

10 Ways to Avoid Building Community Within the Church

The following is a "tongue-in-cheek" look at things to avoid. Please remember that it was written with a sense of irony and gentle lampooning.

10. Keep conversations short. You are busy, you have a lot to deal with in your life, if you talk to someone you might get close to them and that takes time and energy that you don't have. Just keep it short and sweet, don't bother talking about anything more than the weather. If you don't know a person is hurting, then you don't have to do anything about it.

9. Always sit in your "assigned" seat. By always sitting in the same seat you always sit around the same people. These folks know the deal, and stick to the appropriate 30 second conversations: weather, sports, how the new preacher is doing, etc. Also, this keeps you from having to venture out, meet new people, and possibly sit next to someone you aren't familiar with.

8. Avoid new people. It's one thing to deal with all the people that you already know at church, but it's another to actually meet new people. Seriously, you aren't good with names, you don't have the time, or the energy, so just walk right past anyone you don't know. After all, they won't notice that you totally avoided them.

7. Come in late. Don't overlook the beauty of this one. By coming in late you totally avoid even the 30 second conversations. And (bonus), you avoid the new people! It just makes life easier.

6. Leave immediately after the service (or early). This has the same benefits as coming in late, with the added benefit of getting on the road more quickly to beat those other churches to eat. This way you get out of that crowded church building so that you can go sit with your people and eat a meal. If

you add this method with the coming in late method you could go to a church for years and never meet anyone.

5. Be physically present but mentally absent. When talking to someone, pretend to listen by nodding your head and saying "uh huh" while you are really thinking about what show comes on TV later that night. Basically, just don't engage anyone on any level. After all, you're just there to put in your "time" and then get on with your life.

4. Don't share a meal. If your goal is to avoid community, this step is of the utmost importance, don't ask people to lunch! Sharing a meal is an intimate thing that creates deeper relationships. So, when someone asks you to lunch fake a stomach ulcer or something, just get out of it.

3. Stay very, very busy. The busier you are, especially on a Sunday, the less time you have to "deal" with people. In fact, attempt to be so busy that when speaking to someone you never even stop walking past them as you say hello.

2. Make your default response "everything is great." People will always ask how you are doing. Make sure that you have your "default" answer ready so that when they ask you are ready to say, "everything is great!" This must be your default response, otherwise you might actually let on that your life is not perfect, or worse, that you are struggling. This colossal mistake could lead to deeper conversation and deeper relationship. If you are going to really avoid community while in church, this is probably your best weapon.

1. Don't show up. This is definitely your best method of avoiding community overall because there is no community where there are no people.

"...we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."
(Romans 12:4-14)

INFORMATION

Protection of the Holy Virgin & St. Seraphim of Sarov Church
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website: saintseraphim.com

Our Parish Secretary may be reached at the Church office on Tuesday-Saturday, 9 AM to Noon, at 584-9491.

Fr. Lawrence Margitich may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at lmargitich@sbcglobal.net. He is available Tuesday-Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

PARISH CONTACTS

Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus	473-0314
Fr. John Schettig, Assistant Pastor	318-1559
Fr. John Ramos, Attached.....	570-9849
Deacon Jeremiah Crawford	377-4094
Deacon Nicholas Carr	588-8753
Sub-Deacon Marc Richardson	545-4047
Nicolas Custer, Choir Director	584-9491
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden.....	291-7452
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Parish Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 16, 2011

1. We began with prayer at 7:04 PM. Attending: Fr. Lawrence Margitich, Serge Anderson, Bonnie Alexander, Preston Booker, Debbie Buse, Gary Collins, Petar Griovski, Ole Kern, Sergei Moroz, Nick Nicholson Denise Pellizzer, Xenia Pribyl (Sisterhood President) Absent: Lew Baer
2. Colors for storage shed and new hall. Denise Pellizzer and Mat. Ann Margitich presented three possible color schemes. We went outside and saw them in the sunlight and selected "option B" (lighter green with darker gray roof).
3. May 26, 2011 meeting minutes were accepted as submitted.
4. Rector's Report: (a) Going on vacation Sunday night, June 19, returning late Saturday June 25; (b) Diocesan Council met this week. Financial things look good. New missions in Hemet, Encinitas, Susanville and in Oregon. (c) Next Diocesan Assembly will meet at the All American Council in Bellevue, WA and there will not be an assessment to the parish for that meeting.
5. Treasurer's Report – Statement of May, 2011: (a) We took in about \$800 more than we spent; (b) No unusual expenses last month; (c) New computer and software purchased by the choir for the Church Office. Many Thanks; (d) Chase line of credit is almost approved. We will borrow up to \$400,000 paying interest only for the first several months, then 5¾% (5 years-fixed, then tied to the five-year Treasury rate) after the final amount is known. There will be no closing costs. Motion: Give Petar Griovski approval to take out this loan. M/S/C Serge Anderson/Ole Kern. Motion carried unanimously.
6. Grounds and Facilities Report: Building: Domes for Protection bell tower, main dome & cross – at Serge's shop; Waterproof area around upper 2nd story-altar window – Creative Roofing estimate coming. Porch on the back of Choir Director's Cottage is complete.
7. Old Business: (a) Construction Details – Forming perimeter foundation; slab should be poured Tuesday of next week. Framing should begin by the end of next week. (b) We need to move the play structure, tables, and barbecue equipment next week. We'll reassemble the play structure on the oval lawn as soon as the slab is removed. (c) Current hall will come down early July. (d) We are awaiting PG&E for rewiring and interface with the solar panels, etc. (e) By next meeting, we should see substantial progress. (f) Fort Ross – Fr. Lawrence will direct the choir and is hoping for good attendance. (g) Parish Feast Day: July 19 Bishop Benjamin will be here.
8. New Business: (a) All American Council/Diocesan Council – delegates are Mat. Ann, Petar Griovski and Bobbi Griovski. (b) Funerals – Serge has made some very nice coffins so we can avoid the expensive funeral home versions. Cost will be \$500 and Serge has some on hand. This will help us simplify the funeral process. (c) Barbecue for the Cuneos – July 31 [later changed to July 24].
9. Next meeting will be Thursday, July 28, 2011. Meeting adjourned with prayer at 8:15 p.m.

Saint Seraphim Day – Tuesday, July 19, 2011

THE CELEBRATION began on Monday evening with a Festal Vigil for Saint Seraphim of Sarov, our Venerable and God-Bearing Father. When the bells rang at 6:30, a crowd of parishioners were softly singing and “amen-ing” along with the choir. Knowing smiles appeared as the faithful noticed the Bishop’s staff leaning near the Royal Doors. By the time the readers had finished their texts, the church was filling. Another hour passed, and the double line for venerating our Saint’s icon and being anointed stretched into the Narthex and coiled there in readiness. Many prayers were still to be offered and many hymns to be sung – exquisitely – by our remarkable choir.

Promptly at 9:30 AM the next morning, the bells were ringing as Bishop Benjamin was greeted with bread and salt at the church door. As he stepped inside to be welcomed by the assembled clergy, the choir sang the verse “From the rising to the setting of the sun the Name of the Lord is to be praised...” A few steps further, and His Grace was on the carpeted dais in the center of the church removing his outer vestments. Sub deacons and servers rushed forward bearing his liturgical wear. The congregation watched the vesting with awe and delight. The Bishop is not only the Icon of Christ, and so he is “robed in majesty” but the icon of the person who is glorified in Christ. We had seen it before but never tire of the intimacy and love that *Dressing Our Bishop* evokes. Crown firmly placed, deacons with smoking censers at the ready, Vladyka blessed the clergy and all of us before passing through the Royal Doors into the Holy Altar and to the High Place, from which we hear his first words: “Peace be to all.”

The Holy Altar was full – both of grace and of clergy! One bishop, eleven priests from Orthodox churches throughout the greater Bay Area, four deacons (from Holy Trinity Cathedral, St. Nicholas and St. Seraphim), two sub deacons and near countless acolytes and servers blessed us all by their presence and perfection.

The homily, a gift to us by Bishop Benjamin, was kindly and encouraging. It recounted St. Seraphim’s feats of faith, his love for others and for the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The messages of peace – both St. Seraphim’s and His Grace’s – rang in our ears. We were, as always, given a challenge as Bishop Benjamin told of the many sacrifices St. Seraphim had made for God and reminded us of how very little we as Orthodox Christians are asked...constant prayer, regular tithing and fasting, all there to sanctify us.

Three chalices were filled and three long lines of pious souls trembling with fear, overflowing with love and effervescent with joy received the Holy Mysteries. More lines, to venerate the cross and and receive individual blessings from the clergy, before gathering around the fountain in the patio for coffee, cool drinks and the blessing of the food and filling of the plates. Pasta salad, sprightly with fresh lemon juice was the special of the day, prepared by Joseph Anderson. Umbrella tables were set up on the oval lawn, and as the crowd reached them, they found platters of assorted bruschetta set out. Laughter and cheerful voices filled the air. Small glasses of vodka (for “medicinal reasons only”) were passed around as trays of dessert pastries were set out. Saint Seraphim was honored. We all knew we were blessed to be part of his church family. – *a parishioner*

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- **SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS:** On October 1, 2011, our Parish will mark 75 years of Holy Orthodoxy in Sonoma County. Plans are being made now for Church Services and a Festal Banquet. Vigil will be served on Friday, September 30 at 6:15 PM, and the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Bishop Benjamin and visiting clergy, starting at 9:30 AM, on Saturday, October 1. The Banquet will be a catered meal, held here on the Parish grounds, in a large tent. Cost per ticket is \$30. A “History of the Parish” is now being prepared for printing, and will be for sale in late September. More information to follow.
 - **BOOKSTORE NEWS:** The bookstore will have a carton of books available for your perusal on Sundays. If there is a particular title you are looking for, it can be “ordered” at any time for delivery on Sunday. Please email your requests to kinigi@sonic.net. Until the bookstore has reopened in our new Parish hall, we will be unable to accept credit card payments. CASH AND CHECKS ONLY will be gladly and graciously accepted. We do have a few new and intriguing titles in stock. Please allow them to lead you into the temptation to purchase them.