

**COUPLES FOR CHRIST
FOUNDATION FOR FAMILY AND LIFE
FRATERNAL HOUSEHOLDS IN CFC-FFL**

The pastoral structure of CFC-FFL is such that every member belongs to a household for personal support, and every member is under the pastoral care of a leader.

There are two types of households in CFC-FFL. One is the *led* household, the other is the *fraternal* household. A led household is a cell group where there is a Household Servant. A fraternal household is a cell group where there is no one Household Servant, but where all the members take pastoral responsibility for everyone else in the group.

The ordinary and most common type of household is the led household. Within a chapter, which is the pastoral subdivision of the one community that is CFC-FFL, basically everyone belongs to a led household. Members belong to a household led by a Household Servant, household leaders belong to a *unit* household led by a Unit Servant, unit leaders belong to a *chapter* household led by a Chapter Servant, and chapter leaders belong to a household led by a Cluster Servant. This is the most common pattern, though subject to some variations.

Notice that the structure is pyramidal. But if you continue moving up the pyramid, you will reach the top, where there is no longer any household available for the top leader. Also, there is no longer any other CFC-FFL leader who can exercise headship over this top leader.

However, in CFC-FFL we believe that every member, no matter how mature and high in leadership, still needs regular pastoral support that is found in a household. We also believe that every elder needs to have someone over him who can help and support him in his continuing personal growth in the Lord and in CFC-FFL.

How is this possible then for the person at the top of the pyramidal pastoral structure? The solution is to have a fraternal household. In effect, we are cutting off the very tip of the pyramid and flattening it a bit. Instead of one person at the very top (or tip), there will be a group of seniors who in effect will act as heads over each other. They will have a *fraternal* pastoral relationship.

Establishing fraternal households

A fraternal household is normally only established in a mature CFC-FFL area where there are already a number of seniors (seniors are Chapter Servants and up). By its very nature, fraternal relationships work well if the members of the fraternal household are mature in their spirituality and in their appreciation of the life and mission of CFC-FFL. Otherwise, CFC-FFL members are better off in a led household, where there is one clear leader who moves the members forward in spirituality and community life.

Spiritual maturity though is not an easily definable quality. And we do not need to define it for our purposes. For us in CFC-FFL, the preferred type of household is the led household, even for those who are already seniors. There is no set level of spiritual growth where we then say that

one “graduates” from a led household to a fraternal household. In fact, a very mature senior may be placed in a led household for certain pastoral reasons. Thus it is possible for a senior who is in a led household to be more mature than another senior who is in a fraternal household.

The basic reasons then for establishing fraternal households are the following:

1. To provide a support group for top leaders, in line with our pastoral principle that everyone, no matter how high in leadership, ought to be in a household for personal support and to be under headship to another CFC-FFL leader.
2. To allow top seniors in a mature CFC-FFL area to handle other seniors under them, not necessarily those directly under them in the next level of leadership.
3. To provide support to the top leader in a new or growing area, even if that top leader would not otherwise qualify to be in a fraternal household in a mature CFC-FFL area.

Let us expound further on the last two items.

We have said that the preferred type of household is the led household, even for those who are already seniors, and notwithstanding their spiritual maturity. If so, then in every CFC-FFL area, there would have been *only one* fraternal household, the one composed of the very top seniors. One disadvantage of this is that these very top seniors (for example, District Servants) will always be handling the same group of seniors in the next level in the pastoral pyramid (that is, Cluster Servants), with this second group of seniors handling still again the next level of seniors (Chapter Servants). In this case, Chapter Servants will never have the opportunity of being led by more mature and more experienced seniors (such as District Servants). Thus, if the Cluster Servants, instead of being in a led household under the District Servant, are placed in a fraternal household together, it will become possible for the District Servant to take on a cluster, and thus to head a led household composed of Chapter Servants.

The third basic reason given above for establishing a fraternal household has to do with the establishment of CFC-FFL in new areas, and their initial development. When we bring CFC-FFL to a new area (a distant one), we start with a CLS and after the CLS we form households. The CLS Team withdraws and leaves the new group to themselves as far as their day-to-day life as CFC-FFL goes. Households are formed according to our pastoral pyramid. CFC-FFL in the area will continue to grow through the years as it conducts CLSs and integrates new members into the body. Now the problem is that the top leader, whether he is just a Household Servant because the new CFC-FFL established is just a small group, or whether he is a Unit Servant or even later a Chapter Servant as the community grows, will have no household to belong to and will have no one as pastoral head. Thus in this situation we can also establish a fraternal household, even if the fraternal household members are still immature in their personal spirituality and in their appreciation of the life and culture of CFC-FFL.

Implicit in all the above is that a particular CFC-FFL area will initially have *only one* fraternal household as it is first established and begins to grow in size. Then as the CFC-FFL area grows even more, when there is already *more than one cluster*, there can be more than one fraternal household.

Practical applications

Thus, to summarize, fraternal households can be formed in a CFC-FFL area to provide pastoral support to the top leader, notwithstanding the lack of spiritual maturity normally required for fraternal relationships.

Second, fraternal households may be established in a mature area as a way of allowing the very top seniors to directly lead and form other seniors in the area.

Fraternal relationships

Membership in a fraternal household is for both husband and wife. Just as in any CFC-FFL household, the men and women relate to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. In addition, in a fraternal household, the *men exercise headship* over each other. The women exercise *leadership* over each other, headship over them still being exercised by their respective husbands.

Members of fraternal households are expected to take responsibility for one another and for the life and vibrancy of the household. More specifically, they are expected to:

1. Be totally open about their life and willingly bring up for discussion any areas needing improvement (remember that there is no one pastoral head who will be regularly monitoring one's life in the Lord).
2. Actively support and encourage one another in the Christian life and in faithfulness to the life and mission of CFC-FFL.
3. Confidently give advice and direction whenever deemed helpful, even when such is not solicited.
4. Actively work to strengthen personal relationships within the group.
5. Correct any member when necessary.
6. Faithfully attend all meetings of the group, and call on one another to faithfulness.
7. Be available for one-to-one meetings with any group member upon request.

On a practical level, the host (the man in the case of a couple) for a particular fraternal household meeting is the one tasked with deciding what to take up for that meeting. In addition, he leads the worship and facilitates the time of sharing and/or discussion. Of course, the whole fraternal group could agree and decide on what to take up for the meetings. But in the absence of any such agreement, the host decides.

Pastoral oversight

For every fraternal household, there is a designated *functional head*, who is a member of the household. The functional head is not the pastoral head of the fraternal household, and he, just like the other men, is under headship to the others. His responsibilities include the following:

1. To see to it that the household meetings happen and that there is good order in the meetings.

2. To continually evaluate the vibrancy of meetings and fraternal relationships, and if lacking, to bring this up to the group for discussion and action.
3. To see to it that the group members are holding one another accountable for the life of the group and for their individual faithfulness to the life and mission of CFC-FFL.
4. To bring up to the attention of the functional overseer any matter that needs a higher senior to take care of.

There is a *functional overseer* designated for every fraternal household. This would be a top senior, who is not part of the household. His responsibilities include the following:

1. To be available to the group and to any of its members for any pastoral input or discussion, upon request by any member.
2. To handle major correction.
3. To occasionally inquire as to the vibrancy of relationships within the fraternal household, and to conduct pastoral visits whenever necessary.
4. To direct the group to take up a particular topic for discussion or to do a particular activity, as he deems helpful or necessary.

(SG. Dec 22, 2010)