PROGRAM STARTUP GUIDE

REVISED SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

THE CHURCH OF THE
INCARNATION

INTRODUCTION

God has wonderfully gifted Incarnation and equipped us for fruitfulness over the course of our life together. As Incarnation continues to grow in both size and missional impact, new possibilities for kingdom work and community continue to arise. It is our desire to see gifted and passionate people in our congregation moving toward opportunities of community, mission, and spiritual formation in a number of ways; in short, we strive to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12). Consider this document a roadmap for that work.

WHAT IS A PROGRAM?

For the purposes of this document, "program" or "ministry" are used as shorthand to suggest any number of avenues which help us meet the opportunities of community, mission, and/or spiritual formation. This could manifest in any number of ways—a group, class, vocational guild, event, opportunity, etc.

REQUIREMENTS OF A PROGRAM

- Generally speaking, leaders of programs/ministries must be members of Incarnation; in this way, leaders are officially plugged into a system of care, accountability, and oversight.
- Programs must align to the vision, values, and theological convictions outlined in COTI's membership affirmation. Additionally, programs must have a clear vision for how it will bolster, further, or extend the core values of COTI.
- Any program involving children/minors must follow the attached child protection policy. (contact Susanna Oda for further instruction: susanna@theincarnation.org)
- Programs must follow the attached building use/policy document.

STEPS TO ESTABLISHING A PROGRAM

The following outlines the steps needed for establishing a program at COTI.

1) Define leadership responsibility
- Each program will need _at least two lay* leaders_ as well as a staff sponsor. Having multiple lay leaders is a safeguard against burnout and also helps ensure the viability of a ministry that's trying to get off the ground.
- Each program will also have a _staff sponsor_ that acts as 1) liaison with the wider church staff; and 2) point person for questions, concerns, needs, etc. The staff sponsor is not responsible for leading or "doing" the ministry, program, event, etc. It may or may not be the case that the staff member you initially approached about your ministry will be your staff sponsor.

---

* "Lay" simply means a person who is not ordained clergy (deacon, priest, or bishop)

2) Craft a purpose statement

This crucial step will help define why your program exists and will provide an anchor to prevent mission drift. Some examples of purpose statements from existing programs:

• Arts Incarnate: *Through all genres of the fine, visual, and performing arts, the mission of Arts Incarnate is to seek and experience Beauty, Truth, and Justice through the Arts.*

• Youth Ministry: *The Church of the Incarnation Youth Ministry seeks to see middle and high school students' faith come alive, by fully embracing the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom in the midst of the secular age.*

3) Define target audience

Who is this ministry targeting? Be specific. For instance, if you are seeking to establish a guild for engineers, what are the requirements for membership in the guild? Will you invite engineering students at JMU, or only licensed engineers? Will you reach out to engineers from different churches, or just those at COTI?

4) Set and approve schedule

Once you have proposed a schedule, work with your staff sponsor so that meetings, events, etc. can be approved by the wider staff and adopted on COTI's calendar and other communication channels.

5) Set the budget

Your ministry may or may not require a budget. Work with your staff sponsor to assess the budgetary needs of your ministry. (childcare, food, materials, honoraria, etc.) If your ministry wishes to request budgetary assistance from COTI, those requests will be fielded by the Missions Committee. Contact Kenlyn Miller: kenlynsm@gmail.com.

6) Publish your ministry

Once the above steps are complete, please fill out the Google form (see final page, Appendix 3) to determine with Laura Lowe the best avenues of communication for your ministry.

FAQ'S

What happens if I no longer want to lead this program?

Some ministries may function for a season and then end. An event can happen once and not be repeated; groups can disband; opportunities can cease being offered. Our goal is not to prop up various programs for the sake of having programs, but rather to follow God's lead for living life together, growing in Christ, and serving our neighbors.

Work with your staff sponsor to discern the next steps for your program, whether that be a leadership transition or a decision to end the program. Each year leading up to our Annual Celebration, we have the opportunity to either roll off of our serving commitments or renew them for the coming year. The case is the same for new programs, ministries, groups, events,

etc. We won't list each and every program in the Annual Celebration booklet, since some of them will have restricted audiences. However, please indicate in your service commitment form whether or not you will continue serving as a leader of a ministry, program, event, etc. Before the Annual Celebration, please meet with your staff sponsor to let them know your plans.

Does my group/program have to meet at COTI?
No. Programs of COTI do not need to meet at the church; in fact, it may be advantageous for certain programs (for example, outreach/evangelism programs) to meet somewhere outside of the church building. If you would like to request use of the building, please fill out the Building Use Policy via Google Form below.

Does my program need to be COTI specific?
Church programs must align with the vision, values, and convictions of COTI, and have a purpose statement that somehow bolsters or furthers these things. However, the target audience may or may not be members of our specific church community.

APPENDIX 1: BUILDING USE POLICY

All programs requesting use of the building must fill out the form above. If you are using a digital copy of this packet, please follow the above link to access the Building Use Google form. Contact Amanda Staton (amanda@theincarnation.org) for questions or access to the link.

APPENDIX 2: CHILDREN SAFETY AND ETHICS

All programs needing childcare must fill out the above form and comply with the Children Safety and Ethics Guidelines. If you are using a digital copy of this packet, please follow the above link to access the Children Safety and Ethics Google Form. Contact Susannah Oda (susannah@theincarnation.org) for questions or access to the link.

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNICATION

To facilitate how to best communicate your event or ministry at Incarnation, please fill out the Google form using the link above (if you are using a digital copy of this packet). Contact Laura Lowe (laura@theincarnation.org) for questions or access to the link.