



Regional Groups

*A guide provided by the
National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGSUSA)*



The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd
An Association of Children and Adults

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Dear Friends,

We know that there is a particular friendship among catechists that seeks celebration and unity. This friendship we share is held in the vision of CGSUSA: *"Regional groups will be encouraged in every part of the nation."* Thank you for your interest in developing and/or sustaining a group in your region in collaboration with our vision.

As you consider this possibility, I hope you will find this packet helpful. Developing and sustaining a regional group can be quite an undertaking, but at the same time, richly rewarding! We are eager to assist you in whatever way we can in this process. In this packet, you will find information to assist your group along with a list of commonly asked questions.

My travels around the country to various regions have been a delightful blessing in my life. I enjoy meeting with our members, hearing about the work being done with our children and encouraging a deepening of our understanding of the religious life of children through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. I hope I can visit your region soon. There is a hosting packet available on our website at I am available to answer your questions, so feel free to contact me by email or phone.

Thank you for your interest! May you walk in the guiding love of the Good Shepherd as you seek unity and support in your region.

In the Peace and Love of our Good Shepherd,

National Director

CGSUSA Regional Groups

What is the purpose of a regional group? Isn't being a member of CGSUSA enough?

Your membership in the National Association of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is very important and connects you with catechists and supporters from across the United States and even around the world, who share a commitment to the Christian formation of children. Your membership support not only gives you access to wonderful resources in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, but also helps our national association spread the word about how a relationship with the Good Shepherd can change the lives of adults and nourish the spiritual growth of children.

In addition to CGSUSA's work on a national level, the Association also supports regional groups throughout the United States. A few of the regional groups are also then subdivided into chapters. You can learn more about regional group activities by emailing CGSUSA at <http://www.cgsusa.org/service/contact.aspx>. You will then be put in contact with the organized group, or chapter nearest your home.

From the beginning of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, it has been a practice of catechists to spend a significant amount of time with each other after the children had left the atrium to discuss, with particular attentiveness, the religious life of the child. This practice has also built deep and sustaining friendships among the catechists. So often, when catechists gather, there is this feeling of "we have already met" that is experienced and celebrated. For this reason, part of the vision of CGSUSA is that "Regional groups will be encouraged in every part of the nation." Regional gatherings are a solid way of developing these groups.

Your regional group is a place where you will find local support and fellowship. While every regional group has its own structure and focus, some opportunities that a region may offer to its members may include material making sessions, retreats, collaborating on formation courses, update sessions, regional workshops and regional gatherings with the National Director.

It is helpful to know the other catechists in your area. One association has supported one another by loaning materials to an atrium in need. Another parish in the same region lost a catechist mid-year and a neighboring parish “loaned” a catechist to the parish until the end of the year. The catechist was able to offer suggestions to both parishes based on her experience of working in two different atria.

How are regional groups identified?

Most regional groups are identified by geography, usually by city, state or region of the country. The National Association is working on better defining regions throughout the country by the atria and association members found in the nation. Not all atria are enrolled on our website and not all catechists are members, so we do ask for your help and support in locating all involved in the work to better serve our vision and mission.



How formal are these Regional Groups?

Each regional group is unique. Some regions have written bylaws and policies, etc., filed for tax exempt status, and keep minutes of their meetings. Other regions are less formal. Your region may want to discern: What is the purpose of your group? Other possible questions to consider: How many members will be active participants in your group? What are the needs of your region? What type of support do you need from the National Association?

Are there guidelines, rules, limitations to follow designed by CGSUSA?

As you begin to develop a regional group or chapter, you may want to visit www.cgsusa.org and review our bylaws, policies, mission statement and vision statement. The 32 Characteristics of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd would also be a good document to keep before you as you begin you're planning.

How many formal regional groups or chapters are there in this country?

There are formal regional groups in the following areas:

- Atlanta, Georgia
- Birmingham, Alabama
- California
- CGS Las Vegas (Nevada)
- CGS NW Texas (Texas)
- Florida
- Guild of the Good Shepherd (MA / New England)
- Lake Michigan Lake Catechists (Illinois)
- Minnesota Catechists (Minnesota)
- New York, New York
- Ohio
- Pacific Northwest Region
- Pennsylvania
- Phoenix, Arizona
- Sonflower Region (Kansas)
- Shepherd's Staff (Iowa)
- Seattle, Washington

Do you know of another association not on the list? Let us know!

(marymirrione@cgsusa.org)

How do you commission, structure, and sustain a regional group?

CGSUSA is developing a “CGSUSA Regional Association Kit” for those areas of the country that would like to look at sample bylaws, policies, newsletters, etc. as they look at forming their own association. If your region has documents to share, if you are seeking advice or to find the answers to your ask specific questions, please contact Mary Mirrione at marymirrione@cgsusa.org.

How many members are on a regional board?

Different regional groups will have different guidelines. Some boards consists of five members, others have seven or nine members. AN odd number of members is important for voting. Some boards have officers and committees, etc. Not all committee members are necessarily members of the board. Sample structures of regional associations, will be available in the “CGSUSA Regional Association Kit” this winter.

How often does the regional board meet?

Most regional boards meet monthly or quarterly, depending on their need.

How often does the larger membership of the regional association meet?

Depending on the geographical location of your group members, some regions gather once a month, quarterly, or have a workshop once or twice a year.

How do regional associations communicate with their membership, ie, newsletters, social media, etc.?

We find our members are very creative in their development of emails, newsletters and use of social media, such as Facebook.

If you are looking for ideas, do not hesitate to go to:

www.cgsusa.org

Link to our FaceBook page <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/The-National-Association-of-Catechesis-of-the-Good-Shepherd-USA/175131972548203>

Link to LinkedIn

http://www.linkedin.com/company/3218950?trk=NUS_CMPY_FOL-pdctd

The CGSUSA Regional Association Kit will include sample newsletters, etc.

Do regional members gather formally and informally as part of the function of the regional groups? What types of events (material making, formation, updates, etc.) bring members together?

Regional Groups offer a variety of events for members, some are formal

gatherings, inviting members to participate in elections and to hear business reports, etc. Other gatherings are less formal, which may include material making and formation events. Some gather for food and fellowship, happily sharing their discoveries of the children. Please go to https://www.cgsusa.org/members/regional_groups.aspx for more information.

Are dues paid?

Different associations have different requirements for membership, while most requirements simply consist of being a catechist in the geographical location, other associations may charge a membership fee to help cover their budget for regional meetings and events.

Where does money go that would be collected from formation courses if a profit results?

Many regional associations are generous in their donations to CGSUSA, tithing 10% of their profits to support National. Some make a donation from each formation course held in their region. Many invite local catechists to join CGSUSA. The CGSUSA Annual Appeal is vital to the ongoing mission of our work. Many regions hold fundraisers, parishes have sponsored special collections, pancake breakfasts, ice cream socials and other events to help support the vision.

We would like for area churches to be supported and supportive during formation courses without any one group becoming overly burdened by the constant expectation that their church will plan, organize and host a training. Does a CGSUSA alleviate some of that vigorous effort?

CGSUSA offers a "Hosting Packet" for those who would like to offer a formation course in their own region. How can churches share the responsibility? How can they invite parishioners to be a part of a training course?

There are churches who invite their parishioners to be a part of the "Cookie Club" or "Meal Ministry", asking them to bring food for courses.

Some local associations will form "Hosting Committees", so that different groups or different parishes will each lead "Welcome and Hospitality Committee", "Food Committee", "Material Making Committee", etc. that way one group is not responsible for a course.

It is the actual gathering and building of friendship that really fills a "vital need" of the catechists. Some gatherings have been around prayer, some around material making, some around a particular theme... but all are seeking that amazing friendship where we know each other even if we have only just met. As our beloved founder Sofia Cavalletti said, "...we all have a common spring at which we drink: the mystery of God filtered through the child. The face of God has many aspects, and what is shown to us through the child, is different from what is familiar to us as adults. We enter into a spontaneous relationship with God because it is He who first 'called us by name.'" (The Founding of the International Council, 1998 Journal)

We invite you to prayerfully consider together how He is calling you to gather with each other.

"I believe it is friendship that supports and sustains our call, and keeps alive our longing for that perfect friendship of the Parousia."

--Tina Lillig (Life of the Catechist: The Necessity of Friendship for the Catechist, 2000 Journal)

