

AGE RANGE

5-12 years

DURATION

4-6 hours

Soccer Clinic

A Program Guide for Orthodox Youth Ministry

Faith. Fellowship. Sport.

*A clinic where soccer becomes a vehicle toward Christ –
uniting Orthodox families across parishes and jurisdictions through discipline,
hard work, spiritual application, skill-building, scrimmages, prayer, and shared meals.*

DURATION

6-7 hours (adaptable based on activities,
saints referenced, and prayers completed)

SETTING

A local park with soccer fields.
May be adapted for parishes with adequate green space.



OUTDOOR
ORTHODOXY



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide packages everything a parish or youth ministry team needs to plan and run an Outdoor Orthodoxy Soccer Clinic from scratch — a one-day event that uses soccer as a vehicle for teaching virtue, unity, and gratitude to children ages 5–12, while their families build relationships across parish lines.

It combines two things that are usually planned separately: the operational run-of-show (staffing, supplies, timing, drills) and the spiritual curriculum (the day's theme and the scripted "Water Break with the Lord" reflection). Run them together, and the clinic becomes formation, not just recreation.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE:

- Vision & Purpose — why the clinic exists and what it's meant to form in kids and families
- Coaches' Theme Notes — the spiritual thread every coach should carry onto the field
- Roles & Staffing Plan — who you need and what they do
- Supply & Equipment Checklist — everything to gather beforehand
- Sample Day-of Schedule — an hour-by-hour run of show you can adapt to your start time
- Age-Group Session Plans — ready-to-run drill and scrimmage structures for littles (5–8) and older kids (9–12)
- Water Break with the Lord — the full scripted spiritual reflection, word for word
- Closing & Gratitude Minute — how to end the day

Adapt names, times, and headcounts to your own parish; the structure and theme are built to travel.





1. VISION & PURPOSE

The Outdoor Orthodoxy Soccer Clinic brings together Orthodox families from all jurisdictions across a region (or city) for a day centered on faith, fellowship, and sport. Designed for children ages 5–12, the clinic uses soccer as a vehicle for cultivating virtues such as humility, teamwork, discipline, and perseverance.

Led by experienced coaches and volunteers, participants engage in skill-building drills, scrimmages, and interactive activities as they explore how athletic competition can become a path toward Christ. Spiritual lessons are intentionally woven into the clinic, helping families recognize that God is present not only within the walls of the Church, but also on the field, in community, and in everyday life.

The event seeks to strengthen connections between Orthodox families, foster new friendships, and demonstrate how shared experiences can unite the Church across jurisdictions. Alongside the soccer programming, a covered adult/family area hosts activities and discussion for parents and younger children, and the day includes a communal lunch, prayer, and reflections from a guest coach or speaker and attending clergy.

KEY STORY THEMES

- Faith beyond the Church walls
- Sport as a means of spiritual growth, humility, and salvation
- Orthodox unity through shared experience & sport
- Building friendships and strengthening family connections
- Helping children grow both athletically and spiritually

2. COACHES' THEME NOTES

Share this section with every coach and volunteer before the clinic. It's the spiritual thread they should carry into every drill, correction, and sideline conversation — not a separate talk, but a lens for how they coach.

UNITY IN CHRIST — BEYOND OUR TEAMS, JURISDICTIONS, AND PARISHES

- Competition is good and can be healthy — encourage kids to feel part of “one team,” which is bigger than attending the same Church or being a part of the same jurisdiction; we are all “one” in Christ. Model and teach sportsmanship: playing at your best, honest play, never taking shortcuts.

GRATITUDE IN ALL THINGS

- Gratitude isn't just something we say — it can be reflected in the way a child plays: patient with a teammate, gracious after a hard loss, encouraging from the sideline.

OUR BODIES AND SOULS ARE INTERCONNECTED

- How we use our bodies feeds our soul — effort, discipline, and care on the field are not separate from a child's spiritual life; they are actually intertwined.
- How we compete and the way we play is a spiritual practice, not a break from one.

Coaches: look for small, natural moments to name these themes out loud — a good pass, a kid helping someone up, a gracious handshake after a hard scrimmage. Affirming the children in putting into practice the spiritual aspects instills these lessons.



3. ROLES & STAFFING PLAN

Below is a generalized staffing structure drawn from a successful clinic run. Scale headcounts to your expected number of participants; the roles themselves hold at any size.

ARRIVAL TIME	ROLE	PURPOSE
2 hours prior to registration	Coach / MC (ages 5–8)	Leads littles' warm-up, drills, and scrimmage; helps emcee transitions
2 hours prior to registration	Spiritual Lead (x2)	Leads the Water Break with the Lord and spiritual application segments
2 hours prior to registration	Adult Program / Closing MC	Runs the adult/family tent programming and emcees closing remarks
2 hours prior to registration	Floater(s)	Fill gaps in setup, registration, and mid-day logistics as needed
2 hours prior to registration	Photography / Videography	Captures the day for the parish and ministry's media library
1.5 hours prior to registration	Coach (ages 9–12)	Leads older kids' skills, scrimmage, and small-sided games
1.5 hours prior to registration	Equipment Lead	Receives soccer equipment, checks and pumps balls, sets up fields
1.5 hours prior to registration	Prayer Corner / Check-in Setup	Sets up the prayer icon, check-in table, and speaker/mic system
1.5 hours prior to registration	Food Tent Setup Crew	Sets up food line tables, tablecloths, and cooling for perishables
30 minutes prior to registration	Coach (littles, additional)	Second coach for the youngest age bracket
30 minutes prior to registration	Coach (clinic guest / featured)	Guest coach who leads a clinic segment and the mid-day spiritual reflection
30 minutes prior to registration	Volunteer – Parking/Greeting	Greets families in the parking area and directs them to registration
30 minutes prior to registration	Food Tent Volunteer	Staffs the food line during lunch
30 minutes prior to registration	Registration / Floater	Runs check-in, hands out name tags, and directs families to the right field
30 minutes prior to registration	Nurse (optional)	First Aid/safety



PRE-EVENT MEETING

Hold a short joint meeting between hosting organizations before gates open, followed by a separate coaches' meeting to align on group sizes, field assignments, and whether any age groups need to be re-split based on turnout.

4. SUPPLY & EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

4.1 GENERAL SUPPLIES

ITEM	NOTES
Snacks (energy bars, chips, applesauce pouches)	For kids and volunteers throughout the day
Coffee & Tea	Beverages for volunteers and parents
Water	Plan roughly 1.5–2 cases per 50 participants
Coolers (2–3)	For drinks, ice, and perishable food
Ice (bags)	Keep food and drinks cold through midday
First Aid Kit (1)	Keep on-site and know who is holding it
Cups, plates, napkins, plastic-ware	For the communal lunch
Trash bags	For each tent/station
Participant shirts (optional)	One per registered child
Volunteer / staff shirts (optional)	For easy identification
Awards	For closing recognition – keep simple and inclusive
Parish/area maps or directories	Helpful for families new to the area
Name tags / pins	Color- or number-coded by age group
Foam poster board	For signage or the day's schedule
Tripod + camera	For photo/video capture
Tablecloths (2+)	For the food tent
Prayer corner icon	For the adult/family tent's prayer space
Speaker / microphone rental	For welcome remarks, announcements, and prayer
6 ft check-in table	For registration



4.2 SOCCER EQUIPMENT

ITEM	SUGGESTED QUANTITY	NOTES
Size 4 balls	50-60	Encourage participants to bring their own as a backup
Cones	150-200	Field markings, drills, and station boundaries
Pugg / pop-up goals	6-8	About 4 per simultaneous scrimmage group
Bibs / pinnies (2 colors)	50-60	Enough for peak scrimmage load
Ball pumps + needles	2-4	Distribute among coaches
Whistles	3-4	One per field coach, minimum
Small soccer balls (littles)	1 per child	Sized down for the youngest bracket
Cones (littles set)	8	Separate small set for the littles' station
Pugg goal (littles)	1	Dedicated goal for the youngest bracket

5. SAMPLE DAY-OF SCHEDULE

Times below are shown relative to a 9:30 AM opening prayer; shift the whole schedule to fit your own start time. Build in buffer – transitions with young kids always run long.

TIME	SEGMENT	WHAT HAPPENS
7:00 AM	Staff Arrival	Coaches, spiritual leads, and floaters arrive; equipment arrives and is checked
7:30 AM	Setup	Prayer corner, check-in table, food tent, and field lines go up
7:45 AM	Host Meeting	Partnering ministries/organizations align for the day
8:00 AM	Staff Arrival (wave 2)	Remaining coaches, food tent, and registration volunteers arrive
8:30 AM	Coach's Meeting	Finalize group sizes and field assignments; decide on any re-splits
9:00 AM	Greeting Begins	Volunteer greets families in the parking area



TIME	SEGMENT	WHAT HAPPENS
9:00 AM	Registration Opens	Name tags issued (color/number = age group); families directed to the right field
9:15 AM	Blessing of the Clinic	Clergy to bless fields, equipment, players & parents with holy water while registration takes place
9:30 AM	Welcome & Opening Prayer	Clergy and MC welcome everyone and open in prayer
9:40 AM	Logistics Talk	Quick rundown of the day, fields, and safety notes
9:45 AM	Warm-Up	Groups split by age for a shared warm-up
10:05 AM	Skills – Littles & Older Kids (parallel)	Age-appropriate technical work on separate fields
10:45 AM	Scrimmage – Littles & Older Kids (parallel)	Small-sided games by age group
11:00 AM	Water Break with the Lord	Full scripted reflection – see Section 7
11:15 AM	Midday Spiritual Reflection	Guest coach or speaker gives a short faith talk
11:30 AM	Warm-Up (collective)	Whole group warm-up together
11:30 AM	Midday Spiritual Reflection	Guest coach or speaker gives a short faith talk
11:40 PM	Afternoon Scrimmages	Mixed or age-group scrimmages; introduce any partner ministries here
12:15 PM	Awards / Final Pep Talk / Gratitude Minute	See Section 8
12:25 PM	Prayer & Closing Remarks	Clergy and MC close in prayer
12:30 PM	Official Close & Cleanup	Break down tents, fields, and tables



6. AGE-GROUP SESSION PLANS

Two ready-to-run sessions – one for younger kids, one for older kids – each built around the same arc: warm up together, build a skill, apply it in a game, then scale up the competition.

Coach's discretion is advised, as the session may need to be adjusted based on the number of attendees. Coaches are encouraged to adapt the session or structure it in whatever way makes the most sense for their clinic. This is simply a sample of what the session could look like, but there are many different options and approaches that can work well.

6.1 AGES 5–8 (“LITTLES”) – SAMPLE SESSION

Total length: approximately 70 minutes.

SEGMENT	LENGTH	FOCUS
Circle Warm-Up	15 min	Partner-based warm-up, no balls or cones needed at first; bring balls in for the last portion. Rotate partners before moving to the next segment.
Technical Work: Dribbling / Passing	15 min	Cones set ~10 yards apart in small groups. Progress through inside-foot turns, outside-foot turns, and pull-behinds. Emphasize running through the ball, not watching it.
Game Application: “Sharks and Minnows”	10 min	Two smaller rectangle grids. Kids dribble to the far end cleanly, avoiding 1–2 “sharks” in the middle. Touched or pushed outside the grid = become a shark. Last one standing wins.
Small-Sided Games (2v2)	15 min	Use pugg goals and cones on mini-fields (aim for 8+ fields). Run in short rounds – e.g., 2 minutes on, 2 minutes off, 1 minute rest, for 3 rounds. Track wins/ties/losses if it helps kids stay engaged.
Final Playing Segment (5v5)	10–15 min	Two fields; two teams play while one team rests and rotates in.

6.2 AGES 9–12 – SAMPLE SESSION

Mirror the same arc at a faster pace and higher technical demand:

Warm-up together as a full group before splitting by field.

- Technical skills block: passing, first touch, and movement off the ball.
- Small-sided games building from 2v2 up to 5v5, with brief coach feedback between rounds.
- Close the session with a scrimmage that mixes kids across parishes where possible – this is where the “unity beyond our own team” theme becomes visible, not just spoken.

Coaching note: for both age groups, look for a natural moment – a hard foul avoided, a teammate helped up, a gracious loss – to connect back to the Section 2 themes in one sentence. Don't stop play to deliver a lesson; name it in passing as it naturally plays out. It's important to note that these are also “coaching moments.”



6.3 PARENT PROGRAM — SAMPLE SESSION

The clinic is also an opportunity to engage and serve the parents in attendance, with the goal of fostering connection and community across all ages. The adult portion can include discussion, reflection and activities that allow parents to connect with one another and explore topics related to faith, family and parenting. Below are some sample ideas that can be adapted based on the group and time available:

ICEBREAKERS

- Where is your home parish?
- How did you become Orthodox?
- Do your kids play soccer?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is your biggest hope for your kids today?
- What do you hope to walk away with?
- How do you balance church life with Sunday games?
- What daily habits help your kids stay connected to their faith?
- What are some of your biggest challenges as a parent?
- How can the Church better support families?

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Parish Map: Pin your home parish to see where everyone is coming from.
 - Small Groups: Discuss a few questions together and share takeaways.
-

7. WATER BREAK WITH THE LORD (15 MINUTES)

This is the spiritual centerpiece of the clinic — run it exactly as scripted, with two leads. Hold the water until Step 3; the waiting is the point.

1. NOTICE (30–45 SECONDS) — LEAD A

Lead A: *“Okay, before anyone drinks — nobody move for the water yet. I want you to just notice your body for a second. How does your mouth feel right now? Is it dry? Sticky? Notice if your throat feels tight. Notice if you’re actually really thirsty right now, more than you were an hour ago.”*

Pause. Let it sit.

Lead A: *“That feeling — that’s not a bad thing. That’s not something wrong with you. Your body is just telling you the truth: you need something.”*

2. NAME IT (30 SECONDS) — LEAD A

Lead A: *“That’s true about more than water. All of us have thirsts — things we need, things we’re hungry for — that aren’t just about our bodies. Just as our bodies need water when we are thirsty, our hearts and souls need a friend*



when we are lonely, want to feel safe when we're scared, want joy when we're sad, want confidence when we're nervous. But always remember, being thirsty is not something bad — it simply is just telling us we need water. In the same way, being lonely or sad isn't bad — it's just telling us we need a friend, or comfort. And it is okay to ask for it from the Lord and all of the people around you that love you."

3. DRINK — LEAD A

Lead A: "So now — go ahead and drink."

Let them actually drink. Give it real time.

4. JUST BE STILL (20–25 SECONDS) — LEAD B

Lead B: "Now just sit for a second. You don't have to do anything, don't have to say anything. Just let your body and your breathing settle. Let yourself be still."

Hold silence. Don't fill it, don't prompt them toward a thought — just let the rest happen. This is recovery, not instruction.

5. CLOSE THE LOOP (15–20 SECONDS) — LEAD B

Lead B: "Water is a gift every time, even though we get it all the time and forget that. Christ told a woman at a well one time that He was 'living water' — that He's the one thing that actually satisfies the thirsts underneath all our other thirsts. You don't have to figure that out today. Just remember: being thirsty is okay. Feeling lonely, or sad, is okay. And especially — asking for help is okay."

6. STILLNESS (5 MINUTES) — LEAD B

Lead B: "Now I'd like to invite you to just rest and rejuvenate your body, and sit quietly to rest and rejuvenate your soul. Take the next five minutes and just sit, drink some water, and be still. As your body hydrates and refreshes, let your soul take in the Lord and refresh your spirit."

7. GRATITUDE MINUTE (3 MINUTES) — MC / COACH LEAD

MC: "All day we've been noticing things — like when we were thirsty, and when we got to drink. Now think back over today's session: what's one thing that felt like a gift?"

Leader shares one brief example first, then calls on a few kids by name.

MC: "None of it — the good pass, a friend helping you up, your body moving the way you needed it to — is something we made ourselves. It's all a gift."

8. CLOSING & GRATITUDE MINUTE

End the day the way you began it — together, and in prayer.

Awards / Final Pep Talk: keep recognition simple and inclusive; use it to reinforce the day's themes rather than just naming winners.

- Gratitude Minute (reprise): a shorter version of the Section 7 gratitude exercise works well as a closer — ask a few kids what felt like a gift about the whole day, not just the last drill.
- Prayer & Closing Remarks: clergy and MC close the day in prayer, thanking hosts, volunteers, and families.
- Official Close & Cleanup: assign cleanup roles in advance so tents, fields, and tables come down quickly



8. CLOSING & GRATITUDE MINUTE

End the day the way you began it — together, and in prayer.

- Awards / Final Pep Talk: keep recognition simple and inclusive; use it to reinforce the day's themes rather than just naming winners.
- Gratitude Minute (reprise): a shorter version of the Section 7 gratitude exercise works well as a closer — ask a few kids what felt like a gift about the whole day, not just the last drill.
- Prayer & Closing Remarks: clergy and MC close the day in prayer, thanking hosts, volunteers, and families.
- Official Close & Cleanup: assign cleanup roles in advance so tents, fields, and tables come down quickly.

APPENDIX: ADAPTING THIS GUIDE

- Scale headcounts and equipment quantities to your own registration numbers — the ratios in Section 4 hold at most sizes.
- If you're a single parish rather than a multi-parish gathering, keep the "unity beyond our own team" language — mix scrimmage teams across families or neighborhoods instead of parishes.
- The Water Break script works as written for a single large group; for a bigger clinic, run it simultaneously on each field with a trained lead per field.
- Consider assigning a photographer/videographer to build a simple highlight reel and photo library afterward — useful for future promotion and for showing families what the day meant.
- Recommend putting together a feedback form to gain insight and help enhance the experience if the soccer clinic is done again.
- Keep a simple sign-up sheet of interested coaches, clergy, and parishes so next year's version starts with a head start, not a blank page.

