



'CROSSING THE THRESHOLD' – EVANGELISATION TEAM RECRUITMENT CONSIDERATIONS

This sheet was prepared originally for the Middlesbrough Diocese in support of its Crossing the Threshold activities.

THE TASK:

To recruit a minimum of 8 – 9 (ideally 12) people who will serve as members of the parish evangelisation team for an initial period of one year.

THE BRIEF:

The team exists to envision, plan and resource a three-year parish evangelisation plan. It is not envisaged that the team will do all the work and implementation, but that they will create a five-point evangelisation plan, inviting and encouraging fellow parishioners to help implement it.

POSSIBLE RECRUITMENT STEPS

1) PRAY FOR GUIDANCE about who to approach

2) MAKE A GENERAL PARISH APPEAL via word of mouth, the pulpit, the newsletter and on the parish website

Possible appeal text:

New Parish Initiative: 'Crossing the Threshold' Team Creation To Reach Out To Non Churchgoing (lapsed) Catholics

Research suggests that approximately 80% of baptised Catholics never or rarely attend Mass. We all know someone who is distant from the life of faith, but many people do re-connect if invited. Bishop Draine has invited our parish to take the lead in this area of outreach by forming a new team to pioneer ministry to lapsed Catholics, as well as generally explore ways of developing parish mission. If you're interested in finding out more and / or potentially supporting this initiative – there is a role for everyone – please ask Father. This initiative will be supported by the Diocesan Evangelisation Commission and the Bishops' Conference Home Mission Desk and we are planning to have our first meeting on *INSERT LAUNCH DAY DATE, TIME, VENUE*.

NOTE: Not everyone who comes forward will be called to join the parish team, but **everyone who comes forward will have some role to play** in the work of parish evangelisation. Some people, for example, will be more suited to serving as evangelisation co-workers who could help at outreach events and when practical tasks need to be completed.

You may therefore find that the general appeal helps in the recruitment process to identify:

- 1) Full parish evangelisation team members
- 2) A separate co-workers' group who can be called upon to help out with practical tasks when needed.

3) SEEK / APPROACH PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC SKILLS

it can be helpful to have a team made up of people who, as a group, possess the following skills and talents:

- 1) Leader - Parish Priest (PP) and / or lay designated team leader – often it can be helpful to have both because the PP may not be able to make every meeting because of sick calls or other commitments.
- 2) Parish stalwart – people who know the parish and its members well, who can be relied upon to support you and the team, and complete assigned tasks
- 3) Previously lapsed Catholic
- 4) Younger parishioner(s) (under 35)
- 5) Administrative and computer skills
- 6) Creative and imaginative
- 7) New convert
- 8) Deacon, religious and / or consecrated
- 9) Professional – someone more likely to have experience of critical thinking, strategy creation and project appraisal
- 10) Family man / woman (both)

NOTE:

Consider if the proposed make-up of your team reflects a diversity of ages, backgrounds and ethnicity, as reflective of the general make-up of the parish and its environs.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Is the proposed team member:

- Practising and enthusiastic about being a Catholic
- Committed to prayer
- Formed in the basics of the Catholic Faith
- Able to work in a team
- Able to learn and listen and trust
- Able to empathise
- Committed, and able to give the time, to a year of service as a member of the team
- Willing to share their faith with others
- Willing to do, as well as plan and think
- Aware of what is being asked of them – show them the project brochure and calendar
- Has a sense of humour

ENDS

SUPPLEMENTARY ARTICLES AND LINKS

1) A model for mission

The setting up of parish vocation teams can help implement the declaration by Europe's bishops that recognise the whole Church as an assembly of those who have been called – lay and ordained, men and women, all who are baptized.

BY CLARE WARD

Earlier this year, nearly 40 volunteers were commissioned by Archbishop Vincent Nichols at St Michael's city centre parish, Birmingham, to be volunteers in the parish's Seekers' Centre. This was the result of three years' efforts of what you might call a "home mission" which involved planning, recruitment, training and prayer filled commitment. This group of volunteers is an example of the kind of evangelisation team every parish should think about having.

St Michael's Parish lies in the heart of the shopping district; it is also close to the university. With this location, the parish has many opportunities for evangelisation. Three years ago, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (the OMI's) approached the Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation (Case) for support in initiating an outreach programme. At that time, the parish had a long-established and active Irish community as well as a sizeable and growing Polish community, but they felt they could be doing more to invite into the church the thousands of people that walked past it daily – perhaps just to pay a visit, but perhaps to introduce them to Christ and to Catholicism.

Following a review of every activity in the area, the core team decided to recruit a group of volunteers, to help evangelisation become a reality. The next step in the process was to find five or six people – ordained, consecrated and lay people.

They did this by approaching people they thought were suitable. Once that group was established, a more general appeal was made through the notices and newsletter – at St Michael's and wider afield.

The core team members were not expected to do all the evangelisation themselves; their role was to plan and facilitate it. To help parishioners think about mission and to enthuse them to get involved, homilies were preached and talks were given about evangelisation on Sundays. The core team hoped that the outreach would become a parish initiative and not just the task of a selected few. They were inspired by the words of Pope John Paul II

in his encyclical *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, where he told us that mission "cannot be left to a group of 'specialists' but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God".

Many of the first volunteers had little or no experience of outreach, but they were willing to learn. To get things started, several vision and training afternoons were put on, supported by Case, covering topics such as recent church teaching on evangelisation, and some of the main methods and processes used in evangelisation. The team was also given a clear brief to develop and was encouraged to put into practice the aims of the mission, which were to provide a warm welcome and hospitality, to listen, pray, journey spiritually with visitors, share their faith stories and to create a pleasant and peaceful environment for both visitors and volunteers.

Eventually, the core team decided that the church would be open every weekday afternoon, manned by volunteers from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m.

Prayer is the foundation of the ministry while the parish centre is also used for conversations over tea and coffee.

Lines of authority and collaboration were set out early on, specifically with regard to the volunteers and the parish priest. (During the process the OMI's left and a diocesan parish priest was appointed.) Eventually, a system of lay leadership developed and the mission now has two lay coordinators, a Religious who serves as an adviser, a lay facilitator and link people who oversee the wellbeing of their day team and report back to the coordinators and parish priest. Case has been on hand to offer consultation and training as requested and the parish priest has played an important role providing encouragement and spiritual direction. Otherwise the volunteers are self-supporting.

The formation and preparation has been helpful in developing the volunteers; and, since the initiative was launched, there have been a number of Spirit-filled encounters. One day some of the volunteers heard someone sobbing at the front of the church. As they approached the sanctuary, they saw a young African man kneeling in front of the tabernacle in a state of distress. They sat with him as he cried. Eventually, he told the volunteers that he had been a child soldier in his home country and was made to do some terrible things. He was in a state of despair – convinced that God would never forgive him for what he had done. The volunteers listened to him and reminded him of God's unconditional love for us. Through the concern they showed for him, they helped him to experience the forgiveness he so yearned for.

Another time, a young Polish girl who was desperately homesick came into the church. Some of the volunteers who speak Polish talked with her, offered the hands of friendship and reassured her that her homesickness would lessen in time.

Sometimes, lapsed Catholics have wandered into the church and have simply been invited to have a cup of tea with one of the volunteers, to have a chat and to spend some quiet time in the church.

The outreach is not just about consoling people in distress; these are not the only seekers. The volunteers have met people who are searching for meaning in their lives; they've met people who are finding their way in life. As a result of their outreach, seven people have been received into full communion with the Church since the Seekers' Centre began and many others have been helped in their journey of faith. The numbers are not huge, but in the year prior to the setting up of the team there were no receptions – so this marked a positive turning point for the parish.

The volunteers talk about the significant impact their involvement in the mission has had on them. Many are recently retired and the opportunity of being involved in the Seekers' Centre has been a big support to them; it has enabled them to contribute to parish and city evangelisation in a humble but important way.

<http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/13th-september-2008/15/a-model-for-mission>

2) Team Preparation

Programs that utilise a team-based approach should ensure that team members have been carefully selected and formed and that they embody a sense of welcome. Team members need not be master catechists, but they should have a deep love of the Church and a mature prayer life. If possible, the team should include Catholics who have had a lifetime commitment to the faith and others who have returned to the active practice of the faith. Some additional skills and practices for team formation include the following:

16 Disciples called to Witness: the new evangelization

- A love of God and his Church
- Involvement and assistance of the pastor in the program
- Dedication to daily prayer
- Team members who are joyful mentors to returning Catholics
- Willingness to share one's own spiritual journey
- Ability to articulate how Christ changed one's life
- Knowledge to share the Gospel message
- Attendance at catechetical formation programs and retreats offered by the diocese or parish
- Participation in training programs for one-on-one evangelization, including online resources that make use of social media
- Ability to empathize
- Willingness to learn active listening skills
- Commitment to participate in the entire length of the program

Source: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/upload/Disciples-Called-To-Witness-The-New-Evangelization.pdf>

“Trust in God who provides us richly with all things for our use.”
1Timothy 6:17

Practical Help 1

RECRUITING FOR EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHETICAL MINISTRY

The persons who respond to the invitation to serve as catechists, assistants, team members, office help or in numerous other positions are the greatest resource for parish catechetical and evangelization programs. While the great majority of these ministers are non-compensated, most respond from a sense of commitment and a desire to serve the Lord; some seek self-fulfillment, and some respond because they see a need or simply because a personal invitation was extended. When calling forth and inviting people to serve, DCM's and Program Coordinators will want to eliminate “volunteer” language as much as possible and to help persons understand that in serving they are responding to their baptismal call. The following suggestions may be helpful in recruiting:

- Pray for guidance and support.
- Make needs known. Use a variety of methods: parish bulletin, website, newsletter; a job board; announcements at liturgies and parish meetings. Even though some people do not read the bulletin or heed announcements, many people do. Many

people will respond if they are convinced there is a need for their help.

- Discern the gifts in the community.
- Be realistic and honest about what the task entails. To serve as a catechist is a major commitment demanding more time and preparation than being the person who sends out the newsletter or is chairperson of the phone committee. A printed job description, which defines the task, explains the training and/or experience necessary, and approximates the number of hours involved each week, will help a person to make a realistic decision.
- Extend invitations and the reason for the invitation (e.g. person's gifts). Personal invitations extended by the Pastor and DCM will yield more positive responses. Remember, it's easy to say "no" to a phone call.
- Try not to "box" people into categories. A professional teacher may not wish to teach religious education classes on his/her weekends, but may be willing to help in another way. Try to fit gifts and talents to needs, capitalizing on people's creative abilities and hobbies.
- Provide comprehensive orientation, training, in-servicing and support. Make sure people are introduced to each other, and that they feel welcomed and needed. Provide a clear description of the task they are to accomplish. Be available to answer any questions, and be appreciative of the work completed.
- Maintain an adequate record of services and be willing to provide references. Even though a person is not paid, experience is valuable and can be used on resumes and job/college applications.
- Insure that all personnel (compensated and non-compensated) are made aware of and comply with diocesan policies regarding sexual misconduct, screening and safe environments. Maintain a copy of the signed declaration, acknowledgement form on policy on Sexual Misconduct and all other safe environment materials in a confidential file for each person.

Practical Help 2

NURTURING AND RECOGNIZING THOSE WHO SERVE

The important service which people provide will continue if people are supported, encouraged and nurtured in their ministry. People should be asked to commit themselves for a specified length of time with the opportunity to renew their commitment if they desire.

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(Compiled and adapted from Bannon, William J. and Suzanne Donovan, S.C., Volunteers and Ministry. (New York : Paulist Press, 1983 and Johnson, Douglas W., The Care and Feeding of Volunteers. (Nashville : Abingdon, 1978.

Source: <http://www.diocese-sdiego.org/en-us/diocese/pastoraloffices/al/evangelizationcatechetical/handbook/practicalhelps.aspx>
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4) VOLUNTEERS IN YOUTH MINISTRY

Steps for Recruiting, Screening, Supporting, Forming, and Evaluating Volunteers

QUALITIES to look for in an adult volunteer:

1. An active Catholic in good standing with the Church with no impediment to full communion
2. Reasonably knowledgeable, and believes in and supports the teachings of the Catholic Church
3. Comfortable relating to young people, genuinely likes and respects teens, and understands their developmental levels
4. Able to make a commitment and follow through
5. Willing to serve and put others first
6. Able to listen to and be available to teens
7. Is enthusiastic
8. Has a sense of humor (it helps!)
9. Is trustworthy; must be of good character, reputation, background, and record
10. Is prayerful
11. Maintains appropriate, professional boundaries with youth
12. Continues their lifelong formation in the Catholic faith.

PROCESS for recruitment and interviewing for an adult volunteer:

The Youth Ministry Leader calls the prospective volunteer or volunteers for an appointment or a group meeting at their mutual convenience. At the appointed time, the following must be covered with the prospective volunteer:

1. Discusses the "Mission Statement" and/or the goals and objectives of the program
2. Discusses the importance of the laity helping to fulfil the "Mission Statement" and/or the goals and objectives
3. Gives the prospective volunteer a copy of the Job Description, the Archdiocesan Application for Volunteer Service (pages 61-62), and the Volunteer Code of Ethics and Personal Conduct of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (page 64).
4. Asks the prospective volunteer to reflect prayerfully for a few days, then call and ask for a response

<http://www.archgh.org/default/Youth-Ministry/YouthMinistryHandbook-3rdEdition-072208.pdf>