

BRAVE

MEN'S MINISTRIES

Local Chapter 2023 Manual

Please seek approval from the BRAVE committee sponsor and the BRAVE Local Chapters coordinator, along with concurrence from the local chapter's priest for any suggestions you may have.

Why Local Chapters?

One annual conference is not sufficient – we need more frequent and more intimate (local chapters) gatherings in every church or city for men to talk about God, the Bible, life, and to grow together in brotherhood, learning, and living the life of a godly Christian man, etc.

Minimum Meeting Requirements for all BRAVE Chapters:

- Prayer at the beginning and end (include Agpeya in some way)
- Facilitated discussion with key takeaways using the BRAVE Curriculum Handouts
 - Facilitators cannot be randomly selected each time. There should be a pre-selected list, as suggested by the local chapter committee/priest, of facilitators who have gone through the facilitator training, are on the facilitators' Signal group.
- The BRAVE curriculum assumes a monthly meeting. There are 10 topics prepared for the year (the 2 other months include the conference, and the other can be fellowship or a men's outing). Please do not skip a month without discussing it first with the local chapter's sponsor.

Minimum Communication Requirements:

- **A monthly** email from the local chapter lead to the BRAVE committee sponsor, cc local chapters coordinator (bassem@bravemensministries.org), with an update on the previous meeting and plan for the upcoming meeting
 - Include the topic discussed, facilitator's name, number of participants, any feedback, date of the next meeting, topic, and facilitator, as well as any other events planned.
- A quarterly virtual meeting for all local chapter leads.

Available Resources:

- <https://www.bravemensministries.org/> has a resources page with various books and media covering numerous topics and is continuously being updated.
- Social Media:
 - YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@bravemensministries>
 - Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/bravemensministries/> (The local chapters pages are in the "More" menu)
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/bravemensministries>
- Donations:
 - Venmo: @BRAVEMensMinistries
 - Zelle: finances@bravemensministries.org
 - Website: <https://www.bravemensministries.org/donate/>
- [Monthly Discussion Handouts for facilitators and participants](#)
- BRAVE Local Chapter Sponsor:
 - Fr. Benjamin Abouelkheir -- 512-537-2767 -- frbenjamin@austin@gmail.com

- Austin
- Bassem Iskander -- 832-512-0674 -- bassem@bravemensministries.org
 - **Local Chapters Coordinator**
 - Dallas/Fort Worth
- Benjamin Rafail -- 713-397-2954 -- ben@bravemensministries.org
 - Houston
 - San Antonio
- Karim Hanna -- 813-380-6547 -- karim@bravemensministries.org
 - Tampa
 - Jacksonville
- Tamer Mina -- 310-873-7755 -- tamer@bravemensministries.org
 - Orlando
- Joey Hanna -- 615-482-4977 -- joeyhanna1@gmail.com
 - Memphis
 - South Florida

Other General Guidelines:

- The Intercessor of BRAVE is St. Barnabas.
- BRAVE is for all men ages 18 and older.
- Teaching:
 - All teaching must abide by the Coptic Orthodox Church faith and dogma.
 - Facilitators in the local chapter are to follow the curriculum provided by the Brave Men's Ministries Committee.
 - Any additional topics should be discussed with the local parish's priest(s) and mentioned in the monthly report of the previous month.
 - *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Col 3:16*
- Behavior:
 - All service interactions (e.g., activities, outings, etc.) must follow and adhere to the Coptic Orthodox Church standards of behavior.
 - *"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." 1 John 2:6*
- Fellowship:
 - [Please refer to the Social Activities document on the local chapters page.](#)
 - A minimum of one fellowship event per quarter is required.
 - Official Fellowship events must be planned at least two weeks in advance to allow for inclusion and attendance.
 - *"And let us consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have made a habit, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:25*
- Accountability:
 - [Please refer to the accountability document on the local chapters page.](#)
 - *"As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." Prov 27:17*
- Services:
 - [Please refer to the services document on the local chapters page.](#)
 - *"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant." Matt 20:26*

How to Get Started

This should be done in close coordination with the BRAVE Local Chapters Coordinator and your BRAVE Local Chapter Sponsor. Please do not start and market a BRAVE chapter prior to receiving approval from the BRAVE Committee.

- The first thing to do is to **establish a passionate, respectful, diverse, and responsible committee**. Before reaching out to individuals directly, ensure that the priest(s) – the “**Local Chapter Clergy Advisor**” of your parish are aligned and that you have their blessing.
 - The committee leader should connect with the BRAVE Local Chapters Coordinator to discuss the city's intent to start a local chapter.
 - The committee will consist of approximately 5 men and a priest. The main BRAVE Committee members will NOT be a part of those 5 but will be available to help or answer questions as needed.
 - Potential Committee Roles (in addition to Abouna who is overseeing all): The Committee can meet and organize however they want & whenever they want, whether in person, on Zoom, or on Signal, etc.
 - Leader / Coordinator – Organizing, overseeing, planning months ahead
 - Local Chapter leadership should be under the guidance of the local chapter priest(s) and in coordination with the BRAVE Men’s Ministries Committee
 - *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” Phil 2:3*
 - Social / Fellowship Coordinator – to schedule (including all logistics) a social fellowship event every couple of months.
 - Service / Volunteering Coordinator – To schedule (including all logistics) a volunteering/serving opportunity either for local churches or for the community/city.
- Now that you have a team with the support of the priest(s), the next step is to establish the focus of the ministry, define what success means specifically. Ensure that, in the way you define success, Christ is the focus.
 - For example: it is easy to equate the success of a ministry to the number of attendees alone. Rather than having the focus of the ministry be to increase numbers, define success by establishing a ministry that further develops members' relationships with Christ. You will find strength in the foundation and longevity of the ministry when it starts with that mindset.
 - Come up with a mission statement. You may find the BRAVE mission statement in the references page useful as your mission statement or as a starting point for your own.

Other Logistics for Committee Planning:

- Meeting Location (same or different every meeting?) and why? Preferably somewhere central so more men can attend. The monthly meeting can be fixed at one location. The additional social or service events that occur every couple of months should not replace the monthly meeting.
- Settle on a date, time, and location for consistency.
- Curriculum – The BRAVE curriculum assumes one meeting each month. If a chapter is eager and wants to meet twice a month, they can if there are enough willing men to sustain that rhythm.

Regarding the topics or discussions of the additional meeting, the committee can determine what the most appropriate topics are on their own.

- Decide on meeting duration and structure
- Consider an agape meal before or after the meeting. (e.g., a potluck for a sense of ownership/involvement).
- **Local Chapter Clergy Advisor** needs to attend the first meeting and as many meetings after that as possible and is encouraged to participate in the meeting as one of the men as a role model of always wanting to benefit and grow.

Selecting facilitators:

- Facilitators can start with a couple, and as you spot other good candidates over time, begin to add more with Abouna's approval.
- The facilitators need to be familiar faces who regularly attend the meeting in order to encourage transparency and vulnerability.
- Attributes of the facilitator:
 - A good conversationalist
 - Somewhat charismatic
 - Able to ask open-ended, probing questions to get people to speak more (we will prepare the main bulk of the materials for him/them)
 - Can keep the conversation focused and ends with key-takeaways
- Facilitators must join the BRAVE Facilitator Signal Group and go through the training provided.

The launch process:

It takes a tremendous amount of energy to overcome spiritual inertia among the men in your church. Be sure to start strong, not fast, intentionally not haphazardly. Also, make sure to plan volunteer services and social activities. Men in general prefer 'doing' than "talking" and engaging them physically through volunteering and social activities will be key to the success of the ministry.

- Please send the information below to Tamer Mina at tamer@bravemensministries.org and CC your BRAVE local chapters sponsor and the BRAVE Local chapters coordinator:
 - Date, time, and location of the monthly meeting for your chapter
 - Name of the man responsible for emailing meeting reminders to members
 - Note: The person responsible for email and admin can be the same person, but it would be better if it's two different men.
- Divide all men in the area among the committee members and have them send personalized emails to each one for invitations and reminders. When possible, rotate the groups among the committee members every quarter so that the men receive communication from different sources.
- Create a spreadsheet to keep track of men.
- Ask the priest to announcement from the pulpit
- Send church announcements (via emails or texts to all church members).
- Create and post flyers in church foyers and halls.
- For announcements, use an email that includes "BRAVE-Local Chapter" in it, such as a MailChimp account (e.g., "BRAVE-Austin").
- Instead of posting videos on the YouTube channel of a BRAVE "Local" @gmail.com, they should be on the LocalChapterPlaylist on the main BRAVE YouTube Channel.
- Also, on the BRAVE main Facebook, create a group for each local chapter on the main BRAVE Facebook Page.

First Meeting:

- The first meeting can be a simple BBQ, giving a chance for the men to meet one another and the committee members introducing themselves and providing the chapter's goals, plans, and purpose
- Ask a visiting Bishop to bless the meeting when he is in town.
- Invite other priests in the area and strongly encourage them to attend the first meeting. The Local Clergy Advisor can help with inviting the other priests in the area.