

Starting a Creation Fellowship...

Following are tips and suggestions for starting a Creation Fellowship through a church. We are also happy to encourage community groups or associations to start independent Creation Fellowships, and we have further ideas and recommendations for forming such an organization. We are grateful for the contributions of our creation friends Helmut Welke and Jim Orme to this “how-to guide” for starting a Creation Fellowship.

PURPOSE: A key reason for starting a Creation Fellowship is simply to help “get the word out.” Our society is constantly bombarded with stories of “millions of years,” that Darwinian evolution is a “proven fact,” and that the Bible cannot be trusted. This takes a heavy toll on our society in general (Hosea 4:1), but also on the faith of young people, even if they grow up in a Christian home and attend a strong church.

There is more than sufficient documentation showing that two-thirds or more of young people from Christian homes end up walking away from their faith by the time they reach college age. The primary driver for this appalling statistic is the teaching of Darwinism. Unfortunately, not enough churches have the staff or members trained in the sciences that can counter the claims of Darwinists and secular science teachers. Having a Christian calling and some knowledge that this situation can be turned around is a key motivation to take on the effort of forming a Creation Fellowship.

While there are several large international organizations that provide volumes of information refuting Darwinism, a local Creation Fellowship can provide resources, and organize and publicize local events that reach a variety of people within a community. The local ministry can provide an ongoing information flow that illustrates how the great majority of scientific facts are significantly consistent with the Bible—and actually contradict the myth of Darwinian evolution. This information flow can be a vital help to the community in general, students in both secular and Christian schools, and churches of all sizes.

Hosea 4:6 states that “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (HCSB). In today’s society, a lack of knowledge of the scientific facts surrounding the topic of origins undermines the faith of young Christians and causes many to discount the Bible and, therefore, the Gospel itself. This is the warning from St. Paul in Colossians 2:8, that we should not be taken “captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elemental forces of the world” (HCSB). There is a real need to answer many of the questions that young people and seekers have.

Your Creation Fellowship is, therefore, primarily an Apologetics ministry, defending the Christian faith, and dedicated to telling the truth in the sciences. Your fellowship can enable Christians of all ages to defend their faith and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively. The fellowship’s ultimate purpose should be to honor the biblical record and to remove any stumbling blocks that hinder basic Christian faith due to the ideology of Darwinism.

BEGIN WITH PRAYER: The need for the founding group to meet together as believers and pray together cannot be overstated. Discussions about forming the fellowship need to be developed on a foundation of much prayer and seeking of God’s calling to form the fellowship with a purpose of promoting biblical Christianity with a common voice. While scientific facts will be the focus of most educational events, all members need to be aware that this will be a spiritual battlefield, and not a dry discussion. It can be exciting to see God work, but we pray for HIS blessing over the ministry. Remember that “not by strength or by might, but by [His] Spirit” will the fellowship see the fruit of equipped Christians and new believers in the Gospel (Zechariah 4:6 HCSB).

REACH OUT TO PASTOR AND CORE GROUP: Having your pastor on board is an essential piece of the puzzle for making your Creation Fellowship sustainable. Partner with your pastor and church leadership for support.

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Next, organize a team of four-five individuals who are interested in being part of the leadership of your Creation Fellowship, and who are in agreement with basic Christian doctrine and the purpose of the fellowship as stated above. It is imperative that the leaders embrace a common belief of the inerrancy of Scripture, the historical accuracy of the Bible beginning with Genesis 1:1, and the inspiration of God in the original documents. Just as God created people with a diversity of personalities and abilities and needs, so has He provided denominations that agree on the key doctrine of salvation by grace and faith in Jesus Christ, but who differ on various other issues that will attract different Christians.

If you intend to use your Creation Fellowship as an outreach opportunity to other Christians and non-Christians in your community, keep in mind that your leadership should communicate a common agreement on the Gospel and the need for all people to be saved from sin and sin's penalty, but should avoid discussion of most denominational differences.

Once you have partnered with your pastor(s) and established a leadership team, here are some details you will need to consider:

REGISTER: Register your Creation Fellowship with IAC at www.creationfellowship.org. Explore the resources available, and know there is a whole staff of creation volunteers waiting to help support and encourage you.

LOCATION: Partner with your church facilities team to determine a specific location for your meetings. If church facilities are not available, a home fellowship or other off-campus location could be an option.

SCHEDULE: Choose your fellowship's meeting frequency and dates. For example, you could meet weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly. Choose your date by considering your church's schedule in addition to any regular meetings that occur in your area that you may want to avoid. Schedule your meetings with the church's master calendar, as appropriate.

FINANCING: If your church has a budget that can accommodate your expenses, praise the Lord! Even if it does not, don't be dismayed by a small budget. Low-cost resources are available. Once you get started, consider having an offering box in the back of the meeting room with a "donations" sign, or actually take offerings. One creation group started with a donation box, but people were not thinking about donating money, so they switched to taking an offering. This works for many groups, and helps ensure some income for facilities, speaker honorariums, or study materials. If your church doesn't already have money accountability rules, it is recommended you always have two people count the money and fill out a deposit form. Have someone responsible to deposit the money. As an alternative, you can consider having your Creation Fellowship financed entirely by memberships, donations, and resource sales.

Another consideration with financing is whether you want to offer "memberships" to regular attendees. You can consider having donation-based membership opportunities. Consider offering your members special incentives, such as teaming with your church's bookstore to give discounts, or offer discounts to annual conferences, etc.

SPECIAL EVENTS: In addition to your regular meetings, consider hosting extra events, such as a "launch event," or an annual conference. For your launch event, consider reserving a special guest speaker, or even hosting a creation conference. Partner with your church leadership, facilities, and hospitality teams to plan ahead and use your launch event to attract a big crowd for the first meeting of your Creation Fellowship. If you are going to have "memberships," considering offering "founding memberships" at the launch event, or even for the first six months of your Creation Fellowship. Consider offering extra incentives for founding members.

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Additionally, consider hosting annual conferences, with classes/speakers teaching on a Saturday, or even all weekend, starting on a Friday evening. Members (or only founding members) could receive discounts on merchandise or special reserved seating for the conference.

SPECIAL SPEAKERS VS. DVDS: Plan your meetings for at least three-six months in advance, so you can publicize, order materials, and/or schedule speakers as appropriate. Most people prefer to hear a live speaker, who can answer questions, rather than to watch DVDs. However, economics and facilities will determine some of that decision.

For weekly fellowships, video series make great block studies. Another option is book studies with weekly discussions and/or media presentations. Occasional guest speakers can be great draws for members to be encouraged and to invite friends. For semi-monthly or monthly fellowships, consider scheduling more dynamic presentations, such as guest speakers or top-rated or new-release videos.

Good speakers need to be scheduled in advance. Partner with IAC and other church/fellowship members to find local speakers or teachers who can prepare a talk that would be acceptable to your audience.

STUDY GUIDES: Especially in the case of video or book studies, but even when you have a guest speaker, consider creating notetaking sheets to help engage attendees during presentations. For video studies, schedule time at the end of the meeting for discussion, to make sure everyone has the correct “answers” for fill-in notes. Partner with IAC for member-created study guides for popular video or book studies.

PUBLICITY: Partner with your church’s media team to create promotional material, especially in advance of your launch event. Even as early as two-three months before your first event, start a media campaign that includes:

- flyers in church bulletin; posters or displays at church information table
- promotional signing on church website, news slides, etc.
Consider creating a separate website or web pages on your church’s website to continually provide information about your Creation Fellowship, resources, membership info, and upcoming events.
- live announcements to the whole church and/or small groups/Sunday school classes
- posters or flyers in local public places, such as coffee shops, small businesses, etc.

If equipped to do so, encourage sign-ups/online registration to get an idea of projected attendance, and to promote attendance follow-through. If appropriate, greet church members in foyer and hand flyers out directly. Always be thinking ahead about upcoming speakers and/or video studies. Create new publicity campaigns regularly to continue to draw new members.

REFRESHMENTS: It is not necessary, but finding someone willing to be responsible for refreshments at meetings is a plus. People will linger and may become accustomed to coming to your meetings and engaging in conversation over a cup of water or coffee and some small snacks. Consider having a donations box on the refreshment table, and/or asking members to take turns bringing refreshments.

RESOURCE STORE/TABLE: Another idea to help with financing is book sales. This can also be a good way to introduce attendees to additional resources. If applicable, partner with your church’s bookstore to make arrangements. Some purchasing discounts may be available through IAC.

MAINTAINING YOUR FELLOWSHIP: Consider having greeters at meetings to make people (especially new people) feel welcome. Pass out a sign-in sheet, with a space for email addresses so you can build a database of attendees to invite to special events. Consider inviting a regular member to take a turn leading a block study. Plan field trips to local learning centers (museums, natural attractions, etc.). Partner with pastor(s) and/or church leadership regularly to assess needs, celebrate goals, etc.

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