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**RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS:
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF INVITATION**

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LEARNING**
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We provide programs, resources, thought leadership, and ministry support that promote professional formation, development, and growth.

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Best practices for recruiting volunteers for parish ministry

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Volunteers provide the energy and momentum necessary for any thriving church or faith community. These selfless individuals bring life to various ministries, support the congregation, and foster a sense of belonging. However, recruiting and retaining volunteers can be challenging in today's busy world. To build a vibrant team of committed volunteers, churches must adopt effective and innovative strategies. In this article, we will explore the best practices for recruiting volunteers and nurturing a culture of service within your parish.

1. Identify and Articulate Needs

Before seeking volunteers, parish and ministry leaders must carefully assess its needs. Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities for each ministry area, outlining the time commitment, skills required, and the impact the volunteers will make. This information will help potential volunteers better understand how they can contribute and align their interests with the parish's needs.

2. Share the Vision and Mission

A compelling vision and mission statement can be a powerful motivator for potential volunteers. When recruiting, emphasize the parish's larger purpose and how volunteering contributes to it. People are more likely to engage when they understand the bigger picture and feel their efforts are making a positive difference.

3. Foster a Welcoming Environment

A welcoming and inclusive atmosphere is essential in attracting volunteers. Greet newcomers with warmth and enthusiasm, making them feel appreciated and valued from the moment they step through the church doors. Create opportunities for new and existing volunteers to interact, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

4. Utilize Multiple Communication Channels

Employ various communication channels to reach a broader audience. Traditional methods like announcements during services and printed materials should be complemented by digital platforms, such as a parish website, social media, and

email newsletters. These channels allow for more frequent and timely updates, ensuring potential volunteers are well-informed about ongoing opportunities.

5. *Personalized Recruitment*

Personalization is key to engaging potential volunteers. Take the time to understand each individual's interests, skills, and availability. Tailor recruitment efforts to match their preferences, showing that their unique contributions are valued. Building a personal connection can significantly increase the likelihood of volunteer commitment.

6. *Provide Training and Support*

Effective training equips volunteers with the skills and knowledge needed for their roles. Offer regular training sessions, workshops, and mentorship programs to support their growth and development. Volunteers who feel adequately prepared are more likely to stay committed and confident in their responsibilities.

7. *Celebrate Achievements*

Recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of your volunteers. Publicly acknowledge their efforts during church services, share success stories on social media, or host appreciation events. Celebrations not only foster a positive and encouraging atmosphere but also demonstrate the parish's genuine gratitude for their dedication.

8. *Encourage Teamwork*

Foster a collaborative environment by encouraging teamwork among volunteers. Assigning volunteers to teams helps create a support system where they can rely on and learn from each other. Teamwork enhances camaraderie and motivates volunteers to persevere during challenging times.

9. *Provide Flexible Opportunities*

Understand that volunteers have various commitments outside the parish. Offer flexible volunteering opportunities that accommodate their schedules and preferences. This flexibility allows individuals to engage at their comfort level, leading to increased long-term commitment.

10. *Lead by Example*

Lead by example as church leaders and staff members. Actively participate in volunteer activities and demonstrate the joy of serving others. When parishioners witness the leadership's dedication to service, they are inspired to follow suit.

Recruiting volunteers for parish ministry involves more than just filling positions; it's about inspiring a shared sense of purpose and fostering a community of service. By clearly

articulating needs, communicating effectively, providing support and training, and celebrating achievements, your parish can attract and retain passionate volunteers who will play an integral role in building a flourishing and compassionate congregation. Embracing these best practices will empower the spirit of service within the parish and bring the vision and mission to life.

Which best practice does your ministry do best? How can you build upon what you're currently doing in order to do even better?

Which best practice does your ministry need to prioritize and improve? Why? Who will need to be involved in making necessary changes?

Imagine you are able to improve the practice you identified as a priority. How will your ministry be impacted? What will the consequences be in 6 months? 1 year? 5 years?

Don't forget, the Center for Learning is here to help. We are pleased to offer a Professional Learning Community that will address identifying, recruiting, and managing volunteers. You can learn more about this program and register at www.learnwithocp.org/calendar. We also coach pastoral ministers from around the country, providing accompaniment and support as they seek to recruit volunteers for their ministries. Schedule a FREE coaching conversation today to see how we can help you and your community. Book time today at www.learnwithocp.org/book-a-meeting.

Assessing parish volunteer practices

The checklist below is meant to help identify areas for improvement. After answering “yes” or “no” for each question, identify realistic action steps your ministry could take to improve your volunteer practices.

For best effect, provide this checklist to several members of your staff and/or ministry and have them complete their responses individually. Then, hold a conversation to align responses and action steps.

question for reflection	yes	no	action step(s)
1. Does your parish have a mission statement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does each ministry have a purpose statement (aligned to the parish mission)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Are these statements regularly referred to as guides and foundations for planning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Are parish volunteers familiar with the mission and purpose statements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Do volunteers understand how their work contributes to the mission of the parish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Does each ministry regularly establish goals for its program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Is there an easy-to-find list of all volunteer opportunities in the parish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Generally, do volunteers have a good idea of what is expected of them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Are there written position descriptions for volunteer ministry positions in the parish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Is there a process to collect the gifts, talents, and interests of parishioners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Are staff members aware of the gifts, talents, and interests of parishioners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12. Are staff members aware of opportunities for parishioners across ministries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. Are potential volunteers invited personally, individually, and face-to-face?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. Are potential volunteers given the position description when they are invited?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

15. Are potential volunteers given an accurate picture of time and effort commitment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16. Are volunteer opportunities available to parishioners of all ages, genders, incomes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17. Is the list of active volunteers representative of the parish as a whole?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18. Are there enough active volunteers so that no one person serves too often/much?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19. Before serving, do new volunteers participate in a training and orientation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20. Are ongoing formation opportunities available to veteran volunteers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21. Are all volunteer positions currently filled by people adequately trained to do them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
22. Are volunteers regularly recognized and thanked by the parish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
23. Are records kept of the volunteer services of each parishioner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
24. Is there a process to evaluate each ministry's volunteer program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
25. Do volunteers have regular opportunity to express experiences and suggestions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

What other questions, observations, or concerns need to be addressed?

How will the action steps identified above be implemented? When? By whom?

When will this checklist be revisited for re-evaluation?

Volunteer role description worksheet

A well-written, clear role description is an essential aid in each segment of the volunteer lifecycle: planning, recruiting, training, managing, and evaluating. Use and adapt the following categories as you collect information to write role descriptions for your ministry.

Role title
Role purpose
Key responsibilities
Ministry team and supervision
Location(s) where service takes place
Length of service
Time commitment and schedule
Qualifications
Support and training provided

Mission, vision, and values worksheet

First step: Mission statement

Your mission statement describes your overall purpose and objective as an organization, group, or ministry. Your parish/church/school has a mission statement, and you should look to this as a starting point. Make sure the mission statement for your ministry aligns with the mission statement for your parish/church/school.

KEY QUESTIONS to consider:

1. What is the mission statement of our parish/church/school?
2. What is our overarching intent as a ministry?
3. What makes our ministry different from the others? (other ministries at our parish, other ministries like ours at other parishes, etc.)
4. What is the essence of what we're trying to achieve?

Mission statement possibilities:

Draft 1:

Draft 2:

Draft 3:

Read through your drafts, keeping in mind your parish/church/school mission statement. Do they align? If not, make any necessary adjustments to your draft(s).

FINAL MISSION STATEMENT:

Second step: Vision statement

Your vision statement describes how your community (and the world) will look if you achieve your mission. Be aspirational and describe the idea end state.

KEY QUESTIONS to consider:

1. What role do we want this ministry to play in our community?

2. What is the idealized future state we want to create?

3. How will people live (and pray) differently if our ministry is successful?

Vision statement possibilities:

Draft 1:

Draft 2:

Draft 3:

Read through your drafts, keeping in mind the mission statement you wrote for your ministry. Do they align? If not, make any necessary adjustments to your draft(s).

FINAL VISION STATEMENT:

Third step: Core values

Your ministry's core values are the principles that guide decisions and actions at every level of participation (from volunteers to staff to leadership).

KEY QUESTIONS to consider:

1. In this ministry, what values would I stand by, no matter what?

2. What values do I demonstrate in my own leadership and service?

3. What principles are most important as those who participate in our ministry serve on a daily/weekly basis?

4. What values support our ministry's mission and vision?

Core value possibilities:

Make them specific enough to guide daily/weekly decisions:

FINAL CORE VALUES

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