Orthodox Parish Leadership Principles and Practices Workshop

At the 2018 Small Parish Forum, one task will be to create a consensus list of 10-12 of the most important “Principles of Orthodox Parish Leadership”. These are key standards/ values/beliefs that are important – and should be shared with other Orthodox small parishes.

Below are starting nominations prepared by the Small Parish Forum Steering team. On Friday morning of the Forum we will break into small groups and attempt to pare the list down, regroup items or receive additional nominations. On Saturday morning we will try to arrive at a final list –based on what we’ve learned at the Forum.

**Leadership Definitions**

Christian leadership is the conscious working together in faith and in love, in a community of brothers and sisters to do God’s will on earth as it is in heaven, and to attaining to the kingdom of God, in the love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. *Thy Will Be Done: Strategic Leadership, Planning, and Management for Christians, Protodeacon Peter Danilchik*

The process of influencing people -- by providing purpose, direction and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization. *Orlando AAC Workshop*

Any person who is willing to take personal responsibility, convene a group to work on a tough problem, and persist in the face of resistance is a leader. *Tod Bolsinger*

Leaders move the group, (parish, community or organization) from where they are to where they need (not necessarily want) to be. To a better version of themselves. *Source Unknown*

Leadership is the capacity for transformation --to initiate a future distinct from the past. Management is the capacity to give order and structure in service of high performance. *Alban Institute*

This set of “Principles” will be an important product of the “Forum”.

Please read over the nominations and be prepared to contribute with zeal. ***With which principles do you most resonate?***

# Potential Orthodox Leadership Principles

1. **Love –** Leadership is both defined and refined in and by love.Good leaders see each person as a child of God for us to focus on, care for, and love.
2. **Humility and Gratitude –**Orthodox leaders realize their gifts and blessings come from the grace of God.
3. **Conciliar** - Leadership in Orthodoxy must be exercised in a conciliar environment.Leaders express their opinions while also fostering dialogue and seeking multiple perspectives and consensus on future direction.
4. **Co-Responsible –** Under the guidance and authority of the priest the lay and clergy leaders are co-responsible for fulfilling the total mission of the parish.
5. **Nurture Community (Koinonia) -** Leaders work to build trust, and collaboration among the priest, the parish council, and the parish. They promote calm, harmony, peace.
6. **Stimulators** – Leaders add positive energy, urgency and intelligent risk taking to parish situations and the parish future. They are dissatisfied with the status quo.
7. **Set an Example -** Realizing they are seen by other parishioners as exemplars and as such are evaluated by their behavior, attitude and actions, leaders work to model good Orthodox Christian behavior. *They come to church. (Vespers, feast days and (virtually) every Sunday.) They maintain good sacramental standing.*
8. **Generous** – Leaders offer generous personal financial support of the parish. They accept responsibility to help others understand the fundamentals and responsibilities of good Christian stewardship.
9. **Authentic – Good leaders are uniquely and authentically themselves.** "Being" comes before "doing." Clergy and lay leaders are WHO they are in God's eyes and not someone else.
10. **Hopeful –** Leaders help the parish to hope. It counteracts denial, resistance and “ruts”. Hope generates the feeling that deeper human desires can be fulfilled.
11. **Inspire Change** -- Leaders are change agents. They stimulate and drive helpful, useful, effective improvement —aimed at lifting the parish to do Christ’s work, to live the Gospel, and to express the hope that is in us as an Orthodox Christian community.
12. **Face Forward -** Vision inspires people to take action and go forward. Leaders helpidentify and express the parish’s lived future as a Christian community. They have a personal vision, contribute to the formation of a “corporate” vision --and communicate it and commit to it.
13. **Select Priorities -** In the context of an overarching vision, leaders articulate a clear set of parish prioritiesthat guide parish actions.
14. **Strengthen Ministry –** Leaders stimulate, build, create and oversee ministries and essential programs that ring out the Good News and mirror parish priorities.
15. **Not Owners But Stewards** – Leaders do *not* behave as parish “owners”. They see themselves as stewards managing the resources, gifts and mission of the parish in service of our Master Jesus Christ.
16. **Excellence Oriented –**Leaders define excellence and push for it.They establish what right looks like and inspire pursuit of same. They dislike mediocrity.
17. **Made Not Born** - While some people are endowed with more natural abilities than others, it is entirely possible to develop individual and team leadership skills and improve significantly as a leader.
18. **Continue to Grow/Improve** - Leaders are not at rest with their own skills and competencies. They look for ways to improve.
19. **Empathy** -- Leading means listening, influencing and engaging. Leaders consistently improve their relationships with people, look at issues from their perspective. They give the benefit of the doubt.They presume positive intentions of others.
20. **Communication** – Leaders communicate clearly, openly and regularly. They work to create an environment of **honest and open communications** without the fear of retribution. They get others to talk and they listen. They actively seek opinions on the margins of the parish.
21. **Best Interests of the Church** - Leaders act with faithfulness to best interests of parish and avoid potential for conflict of interest or personal gain. Leaders agree or disagree with proposals based not on their personal desires but in support of the long term health and mission of the parish and Christ’s Church.
22. **Loyalty -** Clergy and elected leaders follow statutes, by-laws and parish policies. They protect others –particularly children. They live up to past commitments. They manage donated $ to fulfill parish mission.
23. **Act -** Much talking and little acting is ineffective.[[1]](#footnote-1) What people see affects them many times greater than what they hear. Good leaders move from plan to actions avoiding endless conversation.
24. **Difficulty & Failure** – Leaders understand that difficulties and failures happen. They assume that grace will ultimately resolve them. They keep going. They remain steadfast in tough times
25. **Lessons Learned** – In general, mistakes are proof that something is being done[[2]](#footnote-2). If everything has always been done perfectly, the ability to review and improve is lost. Good leaders are wise enough to learn from every experience.
26. **Actively Participate -** Don't just give orders, help.
27. **Develop Others – Good leaders are coaches and** mentors. They find **personal satisfaction i**n the growth and progress of others and **seeing them succeed.** Leaders are the ones who empower people to discover and use their greatest potential. They work to build personal initiative among parishioners.
28. **Delegate –Good leaders** have the ability and confidence to delegate **tasks to others. When delegating, they express desired results without micromanaging. (‘What’ not ‘How’.)**
29. **Balanced Leadership Groups** –No leaders have a full array of needed leadership tools and traits. Leadership groups, such as parish councils, work best when people recognize valuable qualities in others. Some are “generators”/ problem finders, others conceptualize solutions and others excel at implementing. Together they make a body.
30. **Develop Patience** – Everything takes longer than it should– except the spread of bad news or untruths.
31. **No Silver Bullets** – It’s never just one thing. Parish leadership requires multiple skills and tools. Almost every situation is different.
32. **Gratitude** – Say thank you often. Acknowledging and appreciating the efforts of others helps people to contribute more and better.
1. “After all is said and done more is usually said than done.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Of course the idea that ‘If we never do anything we’ll avoid making mistakes’, is wrong. Sometimes the biggest mistakes are made by doing nothing. Making no decisions. Avoiding topics. Accepting the status quo. The [↑](#footnote-ref-2)