



## Resources for Job Seekers

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## Introduction to Resources

These resources are designed to assist Orthodox Christians interested in employment within an Orthodox parish, SCOBA or other Church agency, or any other ministry position. By thoughtfully undertaking the job search process, you are preparing yourself to serve Christ and His Church well.

These resources include:

- ❑ Sources of job leads and ministry contacts
- ❑ Cover letter basics
- ❑ Sample resume structure
- ❑ Interview preparation
- ❑ Sample interview questions for practice
- ❑ Sources of job leads and ministry contacts
- ❑ Sample questions you can ask during an interview
- ❑ Salary negotiation

## Sources of Job Leads and Ministry Contacts

For some people, the “perfect” job in Orthodox Christian ministry is open at the right time for them, and simply lands in their lap. For most people, however, a bunch of very human factors complicate the call to ministry: e.g., there are no jobs open in your home region; there is a job open but it will be a year or two until the parish is ready to commit a salary to it; the only jobs open are in youth ministry, but your gifts are working with the elderly and chanting. It will serve you well to do a good search for a ministry job, to find a good match with an open position and your unique God-given gifts. Here are some sources of job leads and ministry contacts:

- ❑ Your bishop or metropolitan
- ❑ Your parish priest
- ❑ Online job listing services accessible through the Internet (e.g. OrthodoxJobs.com)
- ❑ Family members and their friends
- ❑ Friends and *their* friends and relatives
- ❑ Faculty and classmates where you attended school
- ❑ College/university career services department
- ❑ Alumni network from your school
- ❑ Job postings at ministry organizations (e.g. OCMC, IOCC)
- ❑ Trade journals and newsletters
- ❑ Directories
- ❑ Colleagues in your present organization and field
- ❑ Professional association members (e.g. OTSA, OCAMPR)

## Cover Letter Basics

Once you have decided to apply for a ministry job, you should send a cover letter and resume to the contact person for the job. Use the cover letter to introduce yourself and call attention to your enclosed resume. The well-written cover letter highlights aspects of your background and talents that best meet a parish's needs. Also, always try to obtain the name of the person to whom the letter should be addressed.

- ❑ First paragraph
  - Describe the position or title of the position you seek, e.g., Pastoral Assistant, Youth Director, etc.
  - If someone referred you, mention the person's name and explain your connection.
- ❑ Second paragraph
  - Tailor to a particular job.
  - Briefly explain the reason for your interest in ministry.
  - Briefly and specifically summarize your most desirable qualifications that would meet their needs (consider bulleting three key qualifications).
  - Explain how you intend to contribute to the parish or organization.
- ❑ Third paragraph
  - Add this only if there is additional information to amplify information in the second paragraph that is not in your resume or needs clarification (for example, a special project you undertook at a previous job or in your community).
- ❑ Closing paragraph
  - Request an interview and identify a time when you will follow up. You always want to be in charge of the follow-up. Even when you follow up, leave your name and number, but also tell them that you will try calling them again in a week. Be conscious that you are responsible, interested, gracious and respectful, not pushy.
  - Thank the person for considering your candidacy and say that you are looking forward to meeting him or her.
  - Be sure to follow through with any commitment you make.

## Resume Structure

You should research some resume templates online to find the right format for your needs. Resumes should include the following sections:

- Your name and contact information
- Education
- Work experience
- Skills

If you have just graduated from college or graduate school and you have little relevant work experience, you should place your educational qualifications at the top of your resume. If you have been working for a while and have a lot of relevant job experience, start your resume with your work experience and place your educational qualifications at the bottom.

Be sure your resume is clear and concise. You do not have to be too descriptive, but make sure you clearly express your accomplishments. Note the following example as the candidate states number and ages of young people, duration of work experience, and issues handled.

**Antiochian Village Camp**, Ligonier, PA

Summer 2000 & 2002

*Counselor*

- Responsible for the safety and well-being of 32 campers, ages 13-17, over four two-week overnight sessions.
- Dealt with issues of homesickness, depression, suicide, grief, faith struggles, etc.

Be prepared in an interview to give further details and information on each part of your resume. Be as concrete as possible. For example, if you have experience running retreats, think of what worked and did not work as you were giving them.

Have many friends look at your resume for corrections and comments. Make sure your formatting and fonts are consistent throughout. Do not have any spelling errors.

## Preparing for an Interview

The interview is often the primary vehicle through which hiring occurs. Highly qualified candidates may be turned down for ministry positions because they failed to communicate their talents and abilities. Similarly, underqualified candidates may be hired for, and ultimately fail in, ministry positions because they successfully oversold themselves. Preparing for an interview should help you and the parish make a good decision and once the job begins, to actually do well.

- ❑ Research the parish or organization.
  - Does it have a website?
  - Is it listed in a directory?
  - Google it!
  - Has it been featured in newspaper or magazine articles?
  - Do any of your contacts have any information for you?
- ❑ Research the job.
  - Analyze the job description, and match your experience, skills, interests, and abilities to the job.
  - Talk to people who have worked in similar positions. If you attended seminary, your alumni association may help with locating contacts.
- ❑ Prepare and anticipate questions. Answer the questions given to you. Try to avoid speaking in tangents.
- ❑ Practice your communication skills.
  - Present yourself in a positive manner.
  - Offer a firm handshake.
  - Speak clearly and effectively. Make sure you are not chewing gum or sucking on hard candy during the interview.
  - Listen attentively and maintain eye contact.
  - Avoid the use of unnecessary verbal and nonverbal distractions.
- ❑ Dress appropriately.
- ❑ Be punctual.
- ❑ Turn off your cell phone.
- ❑ Write thank-you note(s) immediately after the interview to the person/people who interviewed you.

Ways to practice interviewing:

- ❑ Have a friend interview you.
- ❑ Conduct a mock interview with videotape.
- ❑ Conduct a mock interview with audiotape.
- ❑ Write out the answers to the interview questions.

Remember, preparation is meant to help you give organized and concise answers that reflect thought.

## Sample Interview Questions for Practice

- What do you know about this parish/organization?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Share your journey of faith as an Orthodox Christian.
- Why did you choose this particular ministry?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals? What are you doing to move yourself toward these goals?
- In what kind of work environment would you be most comfortable?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- How do you handle stress and pressure?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
- What major work problems have you encountered, and how have you dealt with them?
- Name a major mistake you have made in a work situation, and explain how you dealt with it, and learned from it.
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- Describe your ideal boss.
- What experience have you had working as a member of a team?
- How would you define “success” in this ministry position?
- What does success mean to you?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in a parish like this one?
- What are your strongest skills for this position?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What plans do you have for continuing your education?
- Do you have any questions for us?

## Sample Questions You Can Ask During an Interview

Questions about what a parish/organization needs:

- What are the needs of your parishioners and/or those you serve?
- Do you have plans to offer new services/ministries?
- Where do you see the parish/organization going in the next five years?
- What do you see as the parish/organization's strengths and weaknesses?
- Why is this position available?

Questions to help you understand what they are looking for:

- What are your expectations of the person you hire for this position?
- What qualities are you looking for in your ideal candidate?
- How do you view my qualifications? How do I compare with other applicants?
- Are you comfortable that my background satisfies your requirements? Where in particular do you feel my experience is lacking?
- What are the characteristics needed for a person to make significant contributions to this parish/organization?
- What would your expectations of me be in the first year?

Questions to help you understand more about the parish/organization and job:

- Tell me about your vocation/career with this organization.
- What do you like about working/serving here?
- What is the history of this parish?
- How is an employee evaluated?
- What plans do you have for initial orientation and training?
- To whom would I report?
- How are decisions made here? How are policy and operations decisions made?
- How are people kept informed?

Based on your research of the parish or organization, you may have many additional questions to add.

## Salary Negotiation

Hopefully, the parish or organization that is hiring has posted a salary amount or salary range, so that you know this before ever sending a cover letter and resume, and having an interview.

Once you have been offered the job (and not before) is the time to discuss salary with your employer(s). This is a tricky area and you may feel uncomfortable because on the one hand you likely have chosen to do full-time ministry because you are not interested in a high salary, but on the other, if the salary is too low you risk not being able to support your family, feeling bitter and abused, and facing ministry burnout. Having full-time workers for Christ and His Church is too important to let either greed or despair take over the issue of salary. You need to do the research to know what you and your family need.

Here are some items to consider when you are assessing your own need:

- ❑ What is the cost of living in the area of the parish/organization? Research such things as typical housing costs or rents. You may want to peruse [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com) or similar websites.
- ❑ In addition to salary what are the other benefits the parish is offering and what is the value of each? These can include benefits such as:
  - Health insurance
  - Retirement plan
  - Paid vacation
  - Paid sick leave
  - Paid family sick leave
  - Paid personal days
  - Car allowance (if there is traveling involved)
  - Housing allowance
  - Paid time off for holidays
  - Relocation expenses
- ❑ What are your annual fixed expenses?
- ❑ Consider your long-term goals and a reasonable amount needed for a savings account.

These questions will guide you as you negotiate an agreement that both you and the parish or organization can comfortably live with. Know how much you need to make before they ask you the question. Crunch some numbers before negotiating and research the area where you will be working and living. Bear in mind that the money you need to pay your bills is the money you need to have after taxes.

Bill	Monthly	Budget
Car Insurance	\$ 75.00	\$ 900
Electricity	\$ 45.00	\$ 540
Food	\$ 250.00	\$ 3,000
Gas	\$ 150.00	\$ 1,800
Phone	\$ 40.00	\$ 480
Rent	\$ 750.00	\$ 9,000
Savings	\$ 100.00	\$ 1,200
School Loans	\$ 300.00	\$ 3,600
Spending Money	\$ 400.00	\$ 4,800
	<b>\$ 2,110.00</b>	<b>\$ 25,320</b>