

The Gathering Place: Volunteer Policy Manual

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PAD 4148: Volunteer Management

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1. Introduction

The Gathering Place (TGP), formerly known as Trinity United Methodist Church of Palm Beach Gardens, dates to 1962, where in a small farmhouse 51 people gathered for their first Sunday service (Palm Beach Gardens Historical Society, 2021). After the sale of the property in 2022 (60 years later), Trinity United Methodist Church reorganized and launched a church plant restart and rebranded themselves as The Gathering Place. Since then, TGP has seen growth and change in the lives of people throughout the community. TGP believes everyone deserves a place to feel heard, heal, and experience the fullness of God. TGP believes in radical unity and building bridges that lead to human connection, emotional well-being, a faith that heals, and a spirit of cooperative harmony. TGP values a community where all individuals can feel at home within themselves and with each other. Better together. Embracing differences. Loving to heal.

The volunteer program at TGP is managed by multiple full-time and part-time staff individuals. The fields where volunteers are managed include hospitality, praise team, digital technologies, children's ministry, and preaching team. These volunteering areas are managed by the staff members in charge of each given field. Hospitality is managed by the administrative assistant, praise team by the praise team director, children's ministry by the family ministry coordinator, digital technologies by the director of technology, and preaching team by the senior pastor. Each team has distinct needs that are met weekly by volunteers.

a. Hospitality

Each week, the hospitality team works hard to bring church members and newcomers a delightful experience. They are responsible for the set up and breakdown of the displays, tables, and refreshment service in the main lobby. They are also responsible for greeting people, making

them feel welcomed, providing refreshments after service, and extending information to people as needed.

b. Praise Team, Technology Team

The praise team volunteers diligently work throughout the week to memorize songs for the Sunday worship experience. Before service starts on Sunday, they practice singing, strumming, and drumming together before the service starts at 10AM. This team is also responsible for setting up and breaking down the equipment that is needed to support the experience such as amplifiers, speakers, and microphones. The praise team ties in with the digital technologies team to perform microphone checks, sound checks, and coordinate projector slides. The digital technologies team also assists in setting up projectors and screens, operating live feed projector programs, and coordinating the sound experience throughout the service.

c. Children's Ministry

Children's ministry volunteers are responsible for ensuring care and teaching Sunday school lessons to the children of the congregation. Volunteers plan throughout the week to give lessons, create crafts, and learn songs to sing for the children. Volunteers are also required to take special training each year to ensure that safety measures and guidelines are strictly adhered to.

d. Preaching Team

Preaching team volunteers coordinate monthly with the senior pastor to train for servant leader preaching. Assignments that come from monthly meetings, which typically include hosting tables for discussion, public speaking, and teaching assignments. Volunteers are expected to be creative and explore servant leadership roles within the congregation.

Without the valiant hard-working volunteers of the organization, The Gathering Place would not be where it is today. It is evident that the teams and leadership of the organization are vital to the success of TGP. Each team of volunteers must work together and compliment one another's team of volunteers. Overall, TGP houses approximately 30 – 40 volunteers in all areas of its ministries.

2. Volunteer Recruitment

The position of the volunteer and proximity to locating them determines the volunteer recruiting method that the leader will use. Due to the size and nature of The Gathering Place's needs, volunteers should be recruited using four main recruiting methods: warm body recruitment, concentric circle recruitment, ambient recruitment, and targeted recruitment. These four recruiting methods are ideal for a small church.

The need for volunteers relies heavily on Sunday morning activities. And because the congregation is self-supporting and willing to support the cause of the organization, the primary recruiting tool is ambient recruitment. Ambient recruited volunteers are primarily people who feel a sense of connectedness to the organization and who are intentional about supporting their goals (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). The other three methods are best utilized by the individual needs of the staff members to recruit the right volunteers for the positions they need filled.

a. Hospitality

Volunteers for the hospitality team are typically recruited using warm body recruiting methods utilizing Sunday service as the platform. Warm body recruiting is a general type of recruiting method for positions that can be accomplished by most people (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). The administrative assistant, who oversees the hospitality team, inclines the ears of people

who take an interest in the organization, thereby utilizing the warm body recruitment approach. The positions for hospitality volunteers are greeters, ushers, setup and breakdown folks, and refreshment servers.

b. Praise Team

Praise team volunteers are recruited using a combination of targeted recruitment and concentric circle methods due to the nature of the volunteering positions. Musical talent is required to be part of the team. The concentric circles approach is utilized through the praise director. Volunteers are hand selected from the TGP congregation as well as people from within the United Methodist Church organization. This base membership of musicians is able recruit other musicians who are interested in performing together. If the concentric circles approach is not working effectively, the targeted recruitment approach can help to bring people into TGP who have common factors. Since the volunteers needed are niche in the community, finding viable volunteers becomes accessible through the targeted recruitment approach. This approach identifies potential volunteers by understanding who and where these specific people tend to be, thereby targeting them for recruitment of a volunteer position. The positions for praise team volunteers include guitarist, bassist, drummer, singer, and soloist.

c. Technology Team

The director of technology recruits using concentric circles and ambient recruitment. Since the volunteering positions involve setting up and breaking down, and scrolling through the projector slides during the service, most people can handle the job. Because the volunteering positions are task oriented, like the hospitality team, the positions have the potential to fall into duress and fail to retain volunteers. Oftentimes, problems recruiting for this position occur due to

the task-oriented positions which don't give volunteers the freedom to think and volunteer progress is regularly not measured. This makes it difficult to recruit using warm body recruitment methods. But because ambient recruited volunteers are so dedicated to the organization, it is best to use this method for technology volunteers. Although, ideally, the positions should be adjusted to meet the needs of potential technology volunteers. Volunteer positions for the technology team include setup and breakdown engineer, and audio/video technologist.

d. Children's Ministry

Children's ministry volunteers are recruited using a concentric circles and/or ambient recruiting approach. Concentric circle recruiting involves utilizing people you know as your recruiting base, and as the volunteer base expands, opportunity opens to find more potential volunteers (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). The children's ministry ambient recruiting is similar to the warm body recruiting method but is directed more towards the close-knit group of people who are familiar with the philosophies of Christianity and the United Methodist Church. These people are ideally congregants who attend the church and are firmly rooted in the organization. These methods are necessary for recruiting competent teachers for the church's Sunday school. The positions include childcare worker, Sunday school teacher, and sign-in host.

e. Preaching team

Preaching team volunteers are hand picked volunteers from the senior pastor of the church. These volunteers are recruited using ambient recruitment. Other forms of recruitment fail to meet the philosophies of servant leadership and would not benefit the congregation through finding outsiders or through a warm body recruitment method. The volunteers for the preaching

team are supporters of the congregation's communal gatherings in which table discussions are led by team members. The team is also introduced to the pulpit in which biblical teachings and philosophies are preached. These characteristics of the volunteer position render ambient recruitment a clear choice due to the necessity of early indoctrination and continually supported involvement (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). The positions for preaching team volunteers include table leader, preacher, announcer, and small group leader.

3. Orientation, Training, and Development

a. Orientation

Orientation for The Gathering Place should be held at most, once per month depending on the frequency of new volunteers needing to be onboarded. Orientation should be focused on making volunteers feel welcomed, informing them of the history of The Gathering Place, as well as to demonstrate to them the ways in which they can support the organization (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). Overall, the main purpose and goal of orientation is to make the volunteer feel warmly welcomed within the organization. A shortfall in doing this will lead to poor volunteer retention.

Each area of the ministry should develop their own orientation for volunteer onboarding. All orientations should include some form of introductions of other volunteers, history of The Gathering Place and the United Methodist Church tradition, and an overview of policies. Due to the volume of incoming volunteers, large orientations are currently not necessary but may be needed as the church grows. The orientations should not be confused with training. Training of volunteers should be completed directly following orientation and ongoing as each ministry area finds fitting.

b. Training

Training should be completed by established volunteers or staff depending on availability. Certain training may need be conducted as an apprenticeship, such as technology engineering, children's education leader, or table leading. Training should cover roles and responsibilities outlined in the job descriptions. Certain areas of ministry require specialized yearly training, such as Child and Youth Protection Policy (CYPP) training for children's ministry volunteers. This training covers advanced policy and is required for all childcare volunteers and staff to attend. The policies include requirements for background checks, number of volunteers/staffs present in a room at any given time with children, and all other policies that ensure the protection for children. Training should also be used as motivation for future growth and development for the volunteers. Additional training should be offered as a motivating factor for continuing volunteer efforts within the different areas of the ministry.

c. Continued Development

Continued development of volunteers is necessary for volunteer retention. Volunteers who are not offered growth opportunities feel stuck and ignored many times and may quit abruptly. To avoid disruptions, it is recommended that staff should spend time deliberately with volunteers to coach and counsel them. This should be done in an organic manner, not to forcibly control the volunteer, but to bring a compassionate attitude to them out of love.

When staff counsel volunteers, it is to bring a problem to light and help them improve their behavior by acknowledging it and trying to improve (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). This is best accomplished when a well-established relationship exists between staff and volunteers. It is recommended that staff attempt to establish a good working relationship with volunteers through

hands-on coaching. Coaching volunteers should keep current volunteers challenged and engaged in the work they are doing. A good process for coaching is EIAG: experience, identify, analyze, and generalize. Lead the volunteer this way by challenging them with experiences, then identify happenings within the experience and dissect it, analyze and explore the behaviors, and then generalize by making a simple rule or principle to be learned (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). This will help lead the volunteers to become more receptive to what they are doing and why they are doing it.

4. Volunteer Supervision, Evaluation, and Recognition

a. Supervision

Volunteers at The Gathering Place should be placed under the supervision of staff who oversee the area of ministry they are working. Depending on the position of the volunteer, various levels of supervision are necessary. A well established and trustworthy volunteer who is well-embedded within the organization shall need little supervision for most work performed. If a volunteer needs reimbursements, it is in the best interest of the staff member to use good judgement to approve expenses as they arise.

Newly onboarded volunteers will need more supervision than well-established ones. Realizing that there are levels of authority, staff members can formulate better job descriptions for volunteers and understand the best practices for managing them. The different levels of control are as follows: the authority for self-assignment, the authority for self-assignment provided the boss is advised of progress, the authority to recommend self-assignment, and no authority for self-assignment (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). Each level allows for more autonomy within the organization, which is less burdensome than overseeing every function of every volunteer. The staff will manage the volunteers based on levels of trustworthiness, and/or

progress towards trustworthiness. Volunteers should be regularly updated on policies and values held by The Gathering Place. Acknowledging and rewarding good behavior and values will encourage volunteers to keep in accordance with the mission set by TGP.

b. Evaluation

An evaluation of volunteers should be done on an ongoing basis by the staff who oversee the volunteers. Volunteers desire to know how they are performing and how to improve, so this function should not be feared. The fruit of evaluations are that the volunteer will grow, and the organization will gain more volunteer involvement. Volunteer efforts should be evaluated equally with staff. Use the volunteer job descriptions to evaluate volunteering performance. The easiest method to evaluate volunteers is by using the RAP method: review, analyze, plan. First review the past, second analyze the present, and third plan the future (McCurley & Lynch, 2011). Go over the volunteer job description and highlight proficiencies and deficiencies. Bring light to their performance, relationships, and really listen to what they are saying during the evaluation. If problem behavior arises and needs to be addressed, it is advised to speak with the senior pastor for advice.

c. Recognition

Volunteer recognition should be a priority of all staff. It is impossible to carry out the mission and vision of The Gathering Place without our volunteering base, therefore they must feel and be appreciated. It is known that volunteers who do not feel appreciated do not continue to volunteer, therefore we should make every effort possible to retain our volunteering talent for the long term.

The Gathering Place volunteers should feel a sense of connectedness with the organization through their volunteering efforts. They should be treated with respect, and on par

with other staff members. Staff members should embrace the differences in their volunteers and point out their unique characteristics to help them understand their importance in the mission. Guide the volunteers' understanding by showing them the difference they are making through their efforts. Always make sure that the working conditions of the volunteers are acceptable and not intolerable.

Above all, have a good time! It is essential that the atmosphere is positive and feels inviting, loving, and caring. It should feel like a party every time you get together. Enjoy the company of one another, learn to laugh with people, bring a smile, a warm welcome, and care about those who are selflessly serving. If it is a joy to serve, people will continue to bring themselves to you. If it is a chore, nobody is going to show up.

5. Measuring Volunteer Program Effectiveness (indicators of success)

Indicating the success of the volunteering program at The Gathering Place is essential for the organization's continued success. A mission-based evaluation model for hospitality, praise team, and technology teams is fitting, while a customer-based evaluation model should be used for children's ministry and preaching team. The mission-based evaluation model uses the mission and purpose of the organization to realize the performance of the program. This can be observed through each ministry area by looking at the successfulness of their innerworkings.

a. Hospitality

Using mission-based evaluation for the hospitality team observing the success of the team steering together towards the common goal of making people feel welcome and comfortable. The team must be organized and be aware of timeframes for delivering the experience. The team must be flexible and able to readily adapt to serve the people. Each week, setup must be

accomplished prior to congregants arriving. Greeters must be in their positions and ready to greet people who are arriving. After service, refreshments are provided, followed by the breakdown of displays. Each of these is integral in accomplishing the mission of hospitality. Each week the hospitality leader should document its success and any failures for further analysis. Twice per year, collected data should be used to ensure the program is staying on the right path. Any sudden changes in consistency should be further reviewed and program adjustments should be made using good judgement to ensure continued success.

b. Praise Team

The praise team mission is successful when the worship is genuine, and the congregation feels connected through the praise music. Each week the praise team follows a scripted timing for prayer, communion, and communal worship. Each element must be well developed and executed each week. Planning is essential to the success of the praise team. The praise team director should document the occurrences of successes and mistakes each week, and twice a year the data should be analyzed. Consistency is key. Multiple failures or breakdowns should draw a red flag. To address the problems, if they should arise, it is recommended that the leader look for changes within the organization, planning process, or volunteer base, and try to understand what the root cause of the problem is. Once identified, using best judgment, make appropriate changes to the program to ensure continued success.

c. Technology Team

The technology team should measure program effectiveness using the mission-based approach as well. The mission of the technology team is to go unnoticed throughout the entire service. When sound, projector, or slide issues occur, they are disruptive to the flow of Sunday

service. Each week, the director of technology should document the successes and failures that have occurred during the service. Every six months, the weekly logs should be analyzed, and improvements should be made to correct any issues.

d. Children's Ministry

The children's ministry should use customer-based evaluations to measure the effectiveness of their volunteer program. Every three months, a survey should go out to parents, asking them about their satisfaction with the children's ministry and their experience with the volunteers. The questions should be formulated to ensure that the parent's voices are heard and are valued. The data taken from the surveys should be collected and analyzed to ensure that there are no pitfalls within the ministry. When problems are identified, it is important that the children's ministry coordinator act appropriately to make changes to the program. Prior to making any major changes to the program, it is recommended that the senior pastor is consulted and comfortable with the changes.

e. Preaching Team

The preaching team volunteer program should be measured using the customer-based evaluation. When programs are created that use volunteers from the preaching team, surveys should go out to all the participants to fill out. Using the data collected for each program, the preaching team leader should look for out of character clues to find disruptions. These indications may point directly to a volunteer who is not acting according to the preaching team covenant. It should be taken very seriously when a conflict of this nature occurs due to the nature of heresy and confidentiality within the church. Using a thoughtful and respectful approach, volunteers should be addressed, and the covenant should be reestablished. To ensure the

continued success of the program, data should be continually drawn and analyzed to ensure that the preaching team continues to be successful.

References

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