellow parishes.
  - Inform your local parish about how diocesan and archdiocesan SOYO works. They should know that they are a part of a bigger working picture!
  - Word of mouth is the best form of advertisement. Send fliers, but don't neglect a phone call.
- 10. Make your presence known in the parish.**
- Display pictures and information about your activities, so that the parish will feel involved in your work.
  - Involve the parish in fundraising efforts. Fundraising is important for 2 reasons:
    - You'll need funds for traveling and for doing good works
    - The teamwork that goes along with raising money is priceless!
  - Invite parish members to participate in humanitarian efforts. It's inspiring for adults to see children helping their brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 11. IN ALL THAT YOU DO, KEEP CHRIST AS THE CENTER AND THE FOCUS. WHETHER YOU ARE IN WORSHIP TOGETHER OR SIMPLY ENJOYING FELLOWSHIP, ALWAYS BE MINDFUL THAT YOUR BEHAVIOR IS PLEASING TO GOD.**

## Tips to Be Treasured by the Parish Priest

1. Stay involved: your presence at a SOYO function means more to the teens than one can imagine. They follow your example even when you aren't looking!
2. Hand-pick the Youth Director and Advisors of SOYO. Our children and teens deserve our most talented laity to serve them!
3. Stay updated: be aware of what your SOYO does. This shows your love and concern for them and it also enables you to guide them when they stray off the path. Be sure to relay all information that is mailed to the Church office for the youth by the Diocese and Archdiocese!
4. Never underestimate their intelligence. Teach them with all of your ability.
5. Include a legitimate and accurate amount of money for Youth Ministry in your parish budget. This lays seeds of seriousness towards youth work in our parishes and may lead to the hiring of a full-time youth director!
6. Occasionally allow the teens to sing at Vespers or other special services. Their participation in the Liturgical life of our Church is as important as anything else they do. They must be encouraged and equipped to be involved!
7. If your schedule allows, spend some personal and individual time with your youth. The greatest impact comes through personal, one-on-one contact. These are the times when they most remember your words!
8. Be strong, loving and wise when disciplining the youth. They cannot be allowed "to skate" when they make a mistake. Only when we learn boundaries do we learn how to see the difference between right and wrong!
9. Love the children and pray fervently for them. They need you!

**Our children are both the present and the future of the Church.**

**They will be tomorrow whatever we make of them today!**