

2019 ACYOA Juniors Lenten Retreat Guidebook

"In One Chord: Finding Harmony in an Out-of-Tune World"



DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH (EASTERN)

Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

Table of Contents

- I. Table of Contents - *Page 2*
- II. Welcome Letter - *Page 3*
- III. Sample Schedules
 - A. Day-Long - *Page 4*
 - B. Overnight - *Page 5*
 - C. Weekend - *Page 6*
- IV. Sample Registration Form - *Page 7*
- V. Sample Permission Form - *Page 8*
- VI. Sample Code of Conduct Form - *Page 9*
- VII. Sample What You Need To Know Information Sheet - *Page 10*
- VIII. Retreat Center Questions - *Page 11*
- IX. Chapel Supplies - *Page 12*
- X. Food and Supplies Shopping Recommendations - *Page 13*
- XI. Session 1: Introductions & Icebreakers - *Page 14*
- XII. Session 2: Bible Study - *Page 16*
- XIII. Session 3: Video and Discussion - *Page 17*
- XIV. Session 4: Lecture and PowerPoint - *Page 18*
- XV. Session 5: Hands-On Team Building Activity - *Page 22*
- XVI. Additional Fellowship Activities - *Page 23*

February 12, 2019

Dear Pastors, Parish Council Chairs, Youth Advisors and ACYOA Seniors Chairs,

As we approach the season of Great Lent, our department has created this guidebook with nuts-to-bolts instructions to equip you with the resources needed to hold a parish youth retreat. The Lenten season provides a wonderful opportunity for our faithful to reflect on the many distractions that keep them from strengthening their spiritual discipline, as well as to prepare them for the joyful celebration of Easter. This year's retreat sessions will focus on the theme of ***In One Chord: Finding Harmony in an Out-of-Tune World.***

In this guidebook, we are providing our parishes with detailed lesson plans for this year's ACYOA Juniors Lenten Retreats. You will find sample schedules, a sample registration form, a sample permission form, a sample Code of Conduct, a sample information sheet, along with detailed lesson plans for icebreakers, bible study, video and discussion, a powerpoint presentation, and a hands-on team building activity. We hope this will assist you in the execution of day-long, overnight, or even weekend-long retreats that will be organized and led by your parish leadership. It is our intent, that these retreats will open the doors for pastors and youth advisors to directly interact with their young parishioners and make lasting connections within the Church community.

Each parish has the freedom to choose the date that will work for their community, though parishes are welcome to team up with neighboring parishes to create a regional retreat. We suggest that pastors select a committee that will oversee the retreat's organization and implementation. We will work with all of our area pastors and youth advisers to ensure that this transition is a success, and we will be available by phone or email throughout the planning stages of your retreats. With this new initiative, we encourage parishes to reach out to their local ACYOA Seniors for assistance in planning and executing these retreats, further helping to bridge the gap between Juniors and Seniors.

We look forward to receiving your feedback about the materials being provided and to hearing all about your ACYOA Juniors Lenten Retreat.

Warm regards,

The Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

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(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA JUNIORS DAY-LONG RETREAT**

SATURDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

10:00 AM	Registration and Welcome
10:30 AM	Morning Service
11:00-11:30 AM	Session 1: Icebreakers
11:30-12:30 PM	Session 2: Bible Study
12:30-1:15 PM	Lunch and Break
1:15-2:15 PM	Session 3: Video and Discussion
2:15-2:30 PM	Break
2:30-3:30 PM	Session 4: PowerPoint Presentation
3:30-4:00 PM	Vespers

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA JUNIORS OVERNIGHT RETREAT/LOCK-IN**

SATURDAY, (*INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR*)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 4:00 – 4:15 PM | Registration and Welcome |
| 4:15 - 5:00 PM | Session 1: Icebreakers |
| 5:00 – 6:00 PM | Session 2: Bible Study |
| 6:00 – 6:30 PM | Outdoor Break or Organized Indoor Activity |
| 6:30 – 7:30 PM | Session 3: Video and Discussion |
| 7:30 – 8:30 PM | Dinner |
| 8:30 – 9:30 PM | Session 4: PowerPoint Presentation |
| 9:30 – 10:00 PM | Vespers |
| 10:00 PM – 12:00 AM | Campfire, Fellowship, and Snack |
| 12:00 – 12:30 AM | Clean-up and Prepare for Bed |
| 12:30 AM | Lights Out |

SUNDAY (*INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR*)

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 9:00 – 10:00 AM | Wake-up, Clean-up and Get Ready for Church |
| 10:00 AM | Church |
| 12:00 PM | Fellowship and Lunch in Church Hall |
| 1:00 PM | Depart Church |

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA JUNIORS WEEKEND-LONG RETREAT AT RETREAT CENTER**

FRIDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

8:00 – 8:30 PM	Check-in and Arrival
8:30 – 9:15 PM	Pizza Dinner
9:15 – 10:30 PM	Session 1: Introduction and Icebreakers
10:30 – 11:00 PM	Evening Service
11:00 – 11:30 PM	Fellowship and Snack
11:30 PM	To Dorms/Cabins
12:00 PM	Lights Out

SATURDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

8:00 AM	Wake-up
8:30 – 9:15 AM	Breakfast
9:15 – 9:45 AM	Morning Service
9:45 – 10:15 AM	<i>Break</i>
10:15 – 11:15 AM	Session 2: Bible Study
11:15 – 11:30 AM	<i>Break</i>
11:30 – 12:30 PM	Session 3: Video and Discussion
12:30 – 1:00 PM	<i>Break</i>
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Lunch & Group Photo
2:00 – 4:00 PM	Outdoor Fun
4:00 – 5:00 PM	Session 4: PowerPoint Presentation
5:00 – 6:00 PM	<i>Prepare for Dinner</i>
6:00 – 7:30 PM	Dinner & Break
7:30 – 9:00 PM	Session 5: Hands-On Team Building Activity
9:00 – 9:30 PM	Evening Service
9:30 – 11:00 PM	Games, Fellowship and Snack
11:00 PM	To Dorms
12:00 PM	Lights Out

SUNDAY, (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

8:00 AM	Wake-up
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Pack Up, Clean Up and Load Cars/Buses
9:00 AM	Depart Retreat Center and Travel to Church
10:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Divine Liturgy, Worship as a group
12:00 PM	Fellowship and Lunch in Church Hall
1:00 PM	Depart Church

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA Juniors Retreat**
 (INSERT LOCATION NAME)
 (INSERT LOCATION ADDRESS)
 (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

Registration Form

Name: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

Gender: Male Female **Grade in School:** _____ **Age:** _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Home Phone: _____ **Participant Cell Phone:** _____

Participant Email: _____

T-shirt Size (adult sizes): S M L XL XXL

PRIMARY PARENT/GUARDIAN	SECONDARY PARENT/GUARDIAN
Name:	Name:
Cell Number:	Cell Number:
Email:	Email:

About you...

1. How many retreats have you attended (or is this your first retreat)? _____
2. Have you attended the ACYOA Juniors Fall Sports Weekend? YES NO
3. Have you attended the ACYOA Juniors Hye M’rtsoom? YES NO
4. Have you attended the St. Nersess Summer Conferences? YES NO
5. Do you attend Hye Camp or St. Vartan Camp? YES NO
6. Do you attend any other camps? If so, which? _____
7. Anything you would like the retreat staff to know about you? Please answer in the space below:

_____ Yes, my permission form has been completed and submitted.

_____ Yes, my *Code of Conduct* has been read, discussed and signed by me and a parent.

_____ Yes, I have received the “What You Need to Know” Information Sheet

_____ Yes, my payment of (INSERT COST) is enclosed. Check #: _____ Cash: _____

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA Juniors Retreat**
(INSERT LOCATION NAME)
(INSERT LOCATION ADDRESS)
(INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

PERMISSION FORM

I hereby give permission for my son/daughter _____
to travel by bus, van or car with the ACYOA Juniors, under the supervision of all chaperones who travel
with the group to the (INSERT LOCATION NAME AND LOCATION ADDRESS), for a weekend retreat
sponsored by the (INSERT PARISH NAME), (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR).

I understand that the bus, van or car will leave from church on Friday afternoon and will return to
church on Sunday afternoon. The times will be communicated in advance to each parish community.

I hereby release the retreat center, parishes and chaperones from any liability that may occur during this
event. In case of emergency, I understand that every effort will be made to contact a parent or legal
guardian. In the event that I cannot be reached, I give permission for my child to receive emergency
treatment.

Parent/Guardian SIGNATURE: _____ **Date:** _____

PRIMARY PARENT/GUARDIAN	SECONDARY PARENT/GUARDIAN
Name:	Name:
Home Number:	Home Number:
Cell Number:	Cell Number:
Business Number:	Business Number:

Name of Insurance Plan Carrier: _____

Insurance Number: _____

Name of Insured: _____ **Date of Birth of Insured:** ____/____/____

Does Insurance Company have to be notified in an emergency? Yes No

If applicable, please state any medical condition, medication, allergies, etc., that we should be aware:

*****If your child will be taking medication with him/her on the trip,
please advise us and bring the medication in its original container.*****

(INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) **ACYOA Juniors Retreat** | (INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. As members of the ACYOA, we are part of a Christian youth organization and expect Christian standards of behavior at all times. Therefore, all participants and chaperones shall be treated with respect and dignity at all times.
2. We are a community – we all need to clean-up after ourselves, share the facilities, and treat the facilities with respect. The destruction, misuse, or abuse of property will not be tolerated. Those found responsible for such behavior will be held financially liable.
3. Be on time and follow the schedule! You are expected to participate in all activities. All are expected to follow curfew and lights out. Once lights are out, no one is permitted to leave the cabin without a chaperone.
4. No boys are to enter the girls' cabins, and no girls are to enter the boys' cabins for any reason. No excuses!
5. Proper dress and language are expected at all times.
6. No weapons of any kind, firecrackers, or inappropriate audio/video recordings are permitted.
7. I will not participate in the transportation, selling, purchasing, or consumption of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, illegal drugs, or use of paraphernalia of any kind while participating in the retreat. This includes, but is not limited to, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, snuff, chewing tobacco, vaporizers, hookahs, pipes, bongs, vials, rolling papers, and shot glasses, etc. I understand that having any of these items with me during the retreat is cause for immediate dismissal due to our zero tolerance policy on drugs and alcohol.
8. Cell phones should be turned off during the retreat, especially during all sessions and through the night. They may be used only for emergency or to call home, as needed.
9. Take someone with you when you walk outside – and make sure you inform a chaperone of where you are going. Do not walk near the water (including the river, pond, and lake). No participants shall leave the retreat center grounds without the permission of (ENTER PARISH PASTOR NAME).
10. Participate in discussions, share your ideas, and remember to listen to others. Everyone deserves a chance to speak, and everyone deserves to be heard.

Any serious violation of these rules by participants will be evaluated on an individual basis and dealt with quickly and firmly and may result in expulsion of the retreat. The participant's family will be responsible for his/her removal from the retreat center. There will be no refunds for participants asked to leave for disciplinary reasons. *Please note: Depending on the nature of the violation, it may be required to contact the local authorities.*

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CODE OF CONDUCT, AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE ABOVE INFORMATION.

Participant Name PRINT: _____

Participant SIGNATURE: _____

Parent/Guardian SIGNATURE: _____

Date: _____

“WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW” Information Sheet
for the (INSERT PARISH OR REGION NAME) ACYOA Juniors Retreat

(INSERT EMERGENCY NAME AND CELL PHONE NUMBER OF PARISH CONTACT)

(INSERT PHOTOS SPECIFIC TO YOUR ACYOA)

When & Where?

The weekend-long retreat will take place *(INSERT MONTH, DAY, YEAR)* at *(INSERT LOCATION NAME AND ADDRESS)*. Please plan on arriving between *(INSERT TIME)* on *(INSERT DAY)* and departing around *(INSERT TIME)* on *(INSERT DAY)*.

What to Bring?

- Toiletries (i.e. shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, etc.)
- Clothes (i.e. casual and comfortable clothes, warm pajamas, a heavy winter coat, boots, hat, gloves, scarf, etc.)
- Bathrobe, flip-flops, etc for the shared bathrooms.
- Bedding (i.e. sleeping bag, sheets and/or blanket, pillow, towels & washcloth. Bedding will not be provided, so please bring your own.)
- Other: Bible, camera, board games, cards, puzzles, flashlight, reusable water bottle.

Be ready to disconnect and leave technology at home!

Who Will be There?

This is a great opportunity to meet new friends, rekindle old friendships, and get to know the people who care about you and the Armenian Church. In addition to seeing all the friends you’ve made over the years through the ACYOA, Hye Camp, St. Vartan Camp, St. Nersess Summer Conferences, Hye M’rtsoom and Fall Sports Weekends, you’ll get to meet some people you might not know yet

What to Expect?

You will have a chance to ask questions, share your opinions, share your concerns, and learn new things. You will have lots of opportunities to “hang out”, have fun and relax with old friends and make some new ones! We will all learn from each other and grow together in our faith and friendship. Expect to have a great time!

Please contact your pastor or youth adviser with any questions.

Retreat Center Questions

Planning a day-long or overnight lock-in at your parish is the easiest and most cost-effective way to give your youth an opportunity for fellowship and faith-development. However, if you have a very large group or you plan to host a regional retreat with neighboring parishes, you might consider hosting your Lenten Retreat at a designated retreat center. The following are a list of questions that you may want to ask when you are doing research for the perfect retreat center for your group.

1. What are the dates of availability?
2. How far is this retreat center from the parish?
3. What is the minimum number of participants we must have? What is the maximum number that we can have?
4. What is the cost per person? Is there a discount for the leader, priest(s), or chaperones? *(Note: Some places charge 2 for 1 for all adults to encourage a higher participant to chaperone ratio.)*
5. What are the sleeping accommodations? Cabins? Dorms?
 - a. How many can each building accommodate?
 - b. Are there separate spaces/cabins for boys and girls?
 - c. Is there a separate space for the priest(s) to sleep? For the leader to sleep?
 - d. What are the bathroom facilities like?
6. Is there a chapel? Is there a space to hold morning and evening services?
7. Is there a meeting room?
 - a. How many can the space accommodate?
 - b. Are there tables and chairs available?
8. Audio Visual Questions:
 - a. Is WiFi accessible?
 - b. Can you provide a LCD Projector? Screen? Speakers? DVD/TV?
9. Is there a kitchen staff to prepare meals?
 - a. Can you order pizza delivery and bring in outside food?
 - b. Do we get to choose meals?
 - c. Are you able to make Lenten friendly (meatless) meals?
 - d. Do you provide snacks as part of your meal plan?
 - e. Are we allowed to bring in snacks?
10. What is your water system? Is it well water? Can you provide pitchers/coolers of ice water throughout the day or do we need to bring in bottled water?
11. Are there any outdoor activities? Are they included in the fee? If not, what is the cost per person/activity? Is there a leader to lead them?
 - a. Nature walk?
 - b. Camp fire?
 - c. Ropes Course?
 - d. Indoor Gym or Game Room?
12. What is the contract set-up? Is there a deposit? Until when is it refundable? What are the insurance requirements?

Chapel Supplies

If you are utilizing a retreat center for your Lenten Retreat, this list serves as a item-by-item list of what you will need to bring in order to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, as well as Morning Matins and Evening Vespers. Please consult with your parish pastor before borrowing and utilizing these items.

If you are hosting a retreat at your parish, you will only need to have copies of the St. Nersess Matins and Vespers Service booklets available.

Local parish to provide:

- 2-6 Shabigs and *Oorars*
- Poorvar
- Charcoal
- Matches or Lighter
- Incense Ark with Incense
- 2-6 Badarak Green Deacon Books
- Liturgical Gospel Book
- Liturgical Prayer Book for Celebrant
- Cloth to hold Gospel Book
- Communion Cloth
- White Cloth for Altar
- Chalice and Paten with Cover (*Dzadzgots*)
- 2 Candle Holders and 2 Candle Sticks
- Hand Towel
- Water Basin
- Water Pitcher
- St. Nersess Matins and Vespers Service booklets sufficient for all participants to share
 - <https://www.stnersess.edu/liturgical-services.html>
- Divine Liturgy Pew Books sufficient for all participants to share

Celebrant to bring:

- *Nshkar* (enough for your number of registrants)
- Vestments
- Slippers
- Hand-cross
- Wine
- A *Vemkar* (the square consecrated marble slab needed for Divine Liturgy where there is no consecrated altar)
- A Corporal (the square white cloth that covers the *Vemkar* - this is not the white altar cover)

Food and Supplies Shopping Recommendations

*If you are utilizing a retreat center for your Lenten Retreat, this list serves as a item-by-item list of what you **may** need to purchase. The quantities of these items will be based on your total registration numbers. Please be sure to share all dietary needs and allergies of your participants with the retreat center staff in advance, as well as requests for a Lenten-friendly/meat-free menu.*

If you are hosting a retreat at your parish, you can modify this list based on what meals and sessions you are planning to include.

Suggested Items for Saturday Lunch or Dinner (Day-Long or Overnight Retreat):

Paper plates, Napkins, Cups, Silverware and Serving Utensils
Cheese or Cheese/Veggie Pizza or Sandwich Delivery (average of 2.5 slices/small sandwiches per person)
Hummus, Bean Salad, and/or Tabouli
Grapes and Carrots
Soda and Bottled Water

Suggested Snacks (Day-Long, Overnight, or Weekend-Long Retreat):

Soda and Bottled Water
Rice Krispie Treats
Pretzels or Chips
Clementines and/or Apples
Twizzlers
Oreos

Suggested Snacks for Those Unable to Fast Sunday Morning (Overnight or Weekend-Long Retreat):

Juice Boxes
Nutri Grain Bars
String Cheese
GoGurt

Session Supplies:

Copies of Schedule, Bible Study, and Video Discussion Questions
Retreat Registration Packet copies (just in case)
Name tags

Optional Items:

Games: Puzzles, Cards, Sports Equipment, etc.
Ticky tack (Mounting Putty)
Chart Paper, Copy Paper, Post-Its, etc
Scissors and Glue Sticks
Tape and Stapler
Pens, Washable Markers, Dry Erase Markers, and Sharpie Markers
Lysol wipes

SESSION 1: Introductions and Icebreakers

Be sure to go around and have everyone introduce themselves with their name, age, and their answer to the special question (i.e. favorite ice cream, favorite hobby, personal hero, etc.). Select one or more of the icebreakers below, based on your registration numbers and time available.

Think Quick:

This is a very simple game that can help people learn and reinforce each other's names while having fun. Ask the group to stand in a circle and have each person say their name. Now, throw a tennis ball to someone in the group. They have 2-seconds to call the name of someone and throw the ball to them. If they cannot remember a name, then that person is out of the game. The round ends when the only people left know everyone's name in the group.

M&M's:

Have every person take a handful of M&Ms (vary the amount based on size of group). Before eating them, they are to share something for every M&M color. Have the group answer each question color by color. The below list is a sample of questions... feel free to assign your own!

- Red - Something you like to do for fun
- Green - Something they cherish about their family
- Yellow - Something they have planned in the future they are excited about
- Blue - What quality do you appreciate most in a friend
- Orange - An ideal vacation spot
- Brown - If you knew you couldn't fail, what is something you would like to do in the next 5 years

Stand Up If:

Sit in a circle so everyone can see each other. State a series of statements one by one. If the statement applies to them, they stand up in their place. Here are some possible statements you can use.

Stand up if...

- ... you are __ years old (13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, other)
- ... you are from... (list parishes, cities and/or states)
- ... you have been to a Fall Sports Weekend or Hye M'rtsoom before
- ... you have attended (St. Nersess Summer Conferences, St. Vartan Camp, Hye Camp)
- ... you have been to Armenia
- ... you have been to Jerusalem
- ... you have never left the country
- ... you are a dog person, cat person
- ... you speak another language
- ... you like to run
- ... you prefer the mountains, the beach, the city
- ... your favorite color is blue, green, red, pink, purple, orange, yellow, nothing I said
- ... you have broken a bone
- ... you wear glasses or contacts

Circle Chats:

Make two circles with the same amount of people in each circle. One circle will be inside the larger circle. Have the inner circle and outer circle face each other, about an arms length away. Once the circles are assembled, have each person find their partner by reaching out and shaking their hand. Tell participants you will be asking them a series of questions. The inner person will share first for 30 seconds, and then the facilitator will call out "Switch!" and the outer person will share for the next 30 seconds.

IMPORTANT: For each next question you ask, have only the inner circle rotate one person to their right. This way, they are speaking with new people for each question.

1. What superpower do you wish you had and why?
2. If someone made a movie of your life, would it be a drama, a comedy, action, or science fiction? Why?
3. What is your favorite color to wear? Why?
4. Name one of your favorite things about someone in your family or a close friend. Explain.
5. What type of people do you like hanging out with and why?
6. What is one thing you would like to learn during your lifetime?
7. If you could have the answer to any question, what would the question be and why?
8. Where do you most want to travel to and why?

If you have the time, and the participants are enjoying themselves, feel free to add in as many questions as you'd like!

SESSION 2: Bible Study

Break your participants up into groups of 6-8 people, and assign an adult facilitator to lead each group's discussion. Distribute the Bible Study handouts, and have the groups spread out to find a quiet spot to themselves. Remind each group to begin by going around their discussion circle and introducing themselves to reinforce each other's names.

"In Harmony" (See attached handout for participant copy.)

Stuck in a rut. Feeling blue. In a funk. Followed by a rain cloud.

There are many clever ways of saying that we aren't feeling our best. When too many things are tugging at our attention, we can feel out of sync, or out of harmony, with ourselves and with those around us. How lucky we are, then, to belong to the Armenian Church, which gives us a meaningful community through which we can re-focus our attention to God and re-tune ourselves to the song of salvation.

Read **Romans 12:9-21** and discuss the following questions:

1. Can you describe the difference between genuine love and insincere love? What role does genuine love play in you feeling harmonious with your peers?
2. What does it mean to "contribute to the needs of the saints"? What does it mean to "show hospitality to strangers"? How can we do these things, practically speaking, in our daily lives?
3. What are the similarities and differences between rejoicing with someone and mourning with someone? How can both of these things bring you into deeper community with others?
4. Is there someone in your life with whom you are not at peace? What led you to this disharmony? How does this discord affect your state of mind?
5. Why do you think we tend to focus on the evil and disharmony in the world? How can this negatively impact your personal life? What are some strategies that can help you filter out the evil and focus on the good?
6. List a few things from your daily habits that prevent you from spending time with God. How can their absence bring you back into harmony with yourself, with your Church, and with God?

In closing, reflect on the words from the *sharagan* we sing during the Kiss of Peace:

*"This Church has now become one soul, the kiss is given for a full bond.
The enmity has been removed; and love is spread over us all."*

Romans 12:9-21 (NRSV): **9** Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; **10** love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. **11** Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. **12** Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. **13** Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. **14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. **16** Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. **17** Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. **18** If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. **19** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." **20** No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

SESSION 3: Video and Discussion

Before the retreat, the facilitator should watch the video to prepare for the discussion questions. On the day of the retreat, configure the room so it is conducive for viewing the video. Be sure to test your technology (i.e. Laptop/LCD Projector/Speakers) to ensure that it is working. If you have more than ten participants, break them up into small groups of 6-8 people. Make sure everyone in the small group knows each other's names. Provide approximately 20-30 minutes for the discussion questions.

If you do not have internet access and need a hard copy, then please let us know and the DYYAM will gladly ship you a DVD.

“RHYTHM” Nooma Video by Rob Bell

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZim8MQQ5es>

Pre-Video Whole Group Discussion Question:

Which frame of mind are you in right now...I feel in tune with my faith and connection to God or I could use a tune up? Explain.

Post-Video Small Group Discussion Questions: (See attached handout for participant copy.)

1. What do you believe about God's involvement in our daily lives?
2. What images do you have of God? What or who has helped shape the images that you have?
3. Have you ever had moments in your life where you wonder and ask, "Where is God?" What made you feel this way? What was this like?
4. What does it mean for you to be in or out of tune with the song? Is it hard to believe in and desire God when you feel out of tune with him and/or his church?
5. Can you believe in God and be out of tune with the song? Does it work the other way around? What is more important to Jesus: what we believe or what we do?
6. Do you believe that if you live the way Jesus taught us to live, being in tune with the song, that you "will have life in its fullest"?
7. In what areas of your life do you feel most connected to God? In what areas do you wish you could be more in tune with him? Explain.

Whole Group Wrap-Up:

What will you take away from our discussion today? How can you incorporate this into your daily life to get more in tune with God?

SESSION 4: Lecture and PowerPoint

This session will be a whole-group presentation, led by a clergyman or lay-leader. Configure the room so it is conducive for viewing a powerpoint presentation with a speaker. Be sure to test your technology (i.e. Laptop/LCD Projector/Speakers) to ensure that it is working.

Below are some talking points to help the facilitator flesh out the powerpoint slides. However, he or she may choose to personalize the content as they wish!

Taking Spiritual Care of Ourselves: Twelve Steps for the Nourishment of Our Souls

This lecture and attached powerpoint was inspired by the faithful guidance of Mother Christophora, Abbess of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration.

Every vessel in the Church needs replenishing. Oil candles need to be refilled. The chalice needs to be polished. The flowers need to be refreshed. Even the choir needs to be tuned and rehearsed. It is natural for things to slowly grow empty, to need retuning back to their best selves. The same goes for our clergymen, and the same goes for each and every one of us. Spiritual Care does just that.

Spiritual care is the continual nourishment we give to our souls in order to strengthen our relationship with God. This may be accomplished through a number of spiritual practices, including but not limited to: prayer, journaling, fasting, thanksgiving, fellowship, communion, and praise.

STEPS FOR SPIRITUAL CARE:

1. Take Part in Confession and Communion

- a. Regular confession of sins and absolution are necessary in order to be spiritually prepared to approach, and fully appreciate the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist. *(Source: Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church Pew Book, Printed by St. Vartan Press)*
- b. We should consider the regular reception of Holy Communion to be at the center of our lives as members of the Armenian Church. *(Source: "Frequently-Asked Questions on the Badarak" by Michael Daniel Findikyan)*
- c. The act of revealing struggles and sins is a holy and healthy act. Without acknowledging your shortcomings, you risk missing out on revelation and growth. There is something special about the Armenian Church's tradition of confessing as a whole Church. It makes each parishioner accountable to the other. In essence, everyone is saying, "I too, struggle with that. I will help you bear your burden." No matter your differences, you always come to the table of the Lord and eat the feast of Holy Communion with your neighbors. THAT is the most unifying act of the Church.

- d. Although it has fallen out of common practice within our Church, our faithful are encouraged to have a private confession with their pastor at any time.
- e. 1 John 1:9; John 6:56; and 1 Corinthians 11:26

2. Attend Liturgical Services

- a. Worship does not just take place on Sunday. We have so many beautiful services that you can take part in through the daily liturgical hours such as the Morning Service, Evening Service, and Night Service, among others. There are additional prayer services each day, such as the Sunrise, Rest, Peace, Midday (3rd, 6th and 9th hours of the day) Services. To learn more about these prayer services you can find them on <https://www.stnersess.edu/liturgical-services.html>.
- b. Ritual and routine are good for your brain and development.
- c. These services provide you additional time to be with your community.

3. Make a Daily Prayer Routine

- a. Set the tone for your day and help yourself make better choices by keeping God in the forefront of your brain. Regular prayer makes you disciplined, and it strengthens your communication and relationship with God.
- b. Prayer doesn't have to be formal, and it doesn't necessarily have to be words. You can walk, hike, sing, journal, recite a poem, or just being in the presence of God, etc.
- c. Ephesians 6:18

4. Participate in the Church's Fasting Calendar

- a. Abstaining allows you to focus on spiritual nourishment by carefully watching what physical nourishment you put into your bodies. For centuries, fasting in the Armenian Church has typically looked like removing meat and dairy from your diet for specific times in the Church calendar year. Fasting occurs during Lent and Heesnag (before Easter and before Nativity), leading up to certain Feast Days, and every Wednesday and Friday.
- b. Fasting typically pertains to abstaining from certain foods, but in our modern era, we have the ability to expand our understanding of fasting to anything "unnecessary" and "distracting" in our lives. For example, you may be medically unable to abstain from meat protein, but you can certainly abstain from social media, from spending frivolous money, from watching TV, etc. Removing these things from your daily habits can allow you to add things to your life such as reading the Scriptures, spending time in prayer, etc.

5. Read the Holy Scriptures

- a. Reading the Bible provides us with spiritual nourishment and opportunities for discernment. It contains so much wisdom, inspiration, and direction, in addition to containing the Holy words of Christ himself!
- b. The bible is a book of questions, not answers.
- c. Reading is neurologically good for your brain.

6. Study the Writings of the Holy Fathers

- a. The Bible isn't the only thing we read and use for wisdom and instruction! The Bible, liturgy and worship, writings of the church fathers, church councils, saints, canons,

religious art and rituals — organically linked together — formulate the Holy Tradition of the Church. (Source: <https://stjohnarmenianchurch.com/what-we-believe>)

- b. Take time to read the teachings of Holy Fathers and find ways to apply their lessons to your daily life. You can start by reading the poems of St. Gregory of Narek.
- c. The stories of the Saints are also inspiring and useful for helping us make decisions in the face of life's difficulties.

7. Grow Through Classes and Bible Studies

- a. Being a lifelong learner is so important for us, as we are constantly evolving and changing. Being a Christian does not stop when we are baptized, nor does it only take place on Sundays. It is something we must work on each day.
- b. We cannot learn about our faith alone. Simply opening up our Bible and memorizing Scriptures will not be enough to apply the lessons to our lives. We have to learn in community and live these lessons in relation with one another.
- c. The Scriptures cannot be taken at face value. One has to dive deep to understand history, context, language, etc. It is helpful and encouraging to do that with others, and with a teacher who has greater understanding of the text.
- d. Don't be afraid of asking questions or of doubting. This is how we grow and develop.

8. Make Time for Silence, Solitude, and Stillness

- a. We live in a world in which we are constantly bombarded with external noises. It is so important for us to be able to turn off the noise and just sit in silence and allow ourselves to communicate with God through prayer and conversation and try our very best to listen.
- b. As much as we live out our faith in community, it is important to reflect personally and privately. We need to take time to recharge our batteries, and one of the best ways of doing that is to disconnect from the outside world.
- c. Mark 1:35 and Luke 6:12-13
- d. Meditation is so healthy for your brain!
 - i. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/04/harvard-researchers-study-how-mindfulness-may-change-the-brain-in-depressed-patients/>
 - ii. https://www.project-meditation.org/a_wim1/statistics_on_people_who_meditate.html

9. Create a Healthy Habit of Diet and Exercise

- a. Our bodies are made in the image and likeness of Christ and should be treated like a temple. In order for us to be able to fully be able to care and love others we must love ourselves.
- b. Proper diet and exercise are biologically good: endorphins, vitamins, nutrients, etc.
- c. Proper diet and exercise are spiritually good: when our body is healthy, our mind is at greater peace, and we can take the time to focus on caring for our mental health.
- d. Genesis 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 3:16

10. Embrace Opportunities for Grief

- a. Grief is a normal and natural response to loss. Grieving such losses are important because it allows us to 'free-up' energy that is bound to the lost person, object, or experience—so that we might re-invest that energy elsewhere. Healthy grieving results

in an ability to remember the importance of our loss—but with a newfound sense of peace, rather than searing pain. (Source: <http://www.washington.edu/counseling/resources-for-students/healthy-grieving/>)

- b. Being emotionally healthy is an important aspect of our spiritual health. Suffering is a part of life, but we need to learn healthy patterns of coping.
- c. Matthew 5:4

11. Seek Out Opportunities for Forgiveness

- a. Forgiveness is the central part of the gospel and a good reminder of the amazing promises that God gives us.
- b. To withhold forgiveness keeps alive emotions of hurt, anger and blame which discolor your perception of life. To forgive, avoid ruminating on thoughts of being wronged. Rather, trust the power of forgiveness to heal the hurt and pain. Forgiveness means to let go of hatred, instead of allowing it to eat at you. (Source: <https://medium.com/the-mission/how-the-power-of-forgiveness-will-set-you-free-8b3c95068bc2>)
- c. Matthew 6: 9-15

12. Find Ways to Serve Others

- a. Service is one of the five Circles of the Cross (Worship, Witness, Education, SERVICE, and Fellowship)
- b. Sometimes the best way to nourish ourselves is to nourish others.
- c. It is important to serve not just within our parish communities, but within our communities at large.
- d. “Be the change you wish to see in the world!”
- e. Matthew 20:28; Romans 12:13; and Matthew 25: 35-40

SESSION 5: Hands-On Team Building Activity

“Make Some Music”

A Hands-On Team Building Activity (45-60 minutes)

In honor of just having fun in fellowship, and finding inspiration in whatever you have access to, the following activity echos the theme of unity and harmony. Participants will break up into small groups of 6-8 people to create a musical band. They will be challenged to create musical instruments out of objects lying around the parish and/or retreat center. By putting their heads together, the goal is to come up with fun and creative ways to use these common household objects in order to make a song to honor what they have learned during the retreat.

We suggest videotaping your songs to share on social media as a fun reminder of the lessons and conversations from the retreat! Spread the word about how ACYOA can help our youth work together and keep one another in tune, with each other, and with God.

“Your group will be given 20-30 minutes for this activity. You will be challenged to create musical instruments out of objects lying around the parish and/or retreat center and develop a 30-60 second song. Groups will then come back together as a whole group to perform their songs for one another. Once all performances are complete, talk about the challenges you might have initially faced when trying to form your instruments and band, and discuss how you worked together to get in-tune with each other to create beautiful harmony.”

Here are some examples in case the participants (or you) are stumped.

- Tambourine: staple 2 paper plates together with dry beans or rice in the middle. Shake for sound.
- Noise maker: tape one end closed and fill halfway with rice or beans, then tape the other end closed and shake.
- Drum: flip a box over and pound on it with your hands or with sticks.
- Drumming: use empty water bottles as “drum sticks.” Imitate rhythm, drum to music, drum different places to hear different noises.
- Windpipe: cut straws in varying sizes and tape together in size order. Blow through the holes to make beautiful sounds.
- Cymbals: Find two pot covers and simply strike them together.
- Xylophone: Find tall glasses or jars and fill the glasses or jars with different amounts of water. The more water in the glass, the lower the pitch will be. Having less water in the glass or jar will raise the pitch. To play, gently strike the glasses with a mixing spoon.
- Guitar: Find an empty shoe box and remove the cover from the box. Stretch the rubber bands around the box. Attach a ruler or stick to the back of the box on one end to act as the arm of the guitar. To play, strum or pluck the rubber bands.

Additional Fellowship Activities

Dutch Auction

The Dutch Auction is an ideal program to be run at any time, since it can be used to fill any length of time, can be announced and organized spur-of-the-moment, and can easily involve the entire group. It costs nothing, requires little set-up and minimum clean-up, and is fun for everyone. Each group is asked to take one garbage bag or bed sheet, and fill it with ten random items.

As the groups arrive at the chosen area, they sit together in a circle, and the groups form a horseshoe formation. The announcer will be positioned at the open end of the horseshoe. A panel of judges will sit together in the front of the room, listening to the responses from each group and deciding on the winner.

The announcer calls out a question, and the group collaborates to select the “best” or “funniest” item to try and sell it to the judges. You can keep track of the team points from each round for fun, but it is not necessary. All groups will be expected to return the items to their proper places/owners.

1. What is the one item you would need when stranded on an island?
2. What is an essential item to pack for a cruise?
3. What is the secret ingredient for the best church choreg?
4. What would you never want to be caught wearing on your head?
5. Select and explain which item is most needed for a relaxing day off from work or school.
6. What is something that would most assist you when babysitting for your little cousins?
7. What tool would help you in making a new hit song?
8. As the world’s best dog-groomer, what is your secret tool?
9. If you were to travel to Armenia, what would you bring to win over your long-lost family?
10. If you were being chased by a bear, what would you use to defend yourself?

Compliment Circle

Chaperones can lead a Compliment Circle in the cabins, once everyone is ready for bed as a group bonding experience.

1. Ask the group to form a circle.
2. Tell the participants that they are about to participate in a Compliment Circle.
3. Explain that in the Compliment Circle, one by one, each participant will go around and tell the Receiver what they admire and respect about them.
4. Ask a participant to volunteer to be the first “Receiver” – the one to be admired and complimented.
5. This will continue until everyone in the circle has been the Receiver.

Questions to debrief with the group:

- How did you feel as the Receiver before you were given feedback from the other participants?
- How did you feel as the Receiver after you were admired and given compliments?
- How did it feel to think about and share a compliment with someone else?
- How did it feel to let someone know what you admire about them?
- How can personal strength and confidence help you make tough decisions?