



Serra International

Program Manual

“Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.” (Mt. 9:38)

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Introduction

“Serra gives members, who are leaders or potential leaders, the opportunity to develop Christian vision in themselves so they can bring about a great Christian social renaissance.”

Samuel Cardinal Stritch
Past Episcopal Adviser, Serra International

Since 1934, Serra Clubs have worked to establish themselves as Universities of Christian Principles. We believe that our Serra University of Christian Principles can and must be a crossroad where all the vital intellectual currents of our times meet in dialogue... where the great issues of our religion and the church today are plumbed to their depths... where every sincere inquirer is welcomed, listened to and respected by a serious consideration of what he or she has to say about his or her belief or unbelief, his or her certainty or uncertainty... where differences of culture and religion and conviction can coexist with friendship, civility, hospitality and especially love... a place where the endless conversation is harbored, not foreclosed.

We acknowledge and thank Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, for his thoughts which challenge Serrans to open their minds to understanding, positioning them at the door of leadership.

Purpose

This guide is intended primarily for the club vice president for programs and other members of the program committee. It also will be helpful to other club officers, especially the club president and club chaplain.

The manual describes the responsibilities and duties of the club vice president for programs and his or her committee. It includes practical suggestions for conducting effective and informative programs based on Serra's "University of Christian Principles."

Organizing an Effective Club Program Committee

Without being informed and educated about our faith, its principles and standards, one cannot undertake the first principle of Serra: to foster and promote vocations to the religious life, especially the priesthood. The vice president for programs and the program committee design and build the club's programs, the curriculum of its "University of Christian Principles."

The vice president is challenged to provide a year of stimulation and enrichment so that members truly grow in faith and knowledge of the Catholic Church. The job of the program committee is not involved, but it requires organization, dedication and team work. The rewards of an excellent program are a stronger, more enthusiastic club.

Vice President for Programs

Responsibilities

- chair the club program committee
- act as "Dean" of the club's "University of Christian Principles"
- plan, conduct and evaluate one year of bi-monthly, educational Serran programs
- plan and communicate schedule of programs
- determine financial requirements of club programs
- coordinate programs with the club president and the club board of trustees
- insure that the club programs clearly relate to the two objectives of Serra International

- educate and inform club members on Catholic issues and subjects through lectures, discussions, debates, videos or films, and case studies
- delegate responsibilities to club program committee members to involve each one of them
- develop a follow-up method
- recommend Serrans for membership on the club program committee
- develop and distribute the agenda for each program committee meeting
- In cooperation with the membership vice president, helps facilitate new member orientation, induction and officer installation

Goal

- carry out the second principle of Serra, namely, to further Catholicism by encouraging members, in fellowship, through education, to fulfill their Christian vocation to service

The Planning Year

The planning for the first three months of your term should have been completed by the previous vice-president. Your planning should be for the last nine months of your term and the first three months of your successor.

Club Program Committee

Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the club program committee is to develop the club's University of Christian Principles. The program committee will conceptualize, plan, conduct and execute a year of continuing Catholic education.

Subjects for each program are generally developed within the committee which is chaired by the vice president for programs. By talking to other club members and reading the Catholic press, committee members identify subjects relevant to the times. Subjects that interest each club member and make them enthusiastic about the continuing education program are subjects that would receive high priority during the committee planning process.

Structure

The size of the club program committee should be determined by the amount of work to be done. The committee should be small enough to facilitate good progress, but both large and diverse enough to make the programs work.

It is recommended that committee members be appointed on a rotating basis. Where deemed advantageous or appropriate, sub-committees may be appointed.

Composition

Ideally, the program committee should consist of members who are:

- involved in diocesan and/or parish affairs and know many potential speakers
- veteran Serrans who can provide history regarding identified programs
- new and young Serrans who can provide new insight to the committee

The chaplain should be an advisory member of the committee.

Meetings

The committee should:

- have a defined agenda of subjects to be explored
- meet on a regular basis in order to fulfill its responsibilities
- delegate responsibilities for *Action Items* to individuals or small groups of committee members who work on them outside of committee meetings
- develop a follow-up system to assure that work on assigned items is satisfactorily progressing to the completion date
- be aware of district events, Serra International requirements and outside sponsored events
- be aware of the financial impact of all programs and communicate budgetary needs to the club president, treasurer and board of trustees for budgeting and ultimate approval

- send notices of the meeting to the committee members in advance along with the proposed agenda
- keep and circulate adequate records

The committee also should work closely with the vocations committee so that vocations activities and internal programs fully support each other and fulfill the two objectives of Serra.

Resources

- *SERRAN* Magazine and *Bellringer*
- Catholic periodicals and books
- Video and audiotapes of sessions at International and regional conventions
- Encyclicals
- Documents of the Second Vatican Council
- Current Episcopal statements
- File of potential and past speakers
- Continuing education programs at universities and colleges
- Public and Catholic libraries
- Diocesan Offices, personnel and publications

The Serra Club Meeting

Education and fellowship are the principal reasons that Serrans gather together. Most meetings include a prayer, announcements and a brief business meeting, but the majority of the meeting focuses on the program.

A club meeting lasts about 90 minutes. A recommended agenda is:

Gathering and hospitality	15 minutes
Opening prayer, meal or refreshments	20 minutes
Special announcements	2 to 3 minutes
Chaplain's message	3 to 5 minutes
Program presentation	30 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Adjourn with prayer	

A checklist of preparations required for the meeting should be followed to avoid problems during the program. A sample checklist is shown below.

Meeting Checklist

- schedule of events and times for the meeting site
- room/seating arrangements
 - number of seats and tables
 - direction/orientation of seats and tables
 - podium
 - microphone and stand
- amplifier system
- lighting
- special equipment
 - overhead
 - screen
 - slide projector
 - TV and VCR
 - tape recorder
- speaker handouts

- biography and introduction of the speaker

The Serra University of Christian Principles

What is the University of Christian Principles?

The University of Christian Principles is a learning center where Serrans continue to study and learn their Christian heritage, their Catholic faith, their way to understanding and being contributors in the daily activities of the world, the country, the community, the parish, the family.

The University is an institution where Serrans learn to be informed Christian leaders. The University of Christian Principles is a University of Continuing Catholic Education, an institution where potential Catholic leaders are developed and nurtured to be working disciples for Christ. Its students include Serrans, priests and religious of the Church, being involved in continuous dialogue to master the tasks and decisions of daily life while better understanding the role of one another.

What is the curriculum of the University of Christian Principles?

The curriculum covered in this great university is the study of Papal encyclicals, Church doctrine and theological documents and papers. The university provides its students, Serrans, with the knowledge and guidance required to make the decisions demanded of Christian lay leadership.

Why use the term “University”?

The vision of a typical campus includes a formal setting. It is this type of setting that provides individuals with formal education and prepares people like Serrans to take a place in the ever-changing world.

Formal education opens us to a body of knowledge and teaches us how we must apply the knowledge. With our continuing Catholic education and our formation in Serra we learn to understand the changing environment we live in and how our sound Christian principles must be applied to this environment.

What are the results of this curriculum?

Serrans are able to develop and foster wholesome Christian lives by living and loving our brothers and sisters from all walks of life. This learning process helps Serrans become Christian leaders in the true sense of the word.

Serrans must be careful not to confuse good intentions with good leadership. His Eminence John J. Cardinal O'Connor stated, “We cannot expect to be Christian leaders if we do not know our stuff.” Serrans must remember that untrained, unprepared and, above all, uninformed leadership is worse than no leadership at all.

Why is the University of Christian Principles so important?

Christian leaders are not solely educated by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, *Time*, or the daily newspaper. Christian leaders study, analyze and put into practice the principles and teachings of the Catholic faith. Christian leaders are not spectators in life. They are workers, contributors, path-finders; they are doers because they know sincerity does not do the job.

Cardinal Spellman wrote, "While it is true on the threshold of eternity we are judged not by what we know but by what we are; not by knowledge in the mind but charity in the soul. It is nevertheless also true that an intrinsic union of knowledge and love, wisdom and charity is the essence of Christian living." We cannot love what we do not know. A true Christian leader inspired by the Divine Master always remains a learner because he or she loves God and desires to know more of God's teachings.

Program Planning

Program planning requires advanced thinking and detailed preparations. For a successful program, the better the planning, the better the program. To achieve the goal of a successful program, two main objectives need to be fulfilled. Each objective is described in detail below with specific steps and additional suggestions on planning a successful club program.

Objective 1

To identify worthwhile Catholic subjects as themes and topics and seek speakers as the instructors at the club's University of Christian Principles.

How-to

- call an "off-site" meeting of the program committee members and the chaplain or advisor
 - select a location with a relaxed atmosphere
 - choose a room where ideas can be shared freely
 - give the group plenty of time
- ask committee members to prepare themselves by:
 - reading up on current Catholic subjects, especially papal and episcopal letters
 - talking with other club members on subjects that would be of interest to them
 - looking through various resources for subjects of particular current interest programs
- at the meeting:
 - identify known and available subjects and speakers
 - develop new subjects and make a list of new speakers
 - discuss any Catholic subject and explore its possibilities as a program
 - discuss each subject for as long as necessary -- there should be no time limit on the discussion period
- record the subjects discussed
- at the end of the discussion period, the members vote for subjects of interest
 - allow each member to vote for as many subjects as he or she desires
 - eliminate subjects that receive a low vote
 - repeat the voting process
 - reach a consensus
 - only the final number of desired subjects should remain
- organize the subjects for the year according to theme, topic or *Study and Discussion* program
 - list the most desired subject at the top and the least desired at the bottom
- next to or below each subject, list potential speakers who might have expertise in each area
- select at least two knowledgeable speakers for each subject
- contact potential speakers with the following information:
 - subject
 - date of presentation
 - preferred style of presentation
 - length of presentation
 - description of the audience
 - a typical meeting agenda
- after the initial contact, follow-up with a letter confirming the time and location of the meeting and the suggested topic to be presented (see *Appendix B - Confirmation Letter*)
- continue this process until the calendar is complete for all planned dates
- from this point, follow-up via telephone as the meeting date approaches

- review the schedule at least once a month for modifications
- four weeks prior to the presentation:
 - ask each speaker for biographical information (see *Appendix A - Biographical Information*)
 - determine what aids are required
 - ask for a list of books or pamphlets relating to the presentation
 - offer to reproduce any handout material the speaker may use
 - if material is to be reproduced, ask for a delivery date to permit reproduction before the meeting date
 - ask for a reference list -- it can be invaluable to those members who wish to learn more about the subject when included in the club bulletin
 - ask for a few discussion questions to include in the news releases preceding the meeting
- write an introduction of the speaker based on the biographical information
- write articles and news releases about the subjects and speakers for club newsletter and local press
- greet speaker on arrival and extend hospitality
- consider giving each speaker a tangible or token thank you gift at the end of the presentation
- within one week of the presentation, send a personal thank you letter

Objective 2

To prepare the calendar for club programs.

How-to

- create a spreadsheet as the working calendar
 - column headings:
 - event number
 - description of event (chart both major and minor events)
 - name of person in charge
 - meeting dates by month
- identify completion dates for each step of each event for:
 - pre- and post-meeting follow-up calls and letters
 - catering and room set-ups
 - press releases and newsletters
- use the spreadsheet to mark when each step is completed

Suggested Annual Events

The calendar should include annual events that have become traditional within the club and Serra International. These events provide continuity in programming within the club and among the clubs in Serra International. Some of these events may be combined for convenience or expediency. A list of some recognized special occasions are:

- Honoring the newly ordained
- Bishop's report on the diocese
- Serrans and spouses day
- Family communion breakfast
- Report on Serra International Convention
- Visit of the District Governor
- Anniversary of Blessed Serra's death (August 28)
- Installation of officers
- Induction of new members
- Serra/chaplain planning meetings
- Family retreat or members retreat

Themes

Themes are subjects that are so broad in nature that it is impossible to cover all aspects at a single meeting. After a theme is identified, the committee subdivides the theme into sections or areas and determines which ones will be included in the overall presentation. Speakers are chosen and asked to address one section or area so that there is minimal overlap in the overall presentation. Theme programs generally require minimal participation by the membership.

Suggested themes and speakers:

Spirituality and Prayer

- Retreat directors
- Seminary teachers
- Clergy
- Religious Spiritual Directors

How to be Catholic and Ethical in the Business World

- Club members
- A local prominent Catholic in the government, business or professional field of endeavor

Diocesan Operations

- Department heads, representatives from the various diocesan offices
An organizational chart of diocesan office management structure is very beneficial.

Local Social Justice Issues

- Director of Catholic Charities
- Director of a shelter for the homeless
- Clergy, religious or laity who work with homeless, unemployed, poor, illegal aliens
- Refugees or immigrants
- Governmental authorities involved in social welfare
- Representatives from local charity hospitals

Missions

- Director of Society for the Propagation of the Faith
- Representatives from local religious communities or orders working in missionary activities
- Lay missionaries

The Sacraments

- Clergy
- Seminary instructors

Lay Ministries

- Director of Eucharistic or extraordinary minister programs for parish or diocese
- Lay director of religious education
- Instructor of lectors or director of a parish's lector program
- Parish or diocesan music director
- Parish liturgist
- Director of social ministries program

The Universal Church

- Representatives from other Catholic (but not Roman) Churches, i.e., Byzantine (Greek), Eastern Rite Churches

The Bishops' Pastorals

- Club members who have studied individual portions of the pastoral
- Members of the business or academic community
- Clergy

Lives of the Saints

- Club members
- Religious or clergy

Religious Orders, Communities and Diocesan Clergy

- Religious community members
- Diocesan and religious order vocation directors
- Seminarians or clergy

Catholic Press

- Club members
- Chaplain
- Seminary faculty members
- Editor of Catholic paper
- Diocesan Director of Communications

Catholic Marriage and Divorce

- Pre-Cana team instructors
- Marriage encounter team members
- Engaged couples encounter instructors
- Members of local divorced or single parent Catholic groups
- Canon lawyers
- Representatives of the marriage tribunal
- Civil lawyers specializing in family and matrimonial law
- Catholic marriage counselors
- Diocesan psychologist

Issues Presented by Modern Technology

- Theology instructors from seminary or university
- Scientists involved in research
- Representatives from legal, medical and business communities

Catholic Schools

- Principals or guidance counselors from secondary and elementary schools and local Catholic colleges and universities
- Panels of Catholic high school or college students

Youth Ministry

- Director of youth ministry for the diocese
- Shelter directors or representatives
- Youths currently active in young peoples' programs

Vocations

- Diocesan and religious vocation directors
- Seminarians
- Novices

Topics

Topics are subjects covered in a single meeting. They deal with current and highly visible issues. Some sources for topics are the Serra International convention theme and local Catholic issues in the diocesan or parish press. Particular attention should be given to the bishops' pastoral letters as excellent sources of material.

Presentations on topics explore and clarify the discussion subject. Topic meetings are a participatory type of classroom learning. Questions arising from topic presentations generally are

more personal and provide added material and data for post-topic evaluation by listening members.

Suggested topics:

- *Noisy Contemplation — Ways of Prayer*
- *Living Simply So Others May Simply Live*
- *Ethical Issues in the Marketplace*
- *Mid-life Crisis — A Call to Spiritual Growth*
- *Facing Evil and Suffering from a Faith Perspective*
- *Honor Thy Father and Mother — Loving Aging Parents*
- *Perspectives on Authority in the Church*
- *Why I Joined (and Remain Active) in Serra*
- *Advent: Season of Hope*
- *Lent: Our Call to Conversion*
- *Faith and Violence*
- *The Meaning of Saints*
- *Confronting Anti-Semitism*
- *The Seamless Garment — Taking a Consistent Pro-Life Stand*
- *Vocations and the Family*
- *Historical Perspectives on:*
 - *Church Ministry*
 - *Priesthood*
 - *Religious Life*
- *Vocation Trends*
- *Report from the Seminary*
- *Report from the Vocation Office*

Study and Discussion Programs

A series of "Study and Discussion Programs" have been developed by the USA Program Committee for use at the club level. The purpose of a Study and Discussion Program is to help Serrans seek and expand their understanding of their Christian role in life, examine the assumptions and presuppositions about a subject, stretch the thinking of the membership and renew the club's commitment to the continuing education process.

These programs are designed to occupy one or more consecutive club meetings. They are designed in discussion format. A club member or the club chaplain can facilitate the program. Many Serrans have taken part in home discussion programs, or adult education programs in their parishes and are familiar with this format. Because of the depth of discussion that some of these programs create, they may occupy one or more meetings. Programs currently available include:

- Mission and Ministry
- Temple of the Spirit
- Devotional
- God the Father

Program Formats

The presentation styles of the programs should vary. Such variations in style contribute to the overall effectiveness of internal programming. Some styles are discussed below to assist in the planning process.

Round Table or Informal Discussion

The membership forms into small groups, each with a discussion leader. For maximum success, it is important that all enter into the discussion.

Lecture

The effectiveness of this style is greatly enhanced by a question and answer period following a classroom type lecture.

Debate

This style is especially effective if two opposing points of view are to be presented. An open discussion following the debate, devoted to careful analysis of the arguments rather than emotional appeals for one side or the other, enhances the debate.

Panel

This style usually includes two to five members, plus a discussion leader or moderator. The approach may be informational or directed toward the solution of a problem. Careful preparation by the panel members and proper direction by the discussion leader or moderator are prerequisites for the success of a panel presentation. A question and answer period should follow.

Group Interview

A discussion leader interviews several people and then throws the discussion open to the audience. This permits a discussion leader to solicit the thoughts of key persons on the problem.

Video Tape or Film

For maximum effectiveness, the video tape or film should be preceded by a short introduction that includes the background of the topic, questions to be asked, and conclusions that might be drawn. After the tape or film, a leader guides the discussion of the audience.

Case Study

Participants examine a true or hypothetical case to uncover the underlying ethical issues. The group applies Christian decision-making principles in resolving the situation. The moderator presents the problem, explains the technique of participation, establishes ground rules, and limits areas of ideas to positive suggestions (about five minutes). The first moderator stimulates positive, imaginative, and constructive ideas addressed to the solution of the problem without regard for obstacles (about fifteen minutes). The second moderator reviews the ideas, refines them, explains what these are directed to do, re-emphasizes the duty of those present to meet the challenge, and concludes on a high note of inspiration (about ten minutes).

Speakers*Qualifications*

- ability to interest and excite Serrans
- specific expertise in a Catholic subject area

Sources for Speakers

- Club members or members of other clubs
- Local parishes
- Diocesan departments and offices
- Priests, religious, seminarians and laity of the diocese
- Prominent Catholics in residence or visiting in the community
- Catholic lay societies (refer to the diocesan directory)
- Educational institutions
- Business and industry
- Governmental services
- Civic organizations
- Speaker bureaus, professional associations, newspapers
- Social agencies

- Priests' council
- Sisters' and Brothers' councils
- Representative from social action groups such as pro-life and voter issues

Evaluating Club Programs

Constant evaluation of programs is essential to the health and progress of the club. This provides a sound base for future planning and points the way to progress by testing goals and procedures against needs and accomplishments. Clubs that neglect it risk decay.

The program committee should evaluate each program as it occurs. The committee should then conduct an overall evaluation semi-annually. After carefully evaluating the program adjust the plan to better meet the needs of the club members. The following questions can be used to guide a program evaluation.

1. Why were these particular programs chosen? What impact were they expected to have? Did they actually have the impact? Why?
2. What programs had the least appeal? Why?
3. Do you feel that the programs go into sufficient depth?
4. Are there areas and topics you feel are important that have been ignored by the program committee? What are they?

Evaluating Your Club Program Committee

From time to time the committee should rate their program as "S" (Strong), "A" (Average), or "W" (Weak) on the list of statements which follow:

1. The program committee is headed by a capable, dedicated chairperson (the vice president for programs.)
2. There are at least three active committee members, appointed on a continuing basis.
3. The committee meets regularly and conducts its meetings efficiently.
4. At its meetings, the committee has an agenda and completes it.
5. The entire committee has had responsibility for planning the program.
6. The chaplain was included in the planning and execution of the program.
7. All of the programs clearly relate to the basic purposes of Serra International.
8. The overall club program is well-rounded, inviting, creative and free from stereotype.
9. The committee has planned a variety of meeting styles and allowed for exchange of members' ideas.
10. An active, interested, participating membership has developed as a result of the club's programs.
11. The program has encouraged members to act as Christian leaders in their environments.

12. The meeting place and the food/refreshment service have contributed to the success of the program.

Appendix A: Biographical Information

Full Name

Title

Birth Place

High School(s) attended:

College(s)/University(ies) attended:

Name	Degree

Graduate School(s) attended:

Name	Degree
Name	Degree
Name	Degree

Work experience:

Honors/Awards :

Marital Status: Single
 Married
 Children
 Children's ages

Other data Serra might use in news releases about you:

Appendix B: Confirmation Letter

Serra Club Letterhead

Date

Name of Speaker

Title

Address

City, Province Postal Code

Dear :

I wish to thank you for agreeing to be a speaker on (date) for the Serra Club of (name of Serra Club). The meeting will convene at (time) at (name of the establishment, address and telephone number). The subject of the program will be (list the title of the subject) discussed during (personal visit or telephone conversation). Some points of interest which the Serran will be attempting to answer are:

- a.)
- b.)

If you are providing handout material, we will be glad to reproduce the copies. We would request that the you forward this material for reproduction at least seven days before the meeting. The planned program agenda will be:

(customize to your club format)

Gathering and hospitality	15 minutes
Opening prayer, meal or refreshments	20 minutes
Special announcements	2 to 3 minutes
Chaplain's message	3 to 5 minutes
Program presentation	30 minutes
Discussion	15 minutes
Adjourn with prayer	

The Serra Club of (name of Serra Club) is looking forward to your presentation at our University of Christian Principles. If you have any questions regarding the meeting, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Jane Smith
President

Appendix C: Thank You Letter

Serra Club Letterhead

Date

Name of Speaker

Title

Street Address

City, Province Postal Code

Dear :

The Serrans of the Serra Club of *(name of Serra Club)* wish to thank you for your enlightening presentation at our meeting on *(date)*. The remarks were certainly to the point and contributed greatly to our understanding of *(title of the speaker's theme)*.

We have enclosed *(a small stipend or gift)* as a token of our appreciation. Again, thank you for being our guest speaker at the Serra University of Christian Principles.

Sincerely yours,

Jane Smith

President

Appendix D: Club Programs Vice President Position Description

Serra International Suggested Club

Position Description for the Club Vice President of Programs

Position Title: Vice President of Programs

Reports To: President

Position: Attend all Club, Board of Trustees and Committee meetings and functions; serves as the Chair of the Club Program Committee; formulate plans and develops programs that help the clubs members become aware of the current teaching of the Bishops; encyclicals and episcopal statements.

Principal Responsibilities:

1. Attend all Club and Board of Trustee meetings
2. Serve on the Club Board of Trustees
3. Serve as the Chairperson of the Program Committee
4. Assist and attends Regional and District Conventions as appropriate
5. Develop effective programs for club use that contain the current teaching of the Bishops, encyclicals and episcopal statements

6. Develop a long range plan for the Program Committee
7. Attend and actively participates at the Spring Leadership Planning Conferences
8. Assists the President Elect in the preparation of the budget.
9. Understand the responsibilities of the board president and able to perform these duties in the president's absence
10. Participate as vital part of the Club leadership
11. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the President and/or the Board of Trustees
12. Monitors and assesses the impact of Council programs provided for local club use

Position Requirements:

1. Thorough knowledge of Serra International and its Objects and Purposes
2. Ability to work collaboratively with volunteers

Desirable Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

1. Knowledge of current Catholic Church issues
2. Ability to communicate clearly and concisely orally and in writing