

2020 ACYOA Juniors Lenten Retreat Guidebook

"In Communion: Connecting with Others, Ourselves, and God"



DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH (EASTERN)

Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

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December 20, 2019

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

In preparation for next year's 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 strengthen their spiritual discipline and to prepare them for the joyful celebration of Easter. This year's retreat sessions will focus on the theme of ***In Communion: Connecting with Others, Ourselves, and God.***

We would like to thank our primate, Bishop Daniel Findikyan, for his support of this endeavor and for allowing us to use his presentation from the ACYOA Seniors Fall Retreat as a foundation for this topic. In addition, we would like to thank Fr. Hratch Sargysan for his guidance and attention to detail when reviewing the materials in their final stages.

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, small group discussions, presentations, and a hands-on 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. *Please keep in mind that this guidebook contains the raw materials of each presentation; clergymen and presenters should feel free to add their own personality and modify the sessions to meet the specific needs of their audiences.*

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 be available by phone or email throughout the planning stages of your retreats if you have any questions or need additional guidance. We also encourage parishes to reach out to their local ACYOA Seniors for assistance in planning and executing these retreats, especially since this guidebook was adapted from the sessions of this year's ACYOA Seniors National Fall Retreat.

We look forward to hearing all about your ACYOA Juniors Lenten Retreat!

Warmest regards,

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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: In Communion with Others
12:30-1:15 PM	Lunch & Group Photo
1:15-2:15 PM	Session 3: In Communion with Ourselves
2:15-2:30 PM	Break
2:30-3:30 PM	Session 4: In Communion with God
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:** In Communion with Others
- 6:00 – 6:30 PM** Outdoor Break or Organized Indoor Activity
- 6:30 – 7:30 PM** **Session 3:** In Communion with Ourselves
- 7:30 – 8:30 PM** Dinner & Group Photo
- 8:30 – 9:30 PM** **Session 4:** In Communion with God
- 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: In Communion with Others
11:15 – 11:30 AM	<i>Break</i>
11:30 – 12:30 PM	Session 3: In Communion with Ourselves
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: In Communion with God
5:00 – 6:00 PM	<i>Prepare for Dinner</i>
6:00 – 7:30 PM	Dinner & Break
7:30 – 9:00 PM	Session 5: Making Nshkhar
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? _____

_____ 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: _____

_____ Yes, please charge my card (INSERT COST):

Credit Card Number: _____ *Exp. Date:* _____

(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 conditions, medications, 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.****

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 the 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 any water (including 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 who are 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: _____ **Date:** _____

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.

Sample T-Shirt Logo



In the event that you'd like to order t-shirts for your retreat, we've provided a mock-up shirt that includes the "In Communion" design with an ACYOA logo on the front and the Ephesians 4:2 passage on the back.

You are welcome to utilize a local t-shirt company, however, the DYYAM has been very happy over the years with our orders from Shorethings Enterprises, LLC, owned by Shant Kapeghian. If you have been a fan of the quality and comfort of all our camp and retreat t-shirts, and you'd like to support an Armenian-owned business, then look no further! If you have any questions about your order or about the products, do not hesitate to contact Shant directly.

Website: <https://shorethingsllc.com/>

Email: shant@shorethingsllc.com

Phone: 609-864-4516

You can choose a t-shirt, long sleeved shirt, or sweatshirt. When you are ready to place your order, make sure your email includes the style, color, and design you'd like on the shirts, along with a detailed outline of how many shirts you will need in each size. You can attach the two t-shirt mock-ups for reference. **Please be sure to place your final order two weeks before the date of your retreat to allow for timely shipping.**

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 an 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.

Checking In:

Have each person share a three-word check-in (one word for how they feel physically; one word for how they feel mentally/emotionally; and one word for how they feel spiritually).

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 is your favorite color and why?
2. If you could be an animal for a day, which would you choose and why?
3. If you won the lottery, what would be the first 3 things you would do with the money & why?
4. What is your favorite item of clothing and why is it your favorite?
5. What makes you feel the happiest and most fulfilled and why?
6. Who is the most important person in your life and why?
7. What talents and skills do you have?
8. If you only had one month to live, how would you spend your time? With whom?
9. When and where do you feel most like your real self? Why?
10. What is one word you think your friends and family would use to describe you and why?
11. If you have a horrible day, what is at least one thing you do to try to help yourself feel better?
12. What impression do you want to leave on each stranger you meet?

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

Good, Bad, and God:

This is a good icebreaker for digging a bit deeper and finding out how someone's week has really gone. Everyone shares something good that's happened, something bad that's happened, and something God did or spoke to your heart during the week.

SESSION 2: In Communion with Others

The first part of 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.

The second part of this session will be small-group discussions, with appointed leaders. Make sure that your groups are 5-8 people in size, and allow your groups to spread out so that they can focus on what the people in their groups are sharing.

Introductory PowerPoint Presentation (20 Minutes)

SLIDE 1: In Communion with Others (Title page)

SLIDE 2: *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”* (Ephesians 4:2)

- As we think about being *In Communion* with others, I want you to think about this passage and how each of us can strive to live it more fully in our daily interactions.
- What does it mean to bear with one another in love?
- Where do you struggle with this? Where are you successful?

SLIDE 3: *“Fulfillment in life isn’t about objects or possessions; true fulfillment is about our relationships and communication with each other. In today’s dominating tech world we are seeing more human disconnection than ever. Many friendships are virtual, and although we may have 500 or more friends on Facebook (or Instagram), many of us are lonely.”* - Kim Gimmell (The Value of Human Connection Unplugged)

- Do you agree with this quote? Do you feel that there is a disconnect amongst our friends online and our friends that we have in-person relationships with? Are you left feeling lonely sometimes, despite your popularity online? It’s no mystery that social media has changed the face of relationships in our society, and it’s important that we constantly take a deeper look at the role it plays in the health of our relationships, and our overall health in general.

SLIDE 4: The Happiness Study: The Harvard Happiness Study, almost 80 years old, reveals the secret to happiness: close, meaningful relationships with your community, family, and friends.

- The Harvard Study has found a strong association between happiness and close relationships, like spouses, family, friends, and social circles. “Personal connection creates mental and emotional stimulation, which are automatic mood boosters, while isolation is a mood buster,”

says Dr. Waldinger. This is also an opportunity to focus on positive relationships and let go of negative people in your life, or at least minimize your interactions with them. Robert J. Waldinger, who is the current head of the study: "The clearest message that we get from this 75-year study is this: Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Period."

SLIDE 5: 2 in 5 Americans report that they sometimes or always feel their social relationships are not meaningful.

- These next three slides are some alarming statistics Health Resources and Services Administration.
- 40 percent of Americans say they "sometimes or always feel their social relationships are not meaningful."

SLIDE 6: 1 in 5 Americans say they feel lonely or socially isolated.

- 20 percent describe themselves as, "lonely or socially isolated."
- 28 percent of older adults live alone.

SLIDE 7: Loneliness and social isolation can be as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

- From a pure physical health perspective, researchers say loneliness is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.
- According to a survey by Cigna last year, only about 50 percent of Americans have "meaningful in-person social interactions" on a daily basis, and the numbers are worse for Generation Z.

SLIDE 8: Healthy Relationships: *Mutual respect, Trust, Honesty, Compromise, Self-Esteem, Anger control, Communication, Problem solving, Understanding, Self-confidence*

- So how do we combat this growing trend of loneliness and isolation? It is more important than ever to understand what healthy relationships look like and to invest in people who nourish you.
- **Mutual respect:** Even in instances of disagreement, we are called to compassion, commitment, and kindness.
- **Trust:** At the heart of trust is love and loyalty. Being genuine and dependable strengthens any relationship.
- **Honesty:** It's important that we ground our relationships in reality. Honesty is the foundation upon which all friendships and relationships are built.
- **Compromise:** Finding balance is key. Compromise helps two people come to a mutual understanding by respecting the fact that everyone is allowed to have their own opinions.
- **Self-Esteem:** The love and respect you have for yourself will strengthen the love and respect you have for your relationships.
- **Anger control:** While anger is a natural human emotion, too much of it can be destructive.

- **Communication:** Arguments with those closest to us are inevitable, but the key to creating healthy relationships is knowing how to communicate differences.
- **Problem solving:** Overcome challenges by working as a team.
- **Understanding:** Everyone wants to be seen and heard, and it's important to listen with compassion.
- **Self-confidence:** Loving and believing in yourself allows others to show their gifts as well.

SLIDE 9: Unhealthy Relationships: Control/Isolation, Hostility, Intimidation, Neediness, Disrespect, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Verbal/Cyber Abuse.

SLIDE 10: *Examples of Healthy and Unhealthy relationships from TV/Media*

- Show visuals, and ask participants to identify the photos. Have them discuss which are healthy examples and which are unhealthy examples, and why.
- Ask them to share additional examples from pop culture that come to mind.

SLIDE 11: Separation from God: Pride, Envy, Anger, Laziness, Covetousness, Gluttony and Lust

- Take a moment to think about how, when we engage in these seven deadly sins, it can keep us from having healthy meaningful relationships with ourselves and others. How do each of these sins interfere with our day-to-day relationships?

SLIDE 12: Emotional Intelligence (EQ) : Communicate, Be Authentic, Be Helpful, Be Honest, Be Dependable, Show Appreciation, Show Empathy, Apologize.

- Working on and mastering these skills help us develop healthy relationships. We need to work on our EQ just as much as we do our IQ. Which one of these listed items are you the most successful at embodying? With which one do you struggle?

SLIDE 13: Maya Angelou's Quote: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

- When have you found this to be true in the way someone has treated you? Can you share an example that comes to mind?
- We may never know the impact we have on others, or at least not immediately. Don't let that limit you...do good anyways.

SLIDE 14: Breaking bread together is a sacred act. How often do we treat it as such? We are called to share our abundance. Sit with new people in your lunchrooms. Help your parents cook dinner.

- Think about the simple act of breaking bread together. How often does your family make time for this? Once a week? More? If so, you are in the minority. Very few families sit down together to eat dinner due to work, school, and sports schedules. We lack the time for personal

interaction without screen interference.

- What about in the lunchroom at school? Do you always sit with the same people? Are there people you see sitting by themselves? Are their cliques of people? How can you be a force of change to mix it up and get to know new people in an authentic way over lunch?
- As a child in the lunchroom, did you ever share your food with another student who did not have a meal packed? How can we be more mindful when reaching out to others?
- I'd like to share this video with you and get your feedback on how it made you feel after viewing it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDuA9OPyp6I>

SLIDE 15: Thank you! Get ready for small group discussions.

- We are now going to move into small groups to talk a little bit more about being in Communion with Others and what that means to you in your daily life.

Small Group Discussions (40 minutes)

Small groups can be led by adults/chaperones. If low on chaperones, you may utilize your oldest teens to lead the discussion. Feel free to use as many questions as you want, or as many as your time allows.

Independent brainstorm to begin:

1. Scribble a simple schedule of your typical day on a sheet of paper, and jot down the people, in life or online, you interact with on a regular basis.
2. Highlight the three key people in your life that you spend the most time with, outside of romantic relationships. What role do they play in your life?
3. Have any of these people played a role in shaping your faith and character? If so, how?

Discussion Questions:

1. Name the three key people in your life that you spend the most time with, outside of a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend. What role do they play in your life?
2. Describe the level of fulfillment you receive from these daily interactions. For example, is it meaningless chit chat, is it deeply philosophical interactions, or is it somewhere in between? Does the level of fulfillment of these relationships depend on the amount of time you interact with them? Explain.
3. Do you ever find that you separate your relationships into categories? (i.e. School, Work, Church, Gym, etc.) What is the reasoning behind this? Is this "strategy" meaningful, stressful, or just a matter of fact?

4. How comfortable are you in sharing your true authentic self in your daily interactions? Describe some of the difficulties you experience with allowing yourself to be vulnerable.
5. To what extent does your faith play a role in your daily interactions? How do these relationships either strengthen or challenge your faith? Explain.
6. Would you describe your relationships as well-balanced, or do you find yourself giving more, or taking more from the relationships? Are there any unhealthy relationships in your life that you would like to improve? If so, why?
7. Who do you know who always makes you feel heard and valued? What aspects of that person would you want to embody and bring into your own relationships in order to be more deeply in communion with others?

SESSION 3: In Communion with Ourselves

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.

SLIDE 1: In Communion with Ourselves (Title Page)

- Begin by passing around the handout. Give participants about 5 minutes to circle their current gas gauge, read the following reflection questions, and jot down answers.
 1. How do you feel right now? Physically? Emotionally? Mentally? Spiritually?
 2. Take a few minutes to recall a time when you were “running on empty” (it might even be right now). Reflect on what it felt like. Try to describe it in every way you can think of: physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.
 3. Now think back: what were some warning signs indicating you were beginning to run on empty? What do you think you could have done to prevent yourself from burning out?

SLIDE 2: *“Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28)

- Take a moment to reflect on this passage. Do you turn to God when you are weary and burdened? Do you find rest and solace in Him?

SLIDE 3: What’s Your Gauge? We all have things drain us of our energy. When we run low on something, we become stingy and stressed. What helps you to refuel and feel filled?

- Have you ever noticed how stingy we can be when we are about to run out of something? Like when the toothpaste is about to run out you start putting the most miniscule amount of it on your toothbrush, so the tube will last long enough until you get to the store. This is also true of our love...when we’re feeling tired, stressed, or overwhelmed...we can also become stingy with our love and attention and who we give it to. However, when we’re feeling loved, appreciated and valued it flows out of us like a garden hose to every person we meet.
- These are very basic everyday examples and they are everywhere we look...the gas tank or toothpaste or simple examples of our need to be filled and fueled.
- If you had a gauge to tell you how much fuel you have left in your tank, where would the needle be pointing? *Ask participants to reflect on level they circled on the gas gauge handout. Was it Full, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, or Empty? Discuss.*

- What are some of the things that drain the fuel out of your tank?
- What helps you to refuel and feel filled?

SLIDE 4: A Day In the Life: School, sports/band practice, college applications, homework, chores, friendships, church life, social media, etc.

- Think about how you spend a typical twenty-four period...how do you divide your time up? Social media, self-care, commuting, relationships, chores, etc.
- Have you taken the time to sit down and go through your schedule to categorize things as essential and non essential to help you prioritize?
- How much time do you spend in prayer? On your spiritual growth and faith formation? Do you ignore it and leave it Sunday mornings when you are church? 8 hours sleep, 8 hours work, how do you spend the remaining 8 hours?
- Is prayer as important to you as filling up your gas tank? Do you sometimes wait to pray until you really need it...like when your yellow warning light goes on?
- Do you view your time of prayer and reflection as an item you have to check off your to-do list or do you view as something that is essential to getting you through the day?

SLIDE 5: The Seventh Day. *“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day, God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.”* (Genesis 2:1-3) SparkNotes: Scheduling rest is necessary and holy.

- Have any of you scheduled rest into your schedule? Have you scheduled pit stops to fill up? To refresh, recharge and rejuvenate? The Bible calls it the Sabbath, and it’s an entire day out of the week to rest, reflect and refocus on God and all He has done for us (Genesis 2:2 “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all of his work.”
- Do each of us have just a few more minutes to spend in prayer?

SLIDE 6: “We Never Shut Off. We are constantly surrounded by the demands of work, deadlines of school, drum of commuting and the hum of our cell phones. We rarely take a moment to look at life beyond the noise . . . Our church fathers have taught us and demonstrated to us that humans have a need for stillness.”

- In a Bread and Salt video from Lent two years ago, Kat begins the video by saying... “We never shut off. We are constantly surrounded by the demands of work, deadlines of school, drum of

commuting and the hum of our cell phones. We rarely take a moment to look at life beyond the noise.”

- She later goes on to say, “Our church fathers have taught us and demonstrated to us that humans have a need for stillness.
- Jesus made time to escape the noisiness of the world and find a place of stillness and quiet.. After his baptism he went to the wilderness and fasted and prayed for 40 days.
- Being still allows for us to hear the voice of our Father more clearly - to take a step back and make more room for prayer, introspection and worship.
- To empty ourselves with excess so we can be filled with Christ.”

SLIDE 7: Be Still. *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”* (Psalm 46:10) Finding Stillness: 1) Pray. Sit in silence. Listen. 2) Practice saying no when you are stretched too thin. 3) Get regular rest, and get at least 8 hours of sleep per night. 4) Make the time for self-care.

SLIDE 8: Prayer 51 by St. Gregory of Narek, in his book of poetry *Speaking With God From the Depths of the Heart*.

Note: Have a volunteer from the room read the full prayer, or go around the room and have one person read each line.

***Prayer 51 from St. Gregory of Narek’s
“Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart”***

If we run away, it is you who come after us.
If we are weak, you give us strength.
If we falter, you set us on the right and easy path.
If we faint, you encourage us.
If we are sick in body and soul, you heal us.
If we lie, you justify us with your truth.
If we stumble into the darkness, you direct us to heaven.
If we do not turn from our willfulness, you guide us.
If we sin, you cry.
If we are just, you smile.
If we turn from you, you are full of grief.
If we come to you, you celebrate.
If we give, you receive.
If we become stubborn, you are patient.
If we are ungrateful, you still give abundantly.

If we quit, you are sad.

If we are brave, you rejoice.

If I _____, you _____.

If I _____, you _____.

After reading St. Gregory's prayer together, have participants reflect on what God does for them; add your own two lines. At the conclusion invite everyone to go into church for some personal prayer and reflection and to light a candle.

SLIDE 9: Thank you!

SESSION 4: In Communion with God

This session will be a whole-group presentation, led by a clergyman. 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.

Opening question: On a scale of 0-10, how strong is your relationship with God lately? What about over the past six months? Please explain. *(Have participants write their thoughts on a piece of scrap paper, and invite some participants to share with the whole group.)*

SLIDE 1: In Communion: Building Up the Body of Christ (Title Page)

- The vision and focus of Bishop Daniel's ministries is "Building Up the Body of Christ".
- In this presentation, we are going to talk about what that looks like and how we can incorporate it into our everyday lives, to be more in communion with God and strengthen our faith.

SLIDE 2: Building Up the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-17

- *"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. **14** We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. **15** But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. **17** Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds." (Ephesians 4:11-17)*
- *Have someone read the full passage of Ephesians 4:11-17 out loud.*
- This is our basic understanding of what it means to be the Body of Christ: each of us with our unique strengths, coming together as a community and being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.

SLIDE 3: 1 Corinthians 10: 14-17

- *"Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. **15** I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. **16** The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? **17** Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:14-17)*

- This is our theological understanding of the Body of Christ: Christ's sacrifice. Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ, and we are made one with each other when we partake in this holy feast.

SLIDE 4: հաղորդութիւն; haghortootyoon; koinonia; participation; communion; fellowship; union; community; kinship; family collaboration.

- The Armenian word for "Communion" is translated to the Greek word koinonia. We typically understand this as "communion", or superficially "fellowship." But the Armenian is much deeper than that. It evokes familial words, like "union," "community," and "kinship."
- When you hear the word "Communion," what words or images come to mind? *Give participants time to respond.*

SLIDE 5: հաղորդութիւն; haghortootyoon; koinonia. Communion is deeper than relationship.

- However, for most of us, we often think of being in communion with someone as simply having a relationship with them. Communion is so much deeper than relationship! In today's society, we often throw around the word relationship, and as a Christian community, we are called to think about developing a *deeper* relationship with others.
- Communion, or haghortootyoon, is deep, mystical, profound, and sacred.

SLIDE 6: Holy Communion is fueled by love.

- At the very heart of Holy Communion is love. Not the love of our fairy tales or movies or young adult novels.... It is the love of Christ, poured out for us, and this love is unconditional, pure, self-sacrificing, compassionate, forgiving, and eternal.
- When we consume Holy Communion, we are receiving the love of Christ, but we are also binding ourselves to our Church family as we all come together to eat of the same bread.

SLIDE 7: Holy Communion is more than something placed on your tongue.

- Holy Communion does not simply happen in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings, and it does not just reside in the chalice. It is something we are called to embody and to truly live.
- Haghortootyoon is the commission we are given to spread the love of Christ. As we are loved by God, so must we love others. This is true of all our relationships, both significant and seemingly insignificant. The challenge is recognizing that our love should know no limits: the love we have for our close friends and family is also the love that we should have for our neighbors, our mail carriers, our cashiers, our teachers, and to strangers that we pass in the street.

SLIDE 8: *“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)*

- *Have someone read the full passage of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 out loud.*
- We are nothing without love.
- This is a passage that so many of us are familiar with, but we rarely read it and truly reflect on its depth. Love is at the very core of our faith, and it is the power through which God transforms the world.

SLIDE 9: The opposite of Communion is Sin.

- We often think of the opposite of Sin as being Good. If you follow the rules, if you pray X amount of times a day, if you profess your love of God enough, then you can counteract sin.

SLIDE 10: SIN. What we learned in Sunday School: a transgression of divine law; any act regarded as such a transgression, especially a willful or deliberate violation of some religious or moral principle.

- We grew up with the understanding that sin was something that you did, that sin was a rule that you broke or an action that you took that had negative results. This is a limited, simplistic understanding of sin.

SLIDE 11: SIN. Evil deeds are just the beginning... *“I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-35)*

- Things like a bad habit or a mean response are just the tip of the iceberg. It is not sin itself, but the *result* of sin.
- The intention of following a Christian lifestyle is not to *restrain* us, but to *promote goodness*.

SLIDE 12: SIN: anything that distracts us from undivided devotion to the Lord; anything that separates us from the Lord; anything that separates us from the Body of Christ (the Church); anything that separates us from one another.

SLIDE 13: Ὑψηλῶς: Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Covetousness, Gluttony, Lust.

- The seven deadly sins have the ability to slowly break away your communion with God and with others.
- *Have participants give examples of the seven sins and how they interfere with true communion to ensure that they truly understand each.*

SLIDE 14: Love Is Not (1 Corinthians 13): jealous; boastful; arrogant; rude; insists on its own way; irritable; resentful; rejoices at wrong.

- Let's think back to the passage in Corinthians we read earlier. Sin is all of the things that Love is NOT. All of the words can drive a wedge between us and God, as well as between us and others. They cannot foster Love.

SLIDE 15: What separates your from undivided devotion to the Lord? What separates you from others?

- *Have this slide be an interactive discussion.*
- What are some things in your life (or in the life of others) that distract you from devotion to God?
- Have you ever thought of your sin as something that separates you from the Body of Christ (the Church)?
- What habits of yours have the ability to create distance between you and your loved ones?

SLIDE 16: Forging Holy Communion is the mission of the Church. Forging Holy Communion is the Gospel. Forging Holy Communion is what Christianity is all about.

SLIDE 17: A "sinful" world; A broken world; A fragmented world: redefinition/fragmentation of "family", isolation, mental illness, loneliness, epidemic suicide (especially teenagers), chemical dependency (addiction), mass shootings, narcissism (self worship), deification of material wealth, sexual squander.

- These are some other ways we can look at the word "sinful." We live in a "broken" world. We live in a "fragmented" world. It doesn't take much time on any news app or social media feed for you to see how broken the world is.
- *Ask the participants:* Can you add any other examples to this list?

SLIDE 18: The real work of Holy Communion begins when the Badarak ends.

- Think about the hymn that we sing at the conclusion of Badarak. We often think excitedly about Orhnetseets uz Der, because it signifies the end of a long liturgy, but its words contain a powerful declaration: “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall at all times be in my mouth.”
- It is our calling to take the Love that we literally ingest and use it to bring Heaven to Earth.

SLIDE 19: Jealous vs. Grateful. Boastful vs. Meek. Arrogant vs. Humble. Rude vs. Kind. Insists on its Own Way vs. Listens and Accommodates. Irritable vs. Peaceful. Resentful vs. Quickly Turns the Page. Rejoices at Wrong vs. Rejoices at Right.

- Holy Communion gives us the opportunity to change our habits so that we promote goodness instead of sin.

SLIDE 20: How can we bring greater Holy Communion to our people? To our parishes? To our Church? To the world?

- During this retreat, we have talked about strengthening our relationships with others and with ourselves, and we can now see that at the core of those relationships is our relationship with God. Our *COMMUNION* with God. When our communion with God is deep and vibrant and enriching, the communion we share with others can only be enhanced.
- What are some ways you can deepen your communion with God? How can we spread that Love from Christ into all facets of our lives?
- How do we prioritize our communion with God? Do we reach out when things are horrible, overwhelming, or amazing? Do we ever thank God? What is easy about this communion? What is challenging? How, where, and when do you make time for God?

SLIDE 21: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the *COMMUNION* of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

SESSION 5: Making Nshkhar

Participants will get a hands-on session of being In Communion! The parish priest (or other appointed individual) will teach participants how to make an Armenian Nshkhar, which is the handmade bread that becomes the body and blood of Jesus Christ during Holy Communion. Participants will each make their own Nshkhar, and the priest will bless them before participants can take them home.



Before You Begin:

- Be sure to have all of the necessary ingredients for making Nshkhar, including enough flour, water, rolling pins, and multiple Nshkhar stamps, if possible.
- Provide paper towels and Ziploc baggies for all the participants so that they can take their Nshkhars home safely.
- Make sure that you have a sharpie on hand so that you can label the bags with each participant's name.

Lesson Highlights:

- Make sure to tie this hands-on activity back to the lessons. Holy Communion is the moment in the Badarak where we all partake in the Body of Christ, but “the real work of Holy Communion begins the moment Badarak ends.”
- Stress the importance of storing the Nshkhar in a special place in the home, since it is blessed. It is traditional to put a blessed Nshkhar in a home's flour or rice container, but it can be placed reverently on display or in a special keepsake box.

Additional Fellowship Activities

Board Game Relay

Battleships, Connect 4, Monopoly Deal, Uno, Jenga, Checkers, Bananagrams, Rummy-O.. the list goes on! Get out all the games you have on hand, set the timer for 5 minutes, and switch games when it goes off. Pick up the new game where the previous players left off. This is heaps of fun when you have multiple games happening at once!

Conversational Jenga

Basically, you buy a plain Jenga set and write a question on each piece (google questions or brainstorm your own). You answer the question on the one you take and then stack it on top, and whoever is playing can get to know each other a little better! It's the kind of game you could have set up somewhere all the time.

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?