



Creating Ministerial Communities

Core Community Meeting

Aim

To provide an opportunity—through presentation of information, prayer, and discussion—for participants to:

- Help the Parish Core Community members explore the vision of ministerial communities as a fruitful means of combining faith sharing and ministry, as well as the steps that can be taken to create ministerial communities
- Explore ministerial communities as an answer to the baptismal call to share Christ's mission, to pursue holiness, to build community, and to seek maturity in faith

Leader's Instructions

This material is designed to help the Core Community decide if it will bring a vision of ministerial communities to the larger parish. The Core could offer material on creating ministerial communities to people in seasonal groups so that they can see the value of bringing faith sharing into parish ministries. They could also offer either a brief meeting or a workshop to parish ministry groups.

Begin the meeting with the opening prayer and then a song about community (such as the suggestion below). Ask someone to prepare the Scripture reading before the meeting.

Use the following prayer to begin the meeting.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have brought us together in this place. You have called us here as living members of your own Body. You gather us together as a people, lifting each of us into place, and making us into a spiritual temple. You mold us as your own people. Make us living stones, so together we may become a shelter for all those around us. Make us instruments of your mercy through the presence of your Spirit among us. Amen

Song (optional)

"City of God," Dan Schutte, OCP, *Today's Missal: Music Issue*, Portland, OR: Oregon Catholic Press, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, Oregon 97213-3638 or 800-LITURGY or liturgy@ocp.org

Leader's Instructions:

Allow a few minutes for silent reflection on the passage. If you have an extended amount of time, read the passage aloud twice so that people can listen for a striking word or phrase. Then allow time for silent reflection. Finally, invite participants to share with a neighbor a word, phrase, or aspect of the reading that touched him or her.

Reading 1 Peter 2:4-10

Leader's Reflection

We think of time, meeting space, money, and supplies as important resources in ministry, but Peter reminds us that Jesus is the primary resource, the cornerstone of the Church, and we are important as living stones (1 Peter 2:4-5). Committing ourselves to ministry whether as a volunteer or as a member of a ministry group involves seeing ourselves as building blocks in God's hands. Just as a group of people arrange themselves when they get into a car or an elevator, so must we make deliberate attempts to arrange ourselves as we are built into a spiritual house. Just as the pieces of a stone building, a computer hutch, a quilt, or a jigsaw puzzle need to be gathered and assembled, so do we. The service we offer hinges on the way we come together. Each person in our ministry group, each task we set out to accomplish are meant to build and rebuild God's people.

In a document entitled, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*, the U.S. Catholic Bishops invite us to look beyond the tasks we perform. The bishops challenge us to make a clear and definite connection between holiness and service. The call to serve includes four interrelated calls: calls to holiness, community, mission, and Christian maturity. Ministry is intimately connected to the way we share our lives and our faith as we serve God. Creating ministerial communities is one meaningful way of answering these calls together. We put them into practice when we experience regular sharing (talking freely about God and about life experiences), learning (understanding of the gospel, the Church, and ministry skills), a sense of mutual support, mission, and prayer.

When we take the time to pray, to study, to share, to tend to business, and to support one another at our meetings, then a common faith emerges as well as an appreciation for the different talents we bring to ministry. Ordinary meetings begin to reflect the mercy of God at work among us. Many groups that move toward ministerial community have also noticed that communal formation helps the business portion of their meetings go more smoothly because the work becomes a "spiritual sacrifice," literally, means an opportunity to make things holy. And when we deliberately work together as a ministerial community, even though not every gathering will be inspirational for everyone, each step we take toward community helps us grow as living shelters for God's people.

Leader's Instructions:

Allow about twenty minutes for sharing on the following questions.

Small Group Sharing

1. What is my response to the image of living stones used to build a spiritual temple? How does this image relate to my experiences of working together in a ministry group? Does it help?
2. The bishops have challenged us to make explicit connections between holiness and active service. What connection do these already have in your life and in your own ministry groups? What could be done to make this connection stronger?

3. People have many models for a successful ministry gathering. Which of these is closest to your own: family discussion, corporate business meeting, occasion to socialize, gas station fill-up, or a gripe session? How do these models help or hinder your group's ability to adopt a vision of ministerial community?

Business meeting can include the following:

1. Review of previous meeting's minutes and agenda items
2. Possible agenda items to introduce ministerial community to the wider parish:
 - Develop a resource team willing to offer this introductory material to ministry groups in the parish, and then advise the Core Community on two parish groups that could benefit by an extended time of support in creating ministerial community.
 - Offer a guest speaker and evening of reflection on ministerial community.
 - Add books and tapes to the parish library on building community and on faith sharing. Purchase a booklet for each of the ministry heads in the parish such as *PrayerTime, Cycle A, B and C* by Robert Heyer, Editor (RENEW International).
<http://www.renewintl.org/Resources/Pages/pta.html> (A)
<http://www.renewintl.org/Resources/Pages/pta.html> (C).
 - The leaders could be given suggestions on how to add faith sharing to ministry meetings (when or how, for example)
 - Consult with RENEW International regarding this topic (contact Michael Fabian: SCCServices@renewintl.org; or 908-769-5400 ex 144), and consider downloading the on *Creating Ministerial Communities* at www.ParishLife.com.
 - Brainstorm additional ways to assist the parish in this area or even to affirm those who are involved in parish ministry. Discuss which of these ways would be best.
3. Assign tasks to individual members or groups based on the items you wish to pursue.

Closing Prayer

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
On the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
life forevermore.

(Psalm 133)

¹ Excerpt from *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st Century, Revised and Updated* by Thomas A. Kleissler, Margo A. LeBert, and Mary C. McGuinness. Copyright © 1997 by RENEW International. Used by permission of Paulist Press. www.paulistpress.com, p. 94.