



Creating Ministerial Communities

What the Parish Staff Needs

1. Ministerial communities challenge people's motives for helping in the parish.

They may need to renegotiate reasons that reflect both gifts and needs. (Loughlan Sofield, ST, and Carroll Juliano SHCJ, *Collaboration: Uniting our Gifts in Ministry*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000. Pages 51-72 deal with obstacles to collaboration)

- Help group members discover what they value about volunteering in the parish setting. Respect feelings and rewards important to them. Search for gifts and callings.
- The participation of some members may be hampered by emotional or spiritual needs. Assess whether these needs allow enough freedom to function in the group.
- Challenge the group to look at the needs of the people they serve. Look at deeper needs too and discuss advantages of a new direction in these terms.

2. Ministry is a function of spirituality.

(Susan Blum Gerding, Ed.D. and Frank DeSiano, CSP. *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples: Evangelizing Power in the Parish*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999, pages 15-31).

- Group members may come from different spiritualities and movements. Vary the prayer forms used.
- Respect private and communal spiritualities. Relate both to the ministry at hand.
- Foster a spirituality that is unafraid of conversion and eager to affirm complementary gifts.
- The leader's spirituality is most important. Nurturing the leader nurtures the group.
- Watch out for a false division between secular and holy (work and faith), for example, "prayer will take away time from important business," or "sharing won't help us get things accomplished," or "the Bible is for Sundays."

3. Members have several models for a meeting or gathering.

(Thomas A. Kleissler, Margo A. LeBert, and Mary C. McGuinness. *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st Century*. Revised and Updated. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997, pages 92-104)

- People expect any of these models when they gather: family discussion, business meeting, occasion to socialize, gas station fill-up, or a gripe session.
- Offer meaningful agenda items: information, formation, and substance.
- The staff's spoken and unspoken model for meetings will filter into every group in a parish. First, work on changing the structure of staff meetings for a few months. Then you can restructure committee and ministry meetings.
- When moving from one model to another, incorporate one new segment at a time so people can restructure their personal models as well.