

# National Christ Child Society Chapter Guide

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### Chapter 1: The Christ Child Society and NCCS

#### Section 1.1 Overview

On behalf of National Christ Child Society (NCCS), the NCCS Board of Directors and staff would like to thank you for serving in your Christ Child Society chapter and making a difference in the lives of children and families in need in your community. This **Chapter Guide is a resource that should be shared with all your members** to help educate your leaders and members and strengthen your chapter.

Christ Child Society was founded in 1887 by Mary Virginia Merrick with the first chapter established in Washington, DC. By 1912, 24 chapters had been formed across the country, and NCCS was established as a nonprofit organization in 1916. Today, we have over 5,500 members in over 45 (or 46?) chapters nationwide. Inspired by Mary Virginia Merrick's motto, "Find a need and fill it," our members serve as volunteers in their local communities to fill the needs of children through personal service.

Each member of a constituent chapter is also a member of NCCS. A strong national organization was part of our founder's early vision. Mary Virginia Merrick wanted each chapter to operate independently to serve the needs in its community, but she understood the importance and credibility added by being part of a strong national organization that shared one vision and mission.

NCCS is incorporated in the District of Columbia and governed by a volunteer Board of Directors elected primarily from within the chapter membership across the country. Each chapter is a separate legal entity from NCCS and forms as a nonprofit organization in its own jurisdiction. Chapters are chartered by NCCS after meeting its requirements and agreeing to conform to the mission, spirit, and purpose of NCCS and its bylaws.

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As of September 1, 2020, we have 46 (or 45?) Christ Child Society chapters in the following areas:

Akron, OH	Cleveland, OH	Geauga County, OH	Phoenix, AZ	Toledo, OH
Albany, NY	Columbus, OH	Milwaukee, WI	Pittsburgh, PA	Tucson, AZ
Annapolis, MD	Dallas-Fort Worth, TX	Monterey Bay, CA	Quad Cities, IL/IA	Utica, NY
Atlanta, GA	Dayton, OH	Naples, FL	San Diego, CA	Washington, DC
Baltimore, MD	Denver, CO	Northern Michigan	San Jose, CA	Western Massachusetts
Greater Binghamton, NY	Detroit, MI	Oahu, HI **	Sarasota, FL	Western Reserve, OH
Boca Raton, FL	Door County, WI	Omaha, NE	South Bend, IN	
Boston, MA	Duluth, MN	Oshkosh, WI	Stuart, FL	
Cape May, NJ	El Paso, TX	Palm Beach, FL	Summit, NJ	
Central Illinois	Fort Wayne, IN	Pasadena, CA	Texas Capital	

\*\* Denotes Chapter in Formation

Please visit [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org) for a current list of chapters and areas being explored for future chapters.

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### Section 1.2 History of Christ Child Society and its Founder

Over 130 years ago, a young woman's act of love for an unborn child started what has grown into a national organization dedicated to serving children in need - Christ Child Society. Our history began with an extraordinary woman, Mary Virginia Merrick. She gathered family and friends together with an idea to serve one newborn in need. This idea became her lifelong mission and has grown to over 45 (or 46?) local communities, helping thousands of children.

To read about the history of the Christ Child Society and our founder, please go to [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org) and [maryvirginiamerrick.org](http://maryvirginiamerrick.org).

### Section 1.3 Mission, Purpose, Objective, and Principles

#### Mission

National Christ Child Society, through its chapters, is dedicated to providing services to children in need of resources, regardless of race or creed.

Note: All new chapter mission statements, along with changes to existing statements, must be reviewed and approved by NCCS to assure consistency in language.

#### Purpose

*All of our Chapters must be established with the **same purpose** as NCCS, as follows:*

The Society shall be an organization primarily dedicated to child welfare. Its motive and spirit shall be a love of Christ expressing itself in personal service for children and youth **regardless of race or creed**, to honor the childhood of Christ.

#### Objective

The charitable objective of NCCS shall be to serve the needs of all children in need of resources, by promoting effective volunteerism through education, service, and

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leadership development; by developing and chartering Chapters; by maintaining standards and guidelines for the Chapters; by coordinating the work of the Chapters through a unified program; and by promoting the purpose and activities of this organization nationwide.

### Principles

*From the writings of Mary Virginia Merrick:*

- **First**, the guidance of all work undertaken in the line of Catholic principles of charity
- **Second**, an unrestricted membership opens to all people who wish to serve the Christ Child regardless of race or creed
- **Third**, a generous cooperation with all social or lay workers
- **Fourth**, a readiness to do whatever is left undone in the field of charity and to seek only untilled fields for its labor
- **Fifth**, the principle that social work must be conducted on a plane higher than a material level to be effective
- **Sixth**, no work is too small to engage the attention of Christ Child workers nor too large for their ambition in the service of the children of the poor

### Section 1.4 Prayers

#### Christ Child Society Prayer

*Remember in this sacrifice of Your own and only Child,  
all children everywhere throughout the world, and grant that,  
like Your Son, as they increase in years, they may grow in grace and wisdom before You,  
and in the sight of all, for the improvement and saving of the world.  
Jesus, the Friend of little children, bless the little children of the world.*

---

In 2003, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome declared our founder, Mary Virginia Merrick, a "Servant of God." This allowed the preliminary steps towards her

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canonization to begin. In 2011, the Archbishop of Washington, DC, Donald Cardinal Wuerl, opened the formal Archdiocesan investigation into her life of holiness and virtue. This phase is nearly complete and we hope the cause will move to the Roman phase soon. Prayer is critical to the success of the canonization effort. We encourage all Christ Child Society members to pray for the Cause.

### Prayer for the Canonization of Mary Virginia Merrick

*Lord God, in your special love for children, you chose to raise up Mary Virginia Merrick to be the servant of the poor children. In laboring to serve the young and those without hope because of the crushing weight of poverty, she proclaimed the love of your Son. She made her life's work a demonstration that "nothing is ever too much to do for a child."*

*Grant that her example of selfless charity and courageous virtue in the face of her suffering will inspire us to be as generous in the service of others. We humbly ask that your servant Mary Virginia Merrick be numbered among the Church's canonized saints for edification of your holy people, in accord with your most holy will. Through her intercession, please hear and answer my request (state your intention).*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord - **Amen.***

## Section 1.5 Traditions

### The Story of the Red Wagon

The story of the Red Wagon is an important part of the history of Christ Child Society. In 1884, as Mary Virginia Merrick's vision for the Christ Child Society was developing, Mary asked Paul, a young boy who had designated himself her errand runner, what he wanted for Christmas. Paul's mother worked as a laundress for the Merrick family, and Paul said he wanted a red wagon to help his mother with her work, but he added that his family would not be celebrating Christmas that year because his father was out of work. Mary explained that the Christ Child was the giver of all good gifts and suggested Paul write a

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letter to the Christ Child and ask for the red wagon. Paul returned a few days later with not only his letter, but also with a handful of letters written by his brothers, sisters, and friends. Mary and her friends filled all the children's Christmas requests, and each gift was distributed with a tag reading "From the Christ Child." The red wagon symbolizes one of the first gifts given to deserving children prior to the formal organization of Christ Child Society in 1887. Many of our chapters hold fundraising events such as Red Wagon Galas, Luncheons, and fairs, and you will see the red wagon image used in print and online media for some chapters.

**The red wagon image is not trademarked and may be altered for Chapter use. However, when using a red wagon image, the handle of the wagon MUST be pictured in an upright position. This handle placement is a legal requirement as a result of a litigation compromise by NCCS relating to another organization's trademark.**

### Spiritual Traditions

Each time chapter members come together for a meeting, the Christ Child Society Prayer should be recited. NCCS opens its meetings with the Christ Child Society Prayer and ends with "Mary Virginia Merrick, pray for us". All chapters are also asked to encourage their members to pray for the Cause for the Canonization of Mary Virginia Merrick.

### Founder's Day Celebrations

Each year, chapters are requested to hold a special event to honor our founder, Mary Virginia Merrick, and to recognize the history of Christ Child Society. Traditionally, chapters hold a Mass or service on or around, March 25<sup>th</sup>, since Mary Virginia Merrick established this date to honor the Annunciation of our Lord - the coming of the Christ Child. The Mass, or service and accompanying social function, should bring together chapter members, prospective members, and friends to celebrate the achievements of the chapter.

Traditionally, the necrology, or list of the past year's deceased chapter members, is read at the Founder's Day event. This could also be the time to hold a formal ceremony to receive new members. Additionally, chapters could use this event to install new officers

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and recognize and celebrate their members with 5, 10, 15, etc., years of service in the chapter.

Many chapters honor members who have performed outstanding service and continued the vision of Mary Virginia Merrick with an award. The Founder's Day celebration is an ideal time to invite persons and/or agencies or organizations who receive benefits from the local chapter to come and share in the celebration and meet those members who are volunteering their time and talent.

### Christ Child Society Jewelry

Pins/pendants bearing the Christ Child Society historical emblem are available for order through NCCS. Specific jewelry recognizes chapter members, chapter board members, and chapter presidents. Please visit our shop at [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org) to see available items and place orders. Limited inventory is kept on hand, and some items require special order. Remember to plan ahead for orders and call the office to check availability as orders may take up to 8 weeks to fill.

### Section 1.6 Chapter Awards and Recognition by NCCS

The following awards and recognitions are presented by NCCS to honor deserving individuals and chapters.

#### The Mary Virginia Merrick Award

The NCCS Mary Virginia Merrick award was established in 1974 and is presented to an individual or organization who has demonstrated extraordinary service and/or support to National Christ Child Society. NCCS board members and chapter members are encouraged to submit candidates for the award, in writing, to the NCCS Immediate Past President, who will chair the Selection Committee. The Selection Committee will consist of the Immediate Past President, one Past National President, one current NCCS Board Member, and two past NCCS Board Members. Membership in NCCS is not a requirement for this award. The award will be presented at our National Convention which is held every two years in even-numbered years. The recipient's name is added to a plaque

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displayed in the NCCS office and he/she is presented with an award at the announcement during Convention.

### **The Red Wagon Award**

Every two years at Convention, NCCS presents the Red Wagon Award to a chapter with an outstanding program. The winning chapter is given a \$1,000 grant to help support further innovation and development of the program. All chapters are eligible to apply for the award, with the exception of the previous two winners.

Other than the monetary grant, chapters benefit from being the Red Wagon Award recipient through promotion of their program on the NCCS website, an article in the NCCS newsletter, and highlighted at the Convention. The award is also an excellent opportunity to garner local press for the chapter.

Each chapter will be notified of the request for applications in early spring prior to Convention. The application deadline will be announced at that time. The application and informational cover letter will be emailed to each Chapter President and will be available on the NCCS website.

### **Chapter Membership Growth**

The chapter obtaining the largest percentage increase in total paid NCCS membership over the prior two-year period will be recognized at Convention. Chapters must be fully chartered during the measured growth period to be eligible for the award. A plaque listing the chapters receiving this award is on display in the NCCS office.

### **Chapter Anniversaries**

Chapters will be recognized formally by NCCS on the occasion of each 5-year anniversary. A certificate will be presented to the chapter at the Convention or Conference (held in odd-numbered years) nearest the Chapter's anniversary date. Anniversary years are based on the year listed in the official records of NCCS as the recognized founding year of each chapter.

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### The National Christ Child Society Scholarship Fund at The Catholic University of America

The National Christ Child Society Scholarship Fund (the "Fund") was established by NCCS to promote the education of qualified students in the National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS) at The Catholic University of America.

The fund was created to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of Christ Child Society with the purpose of providing financial assistance for tuition, fees, and books to selected students pursuing degrees in NCSSS. Christ Child Society chapters and members from across the country contributed the initial endowment and the first awards were made during the centennial celebration in Washington, DC in 1987. The endowment fund is held and maintained by The Catholic University of America.

Award recipients shall be referred to as Merrick Scholars in honor of our founder Mary Virginia Merrick. All Christ Child Society chapters are encouraged to publicize the scholarship in their chapter, as priority consideration is given to NCCS members and their family members during the selection process. Merrick Scholars are obligated to engage in a field placement as a condition of the award and first consideration for field placement is with our Washington, DC chapter.

## Chapter 2: National Christ Child Society Role and Chapter Relationship

### Section 2.1 Role of the National Office and Board

The National Office provides its chapters with support, information, best practice sharing, and educational opportunities. NCCS has one full-time employee (Executive Director) and two part-time office support. The office works very closely with the volunteer Board of Directors and is physically located in the metropolitan Washington, DC area.

In addition to day-to-day operations, responsibilities include:

- Serve as the primary liaison with chapter leadership
- Support and provide guidance to chapters on National initiatives, programs, operations, and procedures

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- Develop, disseminate, and implement national policy decisions and initiatives
- Preserve the records, history, traditions, and artifacts of NCCS
- Maintain the National membership database and identify ways to grow membership
- Seek expansion opportunities and oversee the formation of new chapters
- Identify and secure funding sources for all NCCS initiatives
- Develop and provide educational and networking opportunities for chapters
- Provide information and direction to chapters regarding nonprofit and diocesan requirements for operation
- Identify and share chapter best practices, examples, and resources
- Visit chapters periodically to foster stronger chapter relations
- Coordinate planning and execution of annual Conference/Convention
- Expand public awareness of NCCS and enhance NCCS' public image
- Provide continuity to the national organization amid changing Boards of Directors

It is NCCS' role to serve our chapters so you can serve more children in your communities with greater impact. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the office or directly to NCCS Board members if you need any assistance.

### Section 2.2 NCCS Board and Office Contact Information

NCCS is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The twelve Board members are elected primarily from within the chapter membership and each director makes a two-year commitment to serve on the Board. Please visit the [NCCS website](#) for a current list of Board members. Please note all Board members can be reached via email using first initial, last name@nationalchristchild.org. For example, Molly Fanning can be reached at [mfanning@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:mfanning@nationalchristchild.org).

#### **Office**

National Christ Child Society  
6110 Executive Blvd, Suite 504  
Rockville, MD 20852

Phone: 301-881-2490  
Fax: 301-881-2493

**Email:** office@nationalchristchild.org

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**Website:** [www.nationalchristchild.org](http://www.nationalchristchild.org)  
**Blog:** [blog.nationalchristchild.org](http://blog.nationalchristchild.org)  
**Facebook:** [NationalChristChild](https://www.facebook.com/NationalChristChild)  
**YouTube** National Christ Child Society

### **Staff**

**Moira Lynch, Executive Director**  
[mlynch@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:mlynch@nationalchristchild.org)

**Karen Bartlett, Office Manager**  
[kbartlett@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:kbartlett@nationalchristchild.org) or [office@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:office@nationalchristchild.org)

**Kristin O'Donnell, Accounting and Special Projects**  
[kodonnell@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:kodonnell@nationalchristchild.org)

**NCCS Office Hours** are 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. ET Monday through Thursday; the office is generally closed on Fridays.

### **Section 2.3 Christ Child Society Chapter Formation and Chartering Process**

Chapters may only operate in the United States and NCCS recognizes three levels of operation.

**Chapter in Formation:** Groups in the beginning stages of establishing a Christ Child Society chapter shall be in this classification. Chapters in Formation must complete the following steps before being approved for Provisional chapter status:

- Form a nonprofit organization, complete organization documents, and elect officers
- Obtain approval from diocese
- Obtain federal tax exemption

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- Recruit members
- Develop program(s)

Members of Chapters in Formation may attend the Conventions, Conferences and Annual Business Meetings of NCCS. Chapter representatives will be granted voice, but no vote during the proceedings of the Annual Business Meeting. The Chapters in Formation do not have any financial obligation to NCCS until they become a Provisional Chapter upon which time annual dues will be assessed.

**Provisional Chapters:** Groups who have completed the aforementioned requirements will be approved by the NCCS Board of Directors for Provisional status. The Chapter will be notified by the National Office and classified as a Provisional Chapter for a period of at least one year. The purpose of this provisional status is to allow the forming Chapter to:

- Create awareness, grow membership, and develop leadership
- Establish and expand effective programs to fill needs in the local community
- Work with NCCS to understand and operate under the Chapter Guide
- Participate in educational and networking opportunities provided by NCCS
- Develop financial management and reporting, and comply with state and federal filing requirements

Provisional Chapters pay Annual Dues to NCCS but do not pay Chapter Support.

**Chartered Chapters:** After successfully completing the Provisional period, the NCCS Board of Directors will approve the chartering of the chapter. In addition to Annual Dues, the fully chartered chapter will be responsible for a Chapter Support assessment, with credit given to Chapters for its member participation in NCCS' Annual Appeal campaign.

### Section 2.4 Chapter Responsibilities to NCCS

#### Reporting Responsibilities

Each chapter is required to complete the following annually:

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1. **Member Roster:** NCCS must confirm each chapter's member roster as of January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The National Office will send you an Excel spreadsheet that reflects your current member roster in our database. You will be asked to verify the information presented (name, address, and email) and make any necessary changes to reflect changes in member status or addresses. You will also complete the NCCS New Membership Form for all new members who are not listed in our current database. The updated roster and new member information is due by February 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.
2. **Annual Chapter Report:** Each year NCCS gathers important information and input from all our chapters via a template that changes annually. The Annual Chapter Report is distributed to chapter presidents in January, and they are expected to work with all their officers and chairpersons to complete the report. The report is due on February 28<sup>th</sup> each year. After aggregating the responses from all the chapters, NCCS communicates the collective input back to chapter presidents and uses the information for planning purposes, development purposes, and in our annual Impact Statement.
  - **Chapter Board List:** A list including full contact information (email address, phone number, and beginning/end term dates) for each board member is due within 15 days of the date on anything the chapter board changes, as current information is critical to effective communication between NCCS and its chapters. Please submit information via email to [office@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:office@nationalchristchild.org). Please visit the Leadership Resources page under Member Resources at [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org) for a copy of the Chapter Board of Directors Information Form that can be used to submit this information.
3. **Tax Filings:** A copy of the most recent filing of **IRS Form 990, Form 990 EZ or Form 990-N** (email acknowledgement of filing) should be sent via email to [office@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:office@nationalchristchild.org) within 15 days of the date the tax return is filed with the IRS each year (e.g., by May 30<sup>th</sup> if your chapter has a calendar year-end or by November 30<sup>th</sup> if your chapter has a June 30<sup>th</sup> year-end).

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4. **Chapter Articles of Organization or Incorporation:** If the document is amended, a copy must be submitted to the National Office within 30 days.
5. **Chapter Bylaws:** Amended bylaws should be submitted to the National Office within 30 days of adoption by the chapter.

### Financial Obligations

1. **NCCS Annual Dues:** Each chapter is assessed Annual Dues of **\$14 per member** based on the number of members listed on the chapter membership roster as of January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The dues amount is set based on the budget adopted by the voting delegates at the NCCS Annual Business Meeting. The chapter is invoiced by NCCS by early March and NCCS Dues must be **paid by March 31<sup>st</sup>**.
2. **NCCS Chapter Support:** Each chapter is assessed Chapter Support of **\$20 per member** based on the number of members listed in the chapter membership roster as of January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. The Chapter Support obligation for a **member is reduced up to a maximum of \$50** if that member contributed to NCCS' Annual Appeal. For example, a chapter is assessed \$20 for a member but that member donated \$20 to NCCS' Annual Appeal. The assessment is offset by the donation to NCCS but does not result in any "credit" for the chapter. Should a member donate \$100 to NCCS' Annual Appeal, the maximum offset of \$50 is applied. The \$20 Chapter Support obligation is taken out of that and a credit of \$30 is applied toward the chapter's overall Chapter Support obligation. The more members that donate more than \$50 to NCCS' Annual Appeal will result in a decreased financial obligation for Chapter Support to the individual chapter. The chapter is invoiced by NCCS in early March at the same time the NCCS Dues invoice is presented and NCCS Chapter Support must be **paid by June 30<sup>th</sup>**.

### Participate in National Day of Service

All chapters are encouraged to participate in our National Day of Service (NDS) which will be held around the 4<sup>th</sup> week of October. The goal is to show our strength as a national organization, engage our membership, encourage support, and raise awareness locally and nationally. NCCS selects the theme and provides resources to help the

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chapters get involved in this national initiative.

### Attend NCCS Conference/Convention

Each fall, NCCS holds an annual Conference or Convention. We hold “Conferences” in odd-numbered years and “Conventions” in even-numbered years. Both Convention and Conference include an Annual Business Meeting (ABM). The purpose of the ABM is to adopt the NCCS budget, amend bylaws, receive reports, pass resolutions, and transact other necessary business. Each chapter in good standing is allowed two voting delegates at the ABM, but all attendees are welcome to attend.

These events are an opportunity for all chapters to come together to:

- Meet and network with chapter members and leaders from all over the country
- Share ideas and strategies for issues facing EVERY chapter
- Learn valuable information to share with their entire chapter
- Meet face-to-face with NCCS Board members and the Executive Director
- Have your voice heard as a voting delegate at the annual business meeting
- Form new friendships and have FUN!

The main differences between conference and convention are:

1. Conference is held in the Washington, DC metropolitan area and is one day shorter than convention, and
2. The convention location moves around the country, and NCCS Board Members are elected at the biennial convention.

NCCS recommends each chapter budget for two members to attend annually, and we expect at least one member from every chapter to attend. The benefits of educational and networking opportunities outweigh the cost of attendance. NCCS recognizes this can be a financial burden on our struggling chapters and chapters in formation. Thanks to the giving spirit of several strong chapters, a **scholarship** initiative has been established to help deserving representatives attend conference/convention. Scholarship applications are distributed by NCCS each spring before registrations are due.

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Conference/Convention are not just for Chapter Presidents and President-Elects. **Every member is invited and encouraged to attend!** It is an outstanding opportunity to reconnect with the mission of Mary Virginia Merrick and learn innovative ways to grow her legacy.

### Support NCCS Annual Appeal

Chapter leaders are expected to promote support of the NCCS Annual Appeal by its members. Not only do member donations to NCCS's Annual Appeal help the chapter to meet its chapter support obligation, they also help us expand our mission to new communities and to enhance our national impact.

### Chapter Requirements Checklist

#	Item	Description	Due Date
1	Chapter Member Roster	Send updates to office periodically throughout year and verify complete roster as of January 1st	February 1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Annual Chapter Report	Used to report activities and gather necessary input	February 28 <sup>th</sup>
3	Chapter Board List	Chapter board member list with contact information and terms	Within 15 days of changes occur and verify list upon request
4	Tax Filings	IRS Form 990, 990 EZ, 990N	February 28 <sup>th</sup>
5	NCCS Dues	\$14/member	March 31 <sup>st</sup>
6	NCCS Chapter Support	\$20/member with reduction for member donations to NCCS Annual Appeal	June 30 <sup>th</sup>

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7	Chapter Articles of Organization/Incorporation	Outlines nonprofit's purpose and structure	Within 30 days of amendment
8	Chapter Bylaws	Significant written rules that establish the chapter's governance structure	Within 30 days of amendment
9	National Conference/ Convention	Attend annual meeting	Annually in Sept
10	National Day of Service	Join us nationally and make a difference locally	4 <sup>th</sup> week in October
11	NCCS Annual Giving Campaign	Encourage chapter members to donate	October through December 31 <sup>st</sup>

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### Section 2.5 Chapter Compliance

Each chapter of Christ Child Society has a responsibility to the national organization and to the other chapters to follow the applicable terms of this guide as well as all applicable Federal and State laws. NCCS reviews chapter operations for compliance and any chapter that is found not to be in compliance will be contacted by the NCCS Executive Director and/or NCCS President to determine the best course of action to assist the chapter in establishing full compliance with requirements.

NCCS will contact Chapter President to discuss issues if any of the following observations are made:

- The chapter is engaging in conduct that is outside the NCCS mission
- The chapter is engaging in an activity that is illegal or immoral
- Membership in the chapter has decreased significantly
- Major chapter board positions appear stagnant
- The chapter does not regularly attend annual conference/convention
- No fundraising projects are held
- Required NCCS reports are not submitted
- Annual Dues and Chapter Support payments are delinquent

NCCS' goal is to work with the chapter on a plan of action to resolve the compliance issue and ensure the chapter returns to full compliance status. If the issue cannot be resolved with phone contacts, the National Office will contact the NCCS Board President who will arrange a visit with the chapter and its board.

If the issue cannot be resolved in a timely manner, the NCCS Board of Directors will determine whether the chapter will be placed on a one (1) year probation. NCCS will have regular contact with any chapter on probation. The NCCS Board of Directors will look for substantial positive progress by the chapter. If during the probationary period the chapter is determined by the Board of Directors to again be in compliance, it will be removed from probationary status.

*A chapter placed on probation will:*

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1. Attend and have voice, but no vote, at all NCCS Annual Business Meetings at Conference and Convention
2. Be unable to nominate officers for the NCCS Board of Directors
3. Remain responsible for all NCCS-required report filings
4. Be responsible for current Dues and Chapter Support obligations (back payment of dues and chapter support will be evaluated per individual case)

### After the one (1) year of probation:

1. After one (1) year of probation, if adequate progress is made as determined by the NCCS Board, but the chapter is not yet in full compliance, a second year of probation may be granted by the NCCS Board.
2. If after one (1) year (or the second additional probation year), the NCCS Board determines no progress within the chapter is apparent, the NCCS Board will vote on whether the chapter's charter should be revoked.
3. If the NCCS Board votes that the chapter's charter be revoked, the NCCS office will request the return of the chapter's charter and disallow the group's use of the Christ Child Society name and logo. Groups failing to comply with NCCS' requests can be subject to legal action.
4. The NCCS office will notify the Diocese in which the chapter functioned of its charter revocation.

## Section 2.6 NCCS Resources

### **NCCS Website** ([nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org))

NCCS' website is the best single source of information and available resources. The website provides a wealth of information about the national organization, our history, our founder Mary Virginia Merrick, current news and events, and programs. Encourage all members to visit [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org) to explore leadership resources and tools, educational resources, program ideas, membership information, and fundraising examples, among other useful resources.

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### Marketing & Communications

Christ Child Society Brand Guidelines were developed in 2016 to help chapters apply the Christ Child Society identity in a consistent manner, build awareness, and achieve a cohesive communications image across the United States. Chapters are provided with logo files, samples, and templates to help each customize their own chapter print and electronic communications while maintaining a consistent identity with the national organization. Many [Marketing & Communications resources](#) can be found on our website under the Member Resources tab. Please contact the NCCS office if you need access to any of the following tools/resources:

- Christ Child Society Brand Guidelines
- Brand Values Matrix
- Chapter logo master digital file specific to your chapter
- CCS Master Branding Templates – for chapter brochure, letterhead, envelopes, and business cards
- CCS Photo Gallery – NCCS has approximately 100 images for chapter use on brochures and other literature. Contact [office@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:office@nationalchristchild.org) to get images.

### Social Media – Follow us

- ✓ Instagram @[NationalChristChild](#)
- ✓ Facebook [NationalChristChild](#)
- ✓ Twitter @[NatlChristChild](#)
- ✓ [NCCS President's Blog \(blog.nationalchristchild.org\)](http://blog.nationalchristchild.org) – you must subscribe to [receive](#).
- ✓ [YouTube – National Christ Child Society](#)

Please encourage all members to follow NCCS and other chapters on social media to help us grow our community, activate support, and raise awareness of our local service with national impact. Remember to like and share posts to help all of us reach and engage larger audiences. We will do the same for you!

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### NCCS Newsletter, Brochures and Other Publications

NCCS publishes a national newsletter twice a year and provides the following to chapters upon request:

- ✓ NCCS brochure and CCS prayer cards
- ✓ Literature to include in layettes or distribute to clients
  - [Read to Me cards](#)
  - [Calm Your Baby cards](#)
  - [No Blanket in Crib Tag/Label](#)
- ✓ Canonization brochure and prayer cards
- ✓ In Service of the Christ Child: An Illustrated Biography of Mary Virginia Merrick
- ✓ CCS Logo Seals and Red Wagon Stickers

Please visit our [Shop](#) on our website for a complete list of all materials, merchandise and other promotional items available for order.

### Chapter Formation Handbook

This handbook is provided to individuals interested in forming a new Christ Child Society chapter to help them understand more about Christ Child Society and the steps necessary to form a chapter in their community.

### Cause for Canonization Website and Social Media

This website ([MaryVirginiaMerrick.org](http://MaryVirginiaMerrick.org)) was developed by the Canonization Advisory Board to promote the cause of canonization for our founder Mary Virginia Merrick. It provides information on her legacy and spirituality in addition to news items, videos, pictures, and other important information about Mary Virginia Merrick. Please encourage members to stay up to date on the cause and related news by visiting the canonization website and following our social media posts.

- ✓ Facebook [@MaryVirginiaMerrick](#)
- ✓ Twitter [@maryVmerrick](#)
- ✓

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### Chapter 3: Chapter Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

#### Section 3.1 President and President-Elect

NCCS recommends a two-year term for Chapter Presidents. We also recommend all chapters have a President-Elect position on their board. The President-Elect should serve in this position for a minimum of one year preceding the date on which he/she will succeed to be President. The President-Elect assists the President in overseeing all chapter activities and performs the President's responsibilities in his/her absence. The President-Elect collaborates with the President to learn the role of the President and automatically becomes President at the end of his/her term.

Important qualifications for the President role include:

1. Being an enthusiastic and passionate advocate of the mission
2. Being comfortable leading the chapter through complex challenges and change
3. Being able to delegate to others and help develop future leaders
4. Having the ability to communicate with a wide spectrum of constituents from members to partners to donors
5. Having effective listening and facilitation skills to fuse diverse viewpoints toward sound decision making

Officer toolkits can be found on the Leadership Resources page under the Member Resources tab on the NCCS website at [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org). Here are some resources included in the Chapter President's toolkit:

- ✓ Chapter President's Checklist
- ✓ Chapter Requirements Checklist
- ✓ Chapter Board Onboarding materials
- ✓ Chapter Strategic Plan Checklist

The Chapter President should:

1. Consider the Executive Committee as the key management team
2. Review all financial aspects of the chapter with the Treasurer

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3. Act as the presider over all Board and General meetings
4. Ensure the Board performs their governance role while encouraging input from all Board members
5. Develop a strong Board orientation meeting with a detailed Board Handbook
6. Help foster respectful group interactions
7. Facilitate reaching consensus for the Board
8. Collaborate with all Board Members and Committee Chairs with transparency
9. Effectively share information with all members and focus on communicating in ways that move your chapter forward
10. Manage conflicts in the chapter should they arise by encouraging information sharing, establishing a collaborative tone, and depersonalizing the conflict

### **Board Orientation**

A strong onboarding process helps your new board engage in the chapter's work immediately and hit the road running with their responsibilities. Provide new board members with a Board Handbook that includes the information and tools they need. A strong Board Handbook and orientation process helps train current leaders and makes it easier for you to recruit future leaders as you are giving them the tools and resources they need to be effective. A sample Board Handbook Table of Contents can be requested via email from office@[nationalchristchild.org](mailto:office@nationalchristchild.org).

Make sure the board members feel comfortable asking questions at any time and consider asking "veteran" or outgoing board members to serve as a mentor for a new board member.

### **Meetings**

As Chapter President, you facilitate all meetings. You will set the agenda, manage discussion, and appoint members to follow up on action items. Be sure to forward copies of the agenda to each Board member several days before the meeting so that the Board comes to the meeting prepared for discussion and action. Ensure meeting minutes noting board action items are completed and distributed promptly as the minutes are important working documents for your volunteer Board members.

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### **Board Goals for the Chapter**

The Board's goals are important. Work with your Board to establish goals for the chapter during the current term and work together to determine roles, responsibilities and actions necessary to meet these goals.

### **Chapter Strategic Plan**

A Strategic Plan helps your chapter translate your vision into goals and objectives along with detail regarding how you will achieve those objectives. The timeframe for a Strategic Plan is generally 3-5 years so your chapter may be in the middle of a plan when you take office. Ensure you are completely up-to-date on the chapter's progress and where adjustments may be necessary. If a strategic plan is not in place, work with your Board to develop a strategic planning process and put one in place.

NCCS can provide great value to the chapter and its ability to serve children more effectively, but the relationship depends on you to work. As the Chapter President, you should:

- ✓ Participate, and encourage other leaders to participate, in educational and networking opportunities offered by NCCS
- ✓ Plan for at least two chapter leaders to attend annual conference/convention
- ✓ Complete all NCCS chapter requirements in a thorough and timely manner
- ✓ Use the NCCS office staff and board members as a resource when you have questions or need assistance
- ✓ Communicate information received from NCCS to all your chapter members
- ✓ Ensure your members are aware of the resources made available by NCCS on the website
- ✓ Read and share the *Challenging Poverty: One Child at a Time Manual* with all your members to help your chapter have effective and impactful programs
- ✓ Communicate your challenges and successes to NCCS so they can share your valuable experience with other chapters
- ✓ Encourage your members to participate in the NCCS National Day of Service

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- ✓ Encourage your members to support the NCCS Annual Appeal

### Section 3.2 Treasurer

All your board members share equal responsibility for the financial health of your chapter, but the Treasurer has more hands-on responsibility. The Treasurer is generally responsible for receiving funds, writing checks, and overseeing and reporting the chapter's finances. The chapter Board depends on the Treasurer to ensure it is making decisions on solid, reliable, and timely financial information.

It is important to limit the Treasurer term to two (2) years if possible to ensure the same person does not end up filling this office for so long that it makes it difficult to replace them with another volunteer. Effective Treasurers encourage and equip fellow volunteers to participate in the financial management of the chapter to ensure it is easy to "pass the baton" to the next Treasurer. NCCS encourages chapters to consider having an Assistant Treasurer position which can help the chapter put more checks and balances in place (Assistant Treasurer could pay invoices and Treasurer could perform bank reconciliations). An Assistant Treasurer could also train for the Treasurer position.

Chapter bylaws will outline the specific duties of the Treasurer, but responsibilities may include:

1. Bank Account/Investment account maintenance and reconciliations
2. Manage report filings with the IRS, state and diocese – Keep a calendar of filing requirements and assign responsibility.
  - a. Form 990
  - b. Form 1099
  - c. Charitable Solicitation Registration
  - d. Sales and Use Exemptions
  - e. Affirmation of chapter information to the chancery of the diocese
  - f. Obtaining necessary permits and licenses for fundraisers or other events
3. Identify and manage risk
  - a. Insurance

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- b. Internal Controls
4. Prepare Donor Acknowledgements to confirm contributions received
5. Prepare chapter budget and present to the board and membership for approval
6. Prepare Timely Financial Reports
7. Maintain the Permanent File for the chapter and ensure compliance with Record Retention Policy
8. Recruit and bring next chapter Treasurer up to speed regarding responsibilities

The Treasurer should have the following qualifications:

1. Financial literacy
2. Ability to establish and maintain chapter Financial software program
3. Comfortable working with numbers and strong attention to detail
4. Understand internal controls
5. Ability to plan and strategize
6. Ability to translate financial information and concepts to chapter members and Board
7. Willingness to ask questions

Officer toolkits can be found on the Leadership Resources page under the Member Resources tab on the NCCS website at [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org). Here are some resources included in the Chapter Treasurer's toolkit:

- ✓ Chapter Treasurer's Checklist
- ✓ Chapter Treasurer's Task Schedule
- ✓ Sample Quarterly Treasurer's Report (Budget vs. Actual)

### Section 3.3 Secretary

The Secretary role may be broken down into two positions – Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary. The Recording Secretary is responsible for drafting the minutes to document Board meetings. Remember to take this task seriously as these minutes serve as proof of the topics discussed and the decisions made in Board meetings and may be the only surviving record of what was discussed during a meeting and the chapter will

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hopefully survive for hundreds of years! Other responsibilities of a Recording Secretary may include:

1. Attend all board meetings
2. Record the minutes of all general, special and Board meetings
3. Obtain approval of all minutes and execute upon finalization
4. Send notices of all meetings
5. Gather reports and minutes from all board committees and retain minutes in historical record files
6. Ensure bylaws are signed and all past and current bylaws are maintained in the permanent records
7. Maintain the chapter record retention policy

Responsibilities of a Corresponding Secretary may include:

1. Conduct the correspondence for the chapter
2. Maintain a file of all correspondence received and sent
3. Working with the President to inform members of board meetings as well as upcoming chapter events

Important qualifications for the Secretary include:

1. Strong organization skills
2. Knowledge of the chapter's activities and programs
3. Pays attention to details
4. Willingness to ask questions

Officer toolkits can be found on the NCCS website at [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org). Here are some resources included in the Chapter Secretary's toolkit:

- ✓ Chapter Secretary's Checklist
- ✓ Chapter Records Retention Policy

### Section 3.4 New Officer Installation

The acceptance of a board position means that person is committed to accepting the duties and responsibilities to serve the chapter in that capacity. NCCS installs its National

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Board after Mass at the biennial convention. Chapters are encouraged to hold their new board installation ceremonies in a spiritual setting as well, and to consider having their Spiritual Advisor conduct the ceremony. Chapters are welcome to modify the Sample Officer Installation Ceremony for their own use. (See sample on the Leadership Resources page under the Member Resources tab on the NCCS website at [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org).)

### **Section 3.5 Chapter Nonprofit Organization**

All Christ Child Society chapters are established as charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations under the IRS tax code which allows them to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions, but the legal structure varies. Some chapters are incorporated while others are unincorporated associations.

Each chapter has articles of incorporation or articles of association, depending on its organization form. Your organizing documents will not need amending often, if at all. It is still a good idea to have an attorney licensed in your state review the chapter's organizing documents every two to four years just to ensure no changes are necessary.

Every 501(c)(3) organization is further classified as a public charity or private foundation. Most of our chapters are classified as a public charity, but make sure you know your chapter's classification as the tax rules differ.

### **Section 3.6 Chapter Articles of Organization or Incorporation**

Your articles of organization or incorporation is the legal document filed in the chapter's state that outlines the general purpose and structure of the chapter.

### **Section 3.7 Chapter Bylaws**

Your bylaws state the rules your chapter will adhere to and cover basic operating guidelines. You should have a general corporate lawyer licensed in your state review your bylaws for compliance with state regulations. NCCS recommends that you go through this review process every few years even if you are not making any amendments to ensure compliance with current state regulations and to ensure you are aware of any upcoming

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nonprofit law changes that may affect your chapter bylaws. Contact the Executive Director at 301-881-2490 if you are interested in sample chapter bylaws.

### Section 3.8 Chapter History

Historical knowledge is key to good governance. Appoint a Board member, usually the Secretary, to keep records of Board activities, including minutes, reports, and photos. Some chapters have a Chapter Historian that serves separately from the Secretary to keep all of the records current. In addition to records retained permanently, ensure records are kept documenting:

- All board members, including position and term
- List of Past Chapter Presidents
- List of recipients of any chapter awards such as the Mary Virginia Merrick award, if applicable
- Membership structure, roster, number, volunteer hour requirements if applicable, dues, etc.
- Program information including number of children/families served and impact made
- Sources of funds and grants
- Spiritual and social activities
- Public relations, honors, and awards

Maintain and preserve all historical records and document the location and contents of your chapter records. While you are in the middle of running the chapter, everything is so clear; at that time you do not realize how soon the details will be forgotten, media coverage will be lost, and photos will go by the wayside.

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### Chapter 4: Chapter Policies, Procedures, and Operations

Every chapter needs written policies and procedures to help ensure transparency, accountability, and strong internal controls exist for the chapter. The policies and procedures need to fit the size and complexity of the chapter, and should simply state what you do, why you do it, and how you do it. They should be reviewed and updated every 2-3 years and copies of all policies and procedures be shared with all members. Written policies and procedures provide structure and will help you recruit succession leadership by making the transition easier.

#### Section 4.1 Internal Controls

Internal controls are a set of policies and procedures to (1) prevent deliberate or misguided use of funds for unauthorized purposes and (2) ensure accuracy and reliability in accounting data and reporting. Every chapter should put safeguards in place to ensure financial transactions are properly authorized, executed, and recorded.

Please see the NCCS Internal Controls Manual for suggested best practices. Remember to check State and Federal laws before adopting policies.

- Lines of Authority
- Segregation of Duties
- Physical Security of Assets
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Capitalization Policy
- Donor Privacy Policy
- Gift Acceptance Policy
- Investment Policy
- Records Retention Policy
- Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy

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### Section 4.2 Accounting

#### Chapter Accounting System

All chapters need an accounting system to accurately record finances and produce meaningful reports that will help your board make informed decisions. The fiscal year (e.g., December 31<sup>st</sup> or June 30<sup>th</sup>) and accounting basis (accrual vs. cash) should be addressed. This bookkeeping process may be as simple as using a checkbook and supplementing with an excel spreadsheet which summarizes bank account activity using income and expense categories. However, using accounting software is a more efficient and accurate way to keep records and produce financial reports and it also allows for stronger internal controls.

NCCS recommends that each chapter consider purchasing accounting software and using Excel spreadsheets for additional detail. One of the most common accounting software for small businesses is QuickBooks Online. The cloud-based online version is recommended because it enables more than one person to have access to the financial records and it is automatically backed up reducing the risk of data loss should a member's computer crash. It is much easier to transition the Treasurer role, and for a second person to review activity and bank reconciliations regularly, if multiple people can access the accounting system. (QuickBooks Online is currently available to nonprofits for only \$50 for a full year through [TechSoup](#).)

#### Bank and Investment Accounts

Bank and Investment Account statements should be opened, reviewed, and reconciled in a timely manner. Make sure that your bank/investment account activity is monitored by more than one person. Account statements and all correspondence from your bank/investment firm should go to someone other than just the Treasurer. This person, often the President-Elect or Vice President, serves as the second set of eyes for your chapter. The Treasurer can be sent a duplicate copy of the statement or they can be given online access to see the statement in order to perform bank reconciliations, review online payments, etc.

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The second person should review the account statement for unusual items. If you are doing this online, you can review the cancelled check activity (opening and reviewing who the checks were written to and for what amount) and withdrawals. You should know what the expenses are and be comfortable with the amounts. Also review deposits for reasonableness. Make sure you ask questions and review substantiating documents when you are not familiar with an item – the Board must be knowledgeable, objective, and inquisitive – if no one ever asks a question, you are not taking your responsibility seriously!

The second person should review the bank reconciliations and ensure they are performed timely on a monthly basis. Whether the review is done using a hard copy or online, print the reconciliation and sign it to document that the review was performed.

Remember to **update passwords** to online banking and accounting software as Board members change.

### Receipts and Revenue

All checks should be endorsed upon receipt and deposited in a timely manner. If you accept credit cards, do not keep the credit card numbers written down anywhere as you may have liability if the number is stolen. All credit card numbers must be destroyed as soon as possible after processing. If a chapter uses a donor database system, contributions recorded in the donor system should be reconciled to deposits in the bank account on a monthly basis.

The IRS has specific requirements governing donor acknowledgments for cash and non-cash contributions. For example, written donor acknowledgments for non-cash contributions must include a description of the contribution, but not value, of the non-cash contribution. Any donation with a value of \$250 or more must be recognized with a receipt from the chapter.

The IRS has not created a standard format for contribution receipts, but the following information must be included. The receipt can be a letter, a postcard, an e-mail message, or a form created for the purpose.

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- The donor's name
- The amount of cash donated, or a description of the item donated if non-cash item
- A statement indicating whether or not any goods or services were provided in return for the gift
- A good faith estimate of the value of goods or services provided. Insubstantial value need not be recorded (see above)

See [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) for additional information. Ensure your chapter acknowledgments are prepared in compliance with IRS regulations. IRS Publication 4221 Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities is a helpful resource and a link to the publication can be found under the Treasurer's Toolkit on the Leadership Resources page on our website [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org).

### Membership Dues

Establish a policy documenting when your membership dues are collected and when they are considered delinquent. Address whether you allow for prorated dues if a member joins mid-year.

All chapters collect dues from their members. Membership dues should be adequate to cover the dues assessed by NCCS (currently \$14/member). They should also cover the Chapter Support assessed by NCCS (currently \$20/member prior to adjusting for member contributions to the NCCS Annual Appeal). Best practices suggest a dues amount of \$50-\$100 per member is adequate for most chapters.

### Are Christ Child Society Chapter Dues Deductible?

Whether the Chapter dues are deductible on a member's federal tax return is a question of federal tax law. If your dues are \$75 or less annually, then your members can deduct them disregarding any benefits received. If the dues are over \$75, the chapter must make a good faith estimate of goods and services the member received and only the portion in excess of the benefit received would be tax deductible.

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Please refer to [IRS Publication 526](#) for more information and requirements. NCCS recommends any chapter with dues over \$75 per year speak to a CPA or attorney regarding the deductibility before advising members.

### Contributed Services and In-Kind Contributions/Gifts

Some chapters receive contributed services. The value of contributed services is not recorded on your tax form, but you would record the value in your financial and management reporting if the contributed service required a specialized skill that would typically be purchased by the chapter if the service was not donated (e.g., pro bono legal counsel).

Almost every chapter receives noncash assets which are referred to as gifts in kind and many of these gifts are hard to value (e.g., handmade blankets and clothing). Whether you officially record and report the value or not, NCCS recommends you keep track of the contributions (both number and estimated value) in some capacity so that you can fully demonstrate the support you receive from a broader support base, and the impact you make on your local community.

### Chapter Fundraising Guidelines

Every chapter needs to raise funds to ensure ongoing financial support and expand programs. Mary Virginia Merrick was a savvy businesswoman and very successful in soliciting influential business people to gain their financial support for Christ Child Society. With a mission as strong as ours, fundraising can be a rewarding experience.

### General Policies

Carefully review invitations and fundraising materials to ensure they are in compliance with Federal and State requirements before they are distributed.

Establish a Development/Fundraising Committee within the chapter. Use the committee to discuss possible fundraising ideas and allow them to research what has worked for other Christ Child Society chapters or similar organizations. Some of the best ideas for fundraising events are ones that have been successful for other chapters.

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Other considerations:

1. Consider raising funds for a specific Christ Child project. Supporters will know exactly what they are contributing to and be able to better identify with a cause in which they believe.
2. Christ Child Society is not a lobbying organization, and chapters are not permitted to carry on any activities that fall outside the written parameters of Christ Child Society and 501(c)(3) regulations or you could risk losing the chapter's tax-exempt status.
3. The use of chapter membership directories, mailing lists or any other compilation of Christ Child Society donors or supporters for any purpose not directly related to Christ Child Society business is strictly prohibited.
4. Chapters should consult with a legal or financial specialist prior to engaging in any planned-giving activity for advice on structuring bequests and planned-giving materials.

NCCS cannot advise chapters on the Federal, State and local laws, so please consult an attorney for such guidance. Also note the IRS states an organization's tax-exempt status may be jeopardized if a substantial part of its revenue is derived from unrelated business activity. Please consult a tax accountant if you need clarification on the IRS regulations.

### Raffles

Raffles are subject to Federal, State, and local law and the **purchase of raffle tickets is not deductible** so chapters should not give tax acknowledgements/receipts. Many states and local jurisdictions require licenses, and Federal restrictions prohibit mailing raffle tickets in most instances. Raffle winnings are taxable events, and the IRS has regulations regarding the reporting of income and withholding taxes if the prizes exceed certain thresholds. Bottom line – raffles can be an easy way to fundraise, but you need to be informed to ensure compliance with all regulations. Please see [USPS Customer Support Ruling PS-307 Lotteries-Raffles](#) for more information regarding the mailing of raffle tickets.

### Fundraising Events

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In terms of charity auctions/luncheons/galas, the IRS has rules governing necessary language on the invitations if the ticket costs \$75 or more so make sure you review the current IRS guidelines.

### Record Keeping

1. Keep accurate records of funds received for tickets, auction items, etc. If supporters receive anything of monetary value by buying a ticket to an event (e.g., a meal is included for the event ticket price), that part must be deducted from the charitable contribution.
2. The IRS requires that any contributions over \$250 must be recognized by a letter to the donor stating the amount of the contribution and that no gifts or services were returned to the donor.
3. Invitations to fundraising events costing \$75 or more are governed by IRS rules requiring you to provide a statement indicating what part of the ticket price is deductible.
4. Chapters receiving grant monies will be expected to document expenditures relative to the project. Keep accurate records and follow up with all required documents and reports.
5. Check with an insurance agent to see if additional coverage is needed for a particular project or event.

Make sure that all State rules governing raffles or auctions are followed strictly and to the letter of the law.

### Expenditures

Establish payment policies and procedures and ensure all officers/employees know who has authority to make disbursements and at what amount. Each chapter should have at least two officers with signing authority on the bank account so that the chapter is not limited if one signer is unavailable.

If chapter credit cards are issued to certain leaders, develop a policy governing for what purposes the cards can be used and if there are limits to expenditures. Ensure supporting receipts are collected, maintained, and properly recorded. The credit card statement

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should be reconciled monthly by someone other than the cardholder and the chapter should document the steps that should be taken if there are unrecognized charges on the credit card statement.

Like all nonprofits, chapters have administrative expenses in addition to fundraising and program expenses. While your chapter should strive to keep overhead expenses low, it is important to invest in your chapter operations and leaders to ensure you are operating effectively. For example, paying for your leaders to attend the NCCS Conference/Convention will inspire and strengthen them as leaders allowing your chapter to thrive in fulfillment of its mission.

While encouraging your leaders to donate to the chapter to help cover some of these expenses is fine, it is also acceptable practice to use income generated from dues, fundraising, and contributions to cover these administrative costs.

### Section 4.3 Financial Planning & Reporting

#### Chapter Budget

A budget is a financial plan that serves as a guide for the next year's operations to help you identify chapter expenses and see how much money you will need to meet those expenses. The Treasurer develops the budget in conjunction with the Chapter President and Board, based on the projects and activities planned by the chapter after discussing goals and objectives with the board, membership chair, program chair, fundraising chair, and any other applicable leaders and getting their input on a projection for next year. Every member who has responsibility for meeting the budget should be involved in creating it – this enables them to “own” it.

The annual budget should be approved by the Chapter Board at a minimum, prior to the beginning of the fiscal year (some chapters require approval by a quorum of members at a general meeting). Also remember your budget is your guide - it is not “written in stone” and may need to be amended by the Chapter Board as the financial position of your chapter changes during the year.

#### Creating a budget:

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1. Review current year income and expense compared to budget
2. Estimate the chapter's income including contributions, grants, dues, fundraising, and investment income
3. Estimate necessary expenses to reach program, organizational, and strategic goals; bills the chapter must pay each month (e.g., rent, utilities, insurance, layette materials)
4. Develop draft budget; review and revise until budget is approved
5. Write down all assumptions
6. Implement the budget –
  - a. Assign responsibilities
  - b. Incorporate the budget into your accounting system software if possible
  - c. Monitor and respond to changes as needed

Although a chapter's income may exceed its expenses, in most cases, break-even is a satisfactory financial outcome for a year's activity. In other cases, a chapter may desire to budget for an operating surplus in order to have funds available for the expansion of its projects or to add stability to its operations by adding to an operating reserve or "rainy day savings fund". Just as households need to have money in the bank for unexpected needs, it is appropriate for chapters to anticipate and save for major expenses or lean fundraising years to ensure the chapter's long-term financial health. NCCS recommends each chapter maintain an operating reserve of 3-6 months' expenses, but some chapters may decide to keep up to 18-24 months based on its own goals.

### Financial Reporting

Financial reports are extremely important in terms of understanding your chapter's financial health and conveying that information to your board. The statements show how income and expense have affected the chapter as a whole and provide a snapshot of the current financial standing of the chapter. Financial reporting should be prepared and presented on a timely and scheduled basis.

Basic financial reports should include:

1. Balance Sheet – summarizes assets, liabilities, and net worth of the chapter on a particular date

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2. Income Statement (also called Statement of Activity) – shows the income and expenses over time, resulting in either a profit or loss
3. Cash Flow Statement – summarizes the resources (income) that become available and the uses of each (expenses paid). A projected Cash Flow Statement is helpful for the Board to be able to anticipate any shortfalls for planning purposes. Not all chapters will prepare formal statements, but it is important to know your chapter's checkbook balance and manage your cash with care and attention
4. Quarterly Budget vs. Actual Results – shows budget amount versus actual and explains significant variances

### Tax Compliance and Filing Tax Returns

#### Proof of Federal Tax Exemption

##### Exemption through Inclusion in USCCB Group Ruling (#0928)

The majority of our chapters have Federal tax-exempt status through inclusion in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Group Ruling through the diocese in which they operate. The USCCB is the central organization holding a group exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and all of the subordinate organizations are classified as Public Charities. The USCCB Group Ruling establishes that all organizations listed in the Official Catholic Directory (OCD) are recognized as tax-exempt. If your chapter is included in the USCCB group ruling, you can prove your nonprofit status with the following two documents:

1. A copy of the current USCCB Group Ruling letter; and
2. A copy of the page from the current edition of the OCD on which the chapter is listed. (Your chapter will be listed under your respective Diocese.) NCCS subscribes to the OCD annually and will send your current listing to you each year. (Please email us at [office@nationalchristchild.org](mailto:office@nationalchristchild.org) should you need another copy.)

The information published in the OCD for your chapter can only be changed by the Chancery Office in your diocese. Chapters should receive requests to update/affirm the listing information annually from their respective diocese. If you are not receiving these annual notices, please contact your local Chancery Office.

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### Exemption through Independent Tax Status Determination

Chapters not included in the USCCB Group Ruling obtained their tax-exempt status by applying directly with the IRS by completing Form 1023 Application for Recognition of Exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Organizations may be classified as Public Charities or Private Charitable Foundations. If your chapter has an independent tax determination, you can prove your nonprofit status by providing a copy of your IRS determination letter which states your organization is tax-exempt. Letters of affirmation of your tax-exempt status should be obtained annually from the IRS to ensure you have current proof of your tax-exempt status at all times.

**If you need assistance with understanding any part of this process, please contact the National Office.**

### **IRS Tax Reporting**

While all of our chapters are exempt from Federal income tax, all of the chapters are required to file an IRS Form 990. **This is true even if your chapter gets its 501(c)(3) status through inclusion in the USCCB Group Ruling.** The only exception is if your chapter is considered an integrated auxiliary of your diocese – we only have one chapter that fits that scenario as of this writing.

There are three versions of the Form 990:

- **Form 990-Ne Postcard** is used if your gross receipts are under \$50,000 and your assets are under \$500,000
- **Form 990-EZ** is used if your gross receipts are between \$50,000 and \$200,000 and your assets are under \$500,000
- **Form 990** is used if your gross receipts are over \$200,000 or your assets are equal to or over \$500,000

Some states require the Form 990 based on your fundraising level so check with your tax preparer to ensure you know your filing requirements and deadlines for filing your tax forms every year.

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### State Tax Exemptions and Reporting

Chapters should have State and local tax exemption as well. Research your State and local regulations for registration and reporting requirements to ensure you are not paying unnecessary taxes. Your chapter most likely needs to maintain a charitable solicitation registration in your state.

### Sales Tax

The chapter's 501(c)(3) status has nothing to do with paying sales tax which is collected at the State and local level. Each taxing authority has different rules so you need to check with your state, but most states issue sales and use tax exemption certificates to nonprofit charitable organizations and your chapter should qualify. Here are some questions you should know the answer to:

1. Does the chapter have a Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate, where is it, and when does it expire?
2. How does my State/local government charge sales tax for nonprofit sales?
3. Does the chapter pay tax on purchases used to fulfill its mission (i.e. layette purchases, printing, etc.)?
4. If my chapter pays utilities (phone, internet, etc.), can I apply for an exemption from tax?
5. What document do we need if the sales tax is waived?
6. Do we pay sales tax on items purchased for fundraising purposes?
7. Can we get a resale exemption for the purchase of the items we will be reselling at our fundraiser?
8. When do we need to charge sales tax and how often do we need to remit the tax?
9. Is there a de minimis rule that would allow a small chapter not to have to collect sales tax because it would be such a small amount?
10. Is there a day(s) when sales tax is not collected? (Some states give 501(c)(3) organizations a tax free day every year.)

### Should Chapters have a Compilation, Review or Audit?

Each chapter needs to determine whether it needs to engage a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to perform a compilation, review, or audit of its financial statements.

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The most basic level of service is a compilation and the higher the level of service required, the more time it will take the CPA to complete the engagement, and the more costly the engagement.

### **Compilation**

In a compilation engagement, the CPA assists the chapter in presenting financial information in the form of financial statements without providing any assurances that there are no material modifications that should be made. Having the chapter's financial statements in the same format as required by an audit makes the review process easier for third parties such as banks or grantors. Compilations provide comfort that the financial statements are free of obvious errors.

### **Review**

In a review engagement, the CPA provides limited assurances that the chapter's financial statements are free from misrepresentations. The CPA will perform analytical procedures and inquires as a reasonable basis for providing this limited assurance, but the auditor will not test and verify transactions in the same way as an audit. The review will not include a review of the chapter's internal controls.

### **Audit**

In an independent audit, the auditor will provide an opinion as to whether the financial statements are presented fairly in all material respects. The auditor must also obtain an understanding of the chapter's internal controls and assess fraud risk.

### **What level of financial review is right for my chapter?**

Various circumstances such as Federal or State funding, grants, and State laws governing charitable registrations may trigger the requirement for the chapter to conduct an independent audit. Although each chapter should review and assess its own requirements, a good rule of thumb in the absence of a requirement would be as follows:

- ✓ Audit - Chapters with annual income of \$500,000
- ✓ Review - Chapters with annual income of \$250,000-\$499,999
- ✓ Compilation - Chapters with annual income less than \$250,000

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If your chapter has annual income less than \$50,000 and a member who is considered a trained set of eyes, you might consider having this person review your financial statements in addition to your Treasurer instead of hiring an outside CPA.

NCCS recommends each chapter engage a CPA to prepare the chapter's tax return and state filings if the chapter is required to file a full Form 990. Chapters that are able to file a Form 990-N or Form 990-EZ may be able to use a trained member as opposed to hiring a CPA.

### **Section 4.4 Member/Volunteer Hours**

We all know the hours contributed by your chapter members and other volunteers is your greatest resource and the donated time is invaluable! You do not record the "value" of this contribution on your books, but we do recommend that you keep track of donated hours. This information can be really helpful in showing the economic impact your volunteers are having on your community and can help you solicit donor support and grants.

### **Section 4.5 Risk Assessment and Insurance**

All chapters should meet with insurance experts periodically to assess their property and liability insurance needs. Insurance coverages to be considered include:

- Directors and Officers Liability Insurance – helps protect your chapter board members and employees in the event they are sued in conjunction with the performance of their duties for the chapter
- General Liability Insurance – provides coverage for a wide range of acts and offenses and is designed to protect the chapter if it is sued for something it did or did not do that resulted in injury or damage to someone else. Abuse and molestation coverage can also be provided and several of our chapters have this coverage for their volunteers due to their personal service programs
- Umbrella Insurance – provides an additional layer of liability coverage over and above your primary General Liability policy

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- Property Insurance – protects the physical assets your chapter owns such as a building, furniture, fixtures and equipment

Your chapter should find a trusted insurance agent or broker to serve as your advocate in finding the best insurance coverage to meet your needs. NCCS uses Alliance Insurance Services, Inc., an independent insurance agency in Washington, DC, as do several of our chapters (<https://www.allianceindc.com>).

Other sources for nonprofit insurance include:

- Charity First [www.charityfirst.com](http://www.charityfirst.com)
- Trusted Choice [www.trustedchoice.com](http://www.trustedchoice.com)
- Philadelphia Insurance Companies [www.phly.com](http://www.phly.com)

### Section 4.6 Technology

#### Information Management

A little technology can go a long way in keeping good records for your chapter. Save records electronically whenever possible. Download bank statements, email your reports, set up free cloud storage, backup your accounting records to the cloud, and use an electronic calendar with built-in reminders.

Cloud computing means data and programs are stored and accessed over the internet instead of “living” on one computer’s hard drive. This is an efficient and effective way to run your chapter. Many chapters do not have permanent office space and storing important records online ensures good information management. NCCS currently uses Dropbox, a cloud-based service, for storing all of our operational records, photos, documents, and spreadsheets. It works by keeping identical copies of files on our computer(s) and its cloud-based storage system. All files are automatically synced over an encrypted Internet connection, meaning the primary copy on our computer’s hard drive is synced to our online Dropbox account, and that copy is backed up again for safety. This system works well for the National Office and Board as we can share, collaborate and edit documents together to increase efficiency and ensure none of our information will be lost if a computer crashes. We encourage all of our chapters to use a similar

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technology to ensure flexibility, efficiency, and better disaster recovery options for your chapter.

### Social Media

It is impossible to deny how powerful a strong online presence is to nonprofits today. Social media provides you an opportunity to tell your story, engage with members and supporters, and share news about your chapter. While it takes time to develop a sophisticated and integrated communications and digital strategy, all chapters should at least have a page on Facebook even if the chapter does not have its own website. Facebook is one of the most widely used social media channels and is a great communication tool for sharing content and photos to raise awareness of your work. Make sure to watch the webinar on our [Videos and Webinars website page](#) "Using Social Media to Connect People to Your Christ Child Chapter" and review the resources provided on how to set up your Facebook page along with best practices for Facebook & Instagram. Furthermore, you can find a resource list for using social media on the [Marketing and Communications page](#) under Member Resources on the NCCS website. Links to established chapter Facebook pages (and other social media platforms) are provided under chapter listings on the [Get Involved section](#) of the website. Check out other chapter's Facebook pages, and remember to follow their pages and share their posts to help each chapter spread their message further. You can also build and strengthen relationships with other organizations by cross-promoting them on your social media. Once you establish a Facebook post it is easy to share your posts on other social media sites such as Instagram or Twitter.

### Website

Often, a person's first exposure to your chapter will be through your website if you have one. Social media can also send traffic to your website and help you reach a greater audience with your website content such as newsletters. Having a simple and attractive, user-friendly website with the ability to accept donations and containing links to your social media sites can help you engage new members, raise money, and connect with the community since your website gives you a strong platform to share your story, mission, and impact.

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### Software

TechSoup is a network of organizations that provide deeply discounted software to nonprofit organizations. Make sure your chapter joins TechSoup (no charge currently) so that it can take advantage of these products ([www.techsoup.org](http://www.techsoup.org)). Microsoft Office and Office 365 are available at great prices generally. QuickBooks Online Plus subscriptions are generally available at a deeply discounted price as well.

### Free Conference Call Service

While face-to-face meetings are the most effective way to capture the attention of participants, engage attendees in conversation, and drive collaboration, there are times when hectic schedules, illness, or bad weather may prevent you from meeting in person. We recommend all chapters establish a free account with a conference bridge service so that you have your own dedicated conference line to use at any time for board and committee meetings. NCCS uses [freeconferencecall.com](http://freeconferencecall.com) for our service which allows up to 1,000 participants and includes a free recording feature.

### Chapter 5: Chapter Programs

Christ Child Society traces its origins to 1884 when our founder, Mary Virginia Merrick made the first layette, or baby “welcome” kit, for an infant in need. This simple act of charity remains an inspiration today and, while all chapters participate in the signature Layette Program, there are many other ways our chapters challenge poverty, one child at a time.

#### Section 5.1 Defining a Christ Child Society Program

Over the decades, as community needs change and understanding of poverty and culture grow, the concept of what defines a Christ Child Society program has evolved.

Today, Christ Child Society programs depend on the basic premise that our chapters and volunteers can have a positive impact on a child’s future through building a relationship, creating positive interactions, and nurturing the seeds of success. Programs are developed, operated, and staffed by members. Program design, volunteer functions, and financial responsibilities are developed primarily by the chapter and may be in collaboration with partner organizations or schools.

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### Section 5.2 Program Focus

The NCCS Challenging Poverty, One Child at a Time Initiative encourages chapters to positively impact their communities by providing **basic needs, enriching education, and empowering children and families**. We follow the directive of Mary Virginia Merrick to “find a need and fill it” when we seek out and meet the needs of our local communities.

Programs can be life changing. We help children be the best they can be by nurturing children individually, helping to build resiliency, and providing a support network to facilitate social, intellectual, and emotional development that will endure over the child’s life. Whether we decide to distribute winter coats, read to preschoolers, or staff a library, the key words are relationship, interaction, and nurturing. Universally, the children we serve benefit from the presence of a caring adult.

### Providing Basic Needs

#### *Layettes*

The signature Christ Child Society program is Layettes. Layettes are conducted by each chapter not only as a requirement of their charter, but also to continue our founder’s legacy. Information about layettes can be found on the [NCCS website \(link to Member Resources>Layettes\)](#) including, vendors, a summary of what chapters include in their layettes, patterns, and a list of educational materials that can be included. NCCS has provides a [Read to Me](#) card that encourages parents to read to their baby; [Calming Your Baby](#), a card with suggestions to soothe a crying baby and reduce resulting abuse; and a [Blanket Tag](#) which should be affixed to any blanket to warn of suffocation risk.

Each chapter chooses partners such as hospitals, health departments, or motherhood support organizations to help distribute layettes to families most in need.

#### *Clothing Programs*

Giving children and families in need access to clothing gives them more than protection from the elements – new clothing helps them feel dignified. Many chapters provide coats, hats, gloves, shoes, school uniforms, and other necessary clothing to children through distribution centers, schools or other partner organizations.

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### *Other Basic Needs*

Some chapters also provide laundry detergent, school supplies, hygiene items, and weekend food packs for children getting free school lunch. Many of our chapters provide “My Stuff” backpacks with necessary items for children in crisis to provide comfort and help ease stress.

### **Enriching Education**

NCCS understands that the children we serve are at risk of falling behind in school, especially in reading; therefore, many of our chapters operate programs in support of education. Chapters have developed a variety of programs - reading to preschoolers, tutoring elementary students, creating and staffing school libraries, distributing books, and planting an educational garden.

We also have several chapters that partner with schools in their community to help provide resources for schools. This support can include fulfilling requests for school supplies for specific children, as well as providing resources such as computers to improve the learning environment.

### **Empowerment**

We help children and their families build life and leadership skills, parenting skills, and wellness through programs focused on empowerment and helping those whom we serve to reach their full potential. Our programs give participants an increased optimism about the future as they build self-esteem and personal skills to improve their lives. Some chapters are able to financially assist families through scholarships to parents, improving not only their lives, but the future of the entire family.

### **5.3 Developing Successful Programs**

Each program should be strongly associated with your chapter’s overall mission and fit into your long-term plans. Strategic planning typically includes both review of the organization's mission, values, and goals and consideration of strategies to reach those goals.

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Programs can be easily adapted to the size of the chapter and the number of willing volunteers. Guidance on how to plan, design, and operate your programs can be found under [Program Development in Member Resources](#). A complete description of chapter programs can also be found on the NCCS website under the [Member Resources](#).

### Evaluations

Regular evaluations are key to making your programs successful and robust. All chapters should evaluate their programs periodically to ensure they continue to meet the current needs of their community and to make decisions about maintaining and improving the programs. Information about evaluation methods is available under [Evaluations in Member Resources](#) on the NCCS website.

### 5.4 Funding Programs

Part of planning for a program is determining how your chapter will support its cost. Some chapters create a new fund-raising campaign or an event with all proceeds specific to the new program. Finding a grant source or other community backer who is of the same mindset as your program can be a partnership that creates a long-term funding solution. More funding ideas can be found under [Fundraising in Member Resources](#).

However, you source your program funding, you will want to be sure to keep the donor(s) informed as to how their financial support is being utilized.

## Chapter 6: Membership

### Section 6.1 Recruiting New Members

When the first Christ Child Society chapter was established in 1887, Mary Virginia Merrick realized the importance of attracting individuals who would share her mission and give their time, talent, and treasure to the Christ Child cause. Competition for nonprofit volunteers is strong, and chapters should intentionally focus on recruiting new, diverse

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members who can bring the skills and experience needed to grow our organization and community outreach.

### Benefits of Membership

Constantly promote the benefits of membership in your chapter. For example:

- Helping others and making a difference in someone's life
- Giving back to your community
- Putting your capabilities to work by sharing your talents, skills, and abilities
- Becoming part of a warm welcoming group of friends who share similar interests
- Having new experiences, learning new skills, and gaining personal growth
- Being offered an opportunity to attend a wide range of events
- Experiencing fun and enjoyment
- Feeling needed, useful, and appreciated
- Getting connected and establishing a presence in a new community
- Becoming a member of National Christ Child Society and joining thousands of dedicated volunteers driven by faith, love, and humility to improve the lives of children in need

### Recruiting New Members

During recruiting events, chapters should cover how to become a member and what the requirements are, but most importantly, emphasize the mission and the benefits of joining. Use NCCS' brand messaging tools – our positioning statement, brand story, and Brand Values Matrix – to introduce Christ Child Society in a compelling way to attract new members. (See the [Marketing & Communications page](#) under Member Resources at [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org) for valuable resources.)

Ideas for recruiting collected from chapters during membership workshops conducted at NCCS annual conferences and conventions include:

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- Personally invite potential members. One of the main reasons someone joins Christ Child Society is because an existing member invites them. Share about the work of your chapter, the joy you experience in your service, and the friendships you have made.
- Maintain a website and social media presence so potential members can find you and see what you do. Keep your online presence current and updated with stories and photos. Publicize testimonials from current members on why they enjoy being a member.
- Use Facebook to garner interest from a broader audience and post about parishes and organizations with whom you collaborate. Also share other's content that aligns with your mission and goals.
- Incorporate proof of your chapter's accomplishments when preparing recruitment materials. Use statistics and testimonials that help show the effectiveness of your programs. Create visuals that highlight your success and impact and use the visuals in your promotion materials.
- Get out there and promote your chapter.
- Speak at local parishes, local women's groups, and Catholic schools to spark interest.
- Use NCCS' brand messaging tools to help you attract people to join your chapter.
- Consider having your chapter join the local Chamber of Commerce. It is a great way to network with your local community and get more visibility.
- Invite parish families to get involved in events such as book or diaper drives to support your programs and become familiar with the work of the CCS. Once someone becomes involved in your activities, it is likely they may join themselves or refer others to you.
- Organize fun social gatherings such as cocktails hours, luncheons, or informational coffees and tell members to invite friends to these events. Show that you are a service organization with fun social benefits.
- Offer a tour for prospective members that will take them to the chapter's service projects and acquaint them with your work.

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- Have a Communications or Public Relations Chair on your board who can spread the word about your chapter through press releases, social media, parish bulletins, etc.
- Open volunteer opportunities to a broader community than just who you know. National Day of Service is a good example of an opportunity to attract new members by inviting others in the community to join you in service.
- Have simple new member sign up forms available at all events where members may bring a friend. Samples of New Member Forms are located on the Membership page at [nationalchristchild.org](http://nationalchristchild.org).
- Include a prospective member information form in mailings and newsletters. Membership Chair can follow-up and track prospective members.
- Consider sending your Membership Chair to the annual national conventions/conferences so that she can brainstorm with other Membership Chairs from around the country on recruitment ideas.

### Recruitment Events

Successful social events can help bring in new members. For any event, put together a small committee to organize the event so that the burden is not on the Membership Chair alone. Using the network of contacts in your committee, brainstorm on unique venues that might spark interest to help boost attendance. See if a local venue will donate food or drinks to offset the costs. Use an online invitation application (paperless post, evite, etc.) to invite and keep track of attendance. Be sure to have your President or a Board member speak at the event. Have plenty of informational handouts and new member sign up materials. Lastly, let NCCS know about your events so they can spread the word to friends who might live in your area.

- **Cocktail party:** Using a local bar, a member's house, or an interesting venue in your community, host a low-key, informational cocktail party offering non-alcoholic beverages, beer, wine, and snacks.
- **Tea/Coffee:** Consider hosting a tea in a local garden, member's home, country club, or hotel. Invite a guest speaker who might be a local celebrity and be prepared to showcase your flagship program.

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- **School based events:** Ask the head of school for permission to host a morning coffee at your local Catholic school to tap into the parent community. See if any members have friends or family at the school and have them take charge of the event.
- **Quarterly/Annual Membership Gathering:** Host a quarterly or annual membership gathering to bring together old and new members. At this event, you can answer questions about Christ Child Society, reinforce the benefits of membership, and sign up new members. Interested persons can interact with current members, who can relay the experience and benefits of working with Christ Child Society on a personal level. The social aspect of such an event can also appeal to new members, as they will see they can build new friendships as a benefit of Christ Child Society membership.

Please visit the Membership section under Member Resources at [www.nationalchristchild.org](http://www.nationalchristchild.org) for sample applications, speeches, fliers, and other chapter materials to help your chapter recruit new members.

### Section 6.2 Welcome and Orientation of New Members

Once someone has decided to join your chapter, have the Chapter President send them a personal message welcoming them aboard. Continue to nurture the relationship and reach out to the new member using a personal touch to make them feel welcome and included. You may want to put a “buddy system” in place where active members are assigned to new members. The “buddy” can invite new members to go with them to events and service projects to make sure they feel welcome and be available to answer questions.

Hold an Installation Ceremony to shine the spotlight on new members. (A sample induction script is on the NCCS website under Member Resources, Membership.) See Section 6.4 of this document.

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Consider providing a new member welcome kit that includes:

- Program descriptions
- Volunteer opportunities
- Calendar of events
- Leadership information
- Membership directory
- Christ Child tote bag or pin

Be sure to give new members a thorough orientation to help them learn more about your chapter, the history of the national organization, and our founder Mary Virginia Merrick. A structured orientation program helps volunteers understand your work and it is especially important if your chapter does not have a provisional period that helps orient new members. Orientation makes members feel more comfortable and confident in their work by helping them see the purpose of what they are doing. A positive orientation increases enthusiasm for the cause.

There are several resources on the NCCS website under the [“Who We Are” tab](#) to help you with the orientation process. Encourage all members, new and existing, to watch [“The Life & Legacy of Mary Virginia Merrick”](#) video on the “News and Events” page of the national website.

### Section 6.3 Membership Categories and Dues

Membership categories differ by chapter with one or more categories, including an active member category with an annual dues amount. Some chapters require members to work a specified number of hours annually while others do not. Some chapters with an “hours” requirement have a second membership category called “sustaining” member. Sustaining members are often assessed a higher dues amount but have a lesser “hours” requirement. Some chapters have a “rolling membership” where new members can join at any time simply by completing an application and paying dues while others have new members join after a provisional period is completed.

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Each chapter determines its membership structure based on what works best for that chapter. For more information, please contact the National Office.

### Provisional period and sponsors

Many of our chapters utilize a provisional program for prospective members. These provisional periods vary widely from a few months to a year, and the requirements of becoming a full member vary. However, the goal for all is the same - to introduce prospective members to the activities of the chapter, help them find the best way to actively participate in the chapter, develop fellowship with other members, and become fully engaged in the mission.

A few chapters require new members to have sponsors that have either invited the new member to join or have been assigned by the chapter. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring the new member becomes active, engaged in the chapter, and meets other members.

### Life Memberships

Lifetime Memberships are no longer offered. However, several older chapters had this category available to members who paid dues, one-time, at a higher rate. Any member who enlisted as a lifetime member has been grandfathered in under those conditions.

### Membership Transfers to Other Chapters

A Christ Child Society member who moves to a new location is encouraged to join the Christ Child Society chapter in that area if one exists. Chapters are required to admit a transfer member to their chapter if that member is already a member in good standing of a chartered NCCS Chapter. Depending on the time of the transfer, the member may be asked to pay dues for the current year to the new chapter or they may not be assessed dues until the new year. The Chapter to which the member belonged on January 1<sup>st</sup> of the payment year pays NCCS dues for the transferred member.

When chapters are aware they are losing a member due to a member's relocation, the President should contact the member and help put them in touch with the chapter in their new location if applicable. If there is not a chapter in their new location, please ask them

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to consider exploring a new chapter formation. Call the NCCS office to learn more about this wonderful opportunity.

### Membership in More than One Chapter

Christ Child Society members may be members of more than one chapter. Each member is asked to select one chapter as their primary chapter and to ensure the primary chapter designation is reported to NCCS. All chapters in which you are a member will pay dues to NCCS on you, however, Chapter Support will only be due from the chapter designated as your primary chapter.

### Section 6.4 New Member Installation

The entire Membership Committee should be a part of planning the installation of new chapter members. Have the installation in conjunction with a General Membership meeting or chapter event so the full membership is there to celebrate the new members. Many chapters provide new members with Christ Child Society member pins or pendants at the installation ceremony. Remember to order membership pins/pendants through the [online shop](#) on the NCCS website if you plan to distribute them. A Sample New Member Installation Ceremony is located under Membership on the Member Resources tab on the NCCS website.

### Section 6.5 Retaining and Engaging Members

All chapters should make member retention a top priority. Engaging members, whether new or long-standing, in your service, social, and spiritual activities is critical to a healthy membership. Communicate chapter news to your members on a routine basis in a short and concise format to keep them engaged. Focus on impact and upcoming volunteer needs and opportunities. It is critical that a fun and welcoming environment exists so that your members look forward to their time serving your chapter.

### More retention suggestions

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- Run efficient, informative meetings and stay within the allotted time. Report on chapter finances and status of ongoing programs and discuss upcoming fundraising and volunteer opportunities. Be sure to rotate meeting times to accommodate working members.
- Offer opportunities for:
  - Utilizing members' talents and skills
  - Learning new skills
  - Social interaction
  - Spiritual growth
  - Service in areas that fulfill their desire "to meet the need" in your community
- Ask for member feedback, ideas and opinions – volunteers bring a wide spectrum of skills, experience and views. Listen and leverage their insights.
- Give membership guidance and training to let members know what is expected.
- If you offer a Provisional year, assign a Mentor Chair to follow the new provisional class for a period of one year, making sure the new members are being fulfilled by their volunteer experiences and sense of community within the chapter.
- Communicate volunteer opportunities often and clearly. Use your newsletter or weekly email blasts to inform members of upcoming volunteer activities. Use easy to use applications like Evites or Sign up Genius to facilitate sign-up and communicate information about events.
- Engage members through regular use of social media, such as the chapter's Facebook page. Share updates about your work and mission to spark the emotion that led your members to your chapter in the first place.
- Have a Corresponding Secretary or form a "Sunshine Club" to send Mass cards, condolences, or get-well cards to members when necessary.
- Host liturgies, days of recollection, or a retreat to bring chapter members together in prayer. Ask members who cannot attend to pray for their chapter and Mary Virginia Merrick's Cause for Canonization.
- Offer service and social activities at various times to allow working members and those with differing schedules to be involved.
- Invite members who have lapsed to see if they have renewed interest. Consider having a homecoming or reunion style party to try to bring the inactive members

# National Christ Child Society

## Chapter Guide

back in. Make sure they know you still need them and that you appreciate their past efforts.

- Conduct frequent evaluations of your programs to make sure they remain relevant and engaging to your members.

### Section 6.6 Recognizing Members

Express appreciation for your members' contributions and take every opportunity you can find to recognize them. Appreciating, recognizing, and rewarding members helps keep your volunteers engaged and builds trust in leadership. Let them know their efforts are making a difference which will motivate them to move into a chapter leadership position. Make sure you thank your members for what they accomplish not simply for "time served." Here are some recognition ideas shared by other chapters:

- Thank program volunteers and chairpersons publicly and by name. Post your appreciation and their pictures on social media. Tell them how important they are and show them how they are making a difference.
- Thank volunteers as intermediate program goals are achieved instead of waiting to the end of the year to give recognition.
- Write handwritten thank you notes and encourage your members to continue to fill the needs of your chapter.
- Recognize members for years of service at general meetings and/or special events. Reward them with a small gift such as flowers or Christ Child Society jewelry.
- Implement awards for Volunteer of the Year, Unsung Hero, and/or Mary Virginia Merrick Award for the member who best exemplifies the qualities of our founder and recognize the member at a luncheon or annual event. Some chapters use Founders Day for annual awards and invite all chapter members and their families to attend.
- Highlight volunteer activities on your website, Facebook page, eblasts, and newsletters. Honor their contributions and accomplishments with pictures and recognition at every opportunity.
- Have a standard feature in your member communications that recognizes/highlights a different member saying what they are actively doing for

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the chapter's programs. This will allow members to get to know their fellow volunteers.

- Special on-the-spot awards can be given to volunteers throughout the year for specific outstanding service in making a difference for the children and the chapter.
- Hold an annual Gavel Club luncheon for past presidents. This is a good opportunity for sharing ideas and thanking them for their longstanding service.
- Invite partner agencies or participating non-member volunteers (knitters, tutors, etc.) to events and recognize their contribution to your chapter.
- Hold a special thank-you get together at a restaurant or someone's home. Invite volunteers, chairs and past presidents to thank them.
- Consider sending your chapter's volunteer of the year to the NCCS annual conference.

Always remember the importance of thanking your volunteers on a regular basis!