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Four Easy Steps to Successfully Invite Volunteers

Why do some committees, organizations or other groups seem to have more volunteers than they need, while others say, "We can't get anyone to help"? There are many possible reasons. One key factor is an effective invitation strategy.

Before you start

Establish a Prayerful Setting: you are inviting others to share in a ministry of the parish. In a very real way, you are partnering with Christ who invites.

Get Organized:

- Be informed about the programme and be enthusiastic and personally committed.
- Enlist the help of some members of the Parish Pastoral Council.
- Set up a time line for the process.
- Introduce the method (outlined below) to those you have invited to assist in the discernment, making sure that all understand. Strongly encourage those who are participating to think of parishioners who are **NOT already involved** in more than one ministry. *It is important to invite those who are not involved in order to succeed long-term.*

Invitation Method

1. Personal Reflection

Prior to the meeting, provide each person with the list of responsibilities of the Bible Study - Parish Team. (*Listed Below*) Each person reflects prayerfully about those he or she knows in the parish and about their gifts for the role of Bible Study - Parish Team. (*Later on the Bible Study – Parish Team will use this same process for inviting Small Community Leaders.*)

Each person writes down the names that come to mind. *Next to each name are written the qualities of the person, which would make him or her suitable for the particular role in question. (E.g. someone with leadership skills, a creative thinker, an organizer, someone who is welcoming and accepting of others, etc.)*

2. Communal Reflection

At the Meeting, all those involved in the process come with their list of names and qualities of potential candidates. The papers are all placed at the centre of the table for a time of prayer. All pray for themselves, that they may be open to the Spirit and pray for those whose names are on the papers, and pray, too, that they will also be open to new names that come to mind during the process.

Next, one person in the circle takes his or her paper, reads one name and the qualities listed. The recorder puts the name on the newsprint or on a whiteboard. If others in the group have brought this same name, they go in turn, naming any additional qualities and the recorder puts a check mark next to the person's name on the newsprint.

If no one else has the same name, the next person reads the first name on his or her list along with the qualities, and anyone else that has that name can add whatever else they may have noted.

The process continues like this until everyone in the circle has read all the names on his or her list and all have been listed on the newsprint.

3. Discernment

The convener invites everyone to reflect prayerfully on the list of names during some time of silence. This time may be brought to a close by praying of the Lord's Prayer or some other familiar prayer.

The Team Leader reminds the group that they are looking for those who **are not already involved** in more than one parish activity or ministry.

Then the floor is opened for any additional reflections. Together the team draws up the final list of candidates to be invited. Sometimes members of the group may say, "Oh, N_____ will never say yes," or "She just has too much to do." It is always best to let the person make his or her own decision rather than rule them out ahead of time.

4. Invitation

The invitation process is composed of five steps:

A decision is made regarding who will invite each of the candidates. This decision may be based on how well one of those in the circle knows the person, who is most likely to get a positive response, and so forth. (*Normally it is not necessary for the priest to do the inviting, but sometimes, he may be the best person.*)

Preparation for the invitation occurs:

Those who are inviting others:

- Receive a list, which includes the qualities for which each person is recognized and their contact information.
- Contact the candidates to set up a time to meet to learn about *the Bible Study Programme* and, eventually, to be invited to serve. **Never invite over the phone or by email.**

Meeting with the candidates

- At the agreed time, those who are inviting meet with the candidates and - with energy and enthusiasm describe why *the Bible Study Programme* is being done in the parish, why it is important and helpful.
- Describe the role and explain that there will be formal training as well as on-going support as the process unfolds. Assure candidates they do not have to "have all the answers".
- Clearly invite the person to serve in the new ministry, *letting them know all the qualities that have been recognized in them* and how the group has prayerfully discerned to call them.
- bring the meeting to a close:
 - If the candidate has agreed, give him or her written information regarding their role.
 - If the candidate has not immediately agreed, offer to give them some time to think it over and ask if it is OK to get in touch again in a few days for their answer.

End with a short prayer and assure those who are still discerning that you will continue to pray with them.

This is very important – do not leave it to the candidate to get in touch with you. It is much more effective to leave the person space to pray, reflect, talk it over with a family member and to set a time when you will speak with them again, and you take the initiative to make the contact.

[Note: one may meet with the candidates as a group using the same process if there are quite a few being invited.]

Follow-up:

- If the person said yes immediately – make another contact and offer to answer any other questions that may have arisen since the meeting and give them the necessary materials before they come to their first meeting.
- If the person declined immediately – simply thank them for their time and willingness to meet.
- For persons who are taking more time to make the decision – at the appointed time, contact them to ask how they are doing with their decision, answer any questions.
- If more time is requested, give it, but always arrange it so that you are the one who gets back to them.

Integration:

Invite the *Bible Study – Parish Team* to a meeting, introduce and welcome them. After their training workshop, spend some time discussing the role and responsibilities and continue to assist them.

Conclusion

Once your volunteers are on-board, it is then your responsibility to invite them for training, mentoring and supporting them so that they will experience success and gain confidence.

Responsibilities of the *Parish Bible Study Team*

The responsibilities of the *Parish Bible Study Team* will be as follows:

- Promote Bible Study in the Parish
- Identify people who will become Small Community Leaders
- Attend training and formation programmes offered in your area
- Reach out to individuals, groups and sodalities to invite them to participate in the bible study programme

- Organise a sign-up Sunday prior to Bible Sunday to give people an opportunity to join a Bible Study Group
- Arrange for sale of books at parish level
- Maintain contact with the Pastoral Development Office