



Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston Office of Young Adult Ministry

Recruiting and Forming Young Adult Leadership

A unique aspect of young adult ministry is that it is a peer ministry and flourishes most when led by young adults; therefore, coordinators should be young adults. This does not necessarily mean choosing the oldest young adult with vast experience in catechesis or the young adult with the biggest personality. The best candidate will have an understanding of the importance of pastoral ministry, reaching out to not only the young adults at the heart of church life, but those on the margins, with a humble spirit of service to those around them.

Qualities to look for in leadership:

- **Faithful** to the teachings of the Church with continued growth in faith life
- **Competent, reliable, organized, and willing to offer time and talent**
- **Hospitable, intentional, and communicative** to young adults, parishioners, and priests

Forming Leadership

The Office of Young Adult Ministry offers 2 leadership trainings for incoming and current volunteer leaders. However, parishes should also form leaders over the course of a month before they launch a young adult ministry.

Areas to focus on in this formation should include:

Faith, Service, and Social: Understanding the Pillars of Young Adult Ministry
Practical Ministry: Planning, Organizing, Running Meetings, Communication
Prayer as the Foundation of Ministry
Evangelizing as a Lay Person
How to Run a Small Group

5 weeks before a ministry launches, the core leadership should be meeting together to get to know one another and taking an hour to learn about and discuss each of these topics.

Encouraged reading for leadership:

Becoming Human by Jean Vanier

Divine Renovation by Father James Mallon

Forming Intentional Disciples by Sherry Weddell

Rediscovering the Heart of a Disciple by Edward Sri

Basics of Small Groups and Studies

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to prayers.

Essential Components:

***Prayer-* hearts are open and not just about intellectual pursuit, pray in the group for the Holy Spirit to bear fruit**

***Teaching-* need to study in an ongoing way**

***Fellowship-* Encourage one another and accept yourselves and one another as imperfect**

***Breaking of the Bread-* through the Eucharist**

***Evangelization-* the Good News is not just for you, it is meant to be shared**

Outside of prayer, the single most important thing you will do for this ministry will be to build relationships with the people you are serving.

“Belonging is a school of love where we learn to open up to others and to the world around us, where each person, creature, and thing in our world is important and respected.”

Becoming Human, Jean Vanier

Interpersonal Skills for Facilitating a Group:

- Use “I statements” (statements that make it clear that this is YOU speaking and not the Church) when stating an opinion or sharing what you gathered from the reading or what someone else was saying.
- Ask Open Ended Questions
- It can be helpful summarize back to people what they just said to make sure you understand questions/ comments.
- Learn the language of the people of your group and how they share
- Don't always use the word “share” the vulnerability of the word can intimidate people, use “relate” or “explain”
- Use open and relaxed body language
- Listening is more important than 98% of what you are going to say

Hospitality

Your hospitality is the first thing people are going to notice about this ministry. You set the example for your group. Not everyone is going to be willing to step outside of their comfort zone; however, not only should you exhibit hospitality, you should encourage it openly within the ministry.

Before the meeting:

Hospitality goes beyond what happens when people walk in. Hospitality starts before the meeting begins with how you let people know when and where the meeting is, by the tone you use inviting them in, and how easily accessible getting this information is.

Do all current and potential new members have easy access to information about studies and other events?

Are there

Are there young adults in the pews, friends of yours, co-workers who you feel the call to invite in, but are nervous about their response?

Is the church aware of young adult events so that they can advertise?

Are you inviting the pastor or priests to events?

During the meeting:

Do you greet everyone as they come in, particularly to those who are new?

Are you friendly or do you seem uncomfortable?

Do you reach out to everyone or do you only talk to people you know?

Do you go up and introduce yourself to new people and take the time to get to know them?

How do people in the ministry speak to one another?

Is it a competition about who knows the most or does everyone have equal opportunity to share and feel like they belong?

As a facilitator, when you see someone dominating the conversation and others trying to speak up, do you make sure they have the opportunity to share?

When people leave, do they feel like they have been welcomed into a community?

After the meeting:

Is everyone made aware of upcoming events with that information being easily accessible?

If there were new people, did someone get their contact information?

Do you follow up with group members?

If someone was having a difficult night, do you follow up and check in?

Evangelizing as a Lay Person

Basics

- 1) It is the duty of every single Catholic, who is baptized and confirmed, not just priests and religious, to go outside of ourselves and reach out those around us.
- 2) You are the tool not the master builder. It is not you who is bringing about conversion. It is Christ through you.
- 3) Quality over quantity. Numbers come with quality interactions and events that fulfill and nurture people exactly where they are, not where you want them to be.

“Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregards for the constraints of time.”
-Evangelii Gaudium 24

Christ is our guide in this. Think of the stories in the Gospels. He spent 3 years with the disciples. The Gospels tell stories of their relationships, but consider the numbers of untold stories. Of day to day life shared in meals eaten together, conversations had in travel and by the sea, community prayer, and the individual relationships they had with one another.

Hospitality and Personal Invitation: *The Call of the First Disciples*, Matthew 4:18-22, *The First Disciples*, John 1: 35-51, *The Wedding Feast at Cana*, John 2: 1-12

Form Relationship and Build Trust: *The Woman at the Well*, John 4:4-40, *Mary and Martha*, Luke 10: 38-42,

Evangelization: *The Sermon on the Mount*, Matthew 5:1-12, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*, Matthew 14:13-21

Invitation to Discipleship: *The Commissioning of the Twelve*, Matthew 10: 5-15

Apostleship: *The Greatest in the Kingdom*, Luke 9: 46-48, *The Coming of the Spirit*, Acts 2:12

Evangelization is neither the first nor the end task of ministry. In fact, it is only part of the cycle of ministry. It begins with hospitality and personal invitation, from there we form relationship and build trust. It is through trust, where evangelization begins. Evangelization can look different for every single person we encounter. Some will be ready to jump right in, while others will be more hesitant. This is where relationship comes in. Learn where people are through getting to know them and meet them there, then move forward.

Facilitating a Small Group When Things are Getting Off Topic

Practicing ahead of time on how to handle with interruptions, distractions, and redirected conversations can help prevent you from being caught off-guard when uncomfortable situations are diverting the mission of the group.

Suggestions for practice,

Make it a game. During leadership formation, have everyone in the group take a turn acting as someone interrupting the group. Write specific interruptions down such

as: “Keeps talking about a recent break up”

“Shares too much about strong political views”

“Argues belligerently with another person during discussion”

“Doesn’t like a particular group of a people (culture, race, sexual orientation, etc)”

“Makes inappropriate comments to women/men in group”

If there are not enough people to make this a “game” or prefer a different method, make sure your leadership discusses and practices an action plan on how these things will be managed.

What do:

Keeps talking about an unrelated topic

There are people who are going to try and steer the group off topic sometimes.

-Designate a strong leader in the group who is not afraid to pipe up, acknowledge what that person is saying and suggest that the topic be addressed after the formal meeting during social time, then follow up with a question/comment that is back on topic

-Make sure to also follow up with the young adult at the end of the meeting to check in if you feel that they need to talk about, have questions about this particular topic

Is sharing too much about personal life

We are not robots and young adult ministry is about community. There are instances when sharing about our personal experience is appropriate; however, this has the potential to devolve quickly. Much like managing someone who is redirecting the conversation, follow the same guidelines and always follow up after.

-Designate a strong leader in the group who is not afraid to pipe up, acknowledge what that person is saying and suggest that the topic be addressed after the formal meeting during social time, then follow up with a question/comment that is back on topic

-Make sure to also follow up with the young adult at the end of the meeting to check in if you feel that they need to talk about, have questions about this particular topic

Hot button topic comes up and the conversation quickly devolves into complaining, attacking a group of people, becomes overly aggressive, or a heated theological debate

Young Adult Ministry should be a safe space for people to discuss the experience of being a young Catholic within the context of current events and prominent social issues. These topics should never be discussed with an “us versus them” mentality. We do not always know people’s past or present experiences. While we should uphold Catholic teaching, if we become too legalistic about doctrine or teaching, we ignore the story of the person sitting in front of us.

- If you know the topic of conversation for the night will be controversial and/ or sensitive, beginning the meeting by laying some ground rules for yourself, as the facilitator, and the group conversation, such as:
 - Not allowing an individual or couple to control the conversation
 - Not making accusations, not solely focusing on deficits, or capitalizing on the weakness of other groups of people
 - Making time for questions to be asked and making it clear that it is acceptable to not understand a topic
 - Allow room for theological and moral discussion, but make sure it is a) accurate and b) not the entire conversation

Has emotional outbursts

These are usually signs of an underlying issue and should be addressed with charity individually outside of the group setting. Use your discretion on whether this is an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed or a single instance.

- Talks too much and won’t let anyone else share
- Swears, distracts others, poor social awareness
- Sharing bad/ incorrect church teaching

Keep in mind:

- Young Adult Ministry provides community, but is not a counseling service and is not spiritual direction.
- Conversations that need to be redirected should be done gently, acknowledging that the group hears what the person is saying, but suggesting that certain topics would be better discussed outside of group.
- There are instances where things can be corrected with gentle humor or in a friendly way.

- Example: Group members swears a lot. Leader can say light heartedly, “Not sure how Jesus would feel with you using that word in His house”
 - Example: Someone is talking too much, talking about not study appropriate things, swearing, etc. it is acceptable to mention in a friendly way what you have personally noticed and that people in ministry might feel uncomfortable with what they are talking about, and you (personally) do not want them to become isolated because of it. Remember to use “I” language.
- If a topic of conversation that comes up that leadership is unsure of, there is nothing wrong, and is in fact preferable, to say that the conversation will be addressed again at the next meeting after the topic has been researched and consulted upon.

Someone who talks too much

There are always going to be people that might be on topic, but talk so frequently or for so long that they intimidate quieter group members and don't give others the chance to share. Things will always be a little unevenly spread on who talks and how much, but ministry is not Catechesis hour for one person to become the teacher. Most of us are not trained theological scholars. If they are, wonderful, but their brains should be picked for insight outside of the group or bring them in as a speaker on a topic that the group is interested in. Bible study is not a college lecture. It is for people to share the journey toward Christ together.

Please use your discretion on how to handle this based on the individual's temperament. Some do not realize they are manipulating conversation, while others do, and can become defensive.

-Contrary to what your parents taught you, it is occasionally ok to interrupt someone as they are taking a breath if they have been rambling too long. Thank them for their input, then say “Let's hear from somebody else” or pointedly ask one group member an open-ended question.

-If the person continues to manipulate conversation, it can be helpful to remind the group at the beginning of the next meeting that study is for community dialogue and you want everyone to have the opportunity to participate equally.

-If the message still does not get across, gently speak to the individual separately about giving others the chance to share.

Prayer as the Foundation of Ministry

“It is in the group that we discover what we have in common. It is as individuals that we discover a personal relationship with God. We must find a way to balance our two opposing impulses.”

Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*

A ministry not built on a foundation of individual and community prayer is simply a club. In facilitating ministry, you will be constantly pouring out to others. The more time and energy you give, the more relationships you develop, the more you will begin to recognize your own failings, your own sinfulness, all of the places in your life that you need to work on, and the more you will want to hide all of those away from the rest of the world.

Resist the temptation to hide behind ministry, using the excuse that you are too busy, and give yourself over to prayer. Otherwise, sooner, rather than later you will find yourself burnt out and running on empty. Not only is this a disservice to yourself, it is a disservice to the ministry.

Practical Personal Suggestions:

- 1) Frequent reception of the sacraments: Confession 1x monthly, reception of the Eucharist whenever possible
- 2) Set a weekly holy hour if you have the access and commit to it, if not spend time in front of the Blessed Sacrament whenever possible
- 3) Commit to 15 minutes of quiet, personal prayer a day. No excuses. Make it as regular as brushing your teeth and eating.

Practical Suggestions for Ministry:

- 1) Pray at the beginning and end of every meeting. Whether it is a leadership team meeting, a study, a small group, whatever it is, open and close in prayer.
- 2) Set the example of praying out loud. Not everyone will be comfortable with this, but challenge members of your group to volunteer to lead.
- 3) As your group becomes more comfortable with one another, open up the floor for prayer intentions and intercessory prayer.
- 4) Don't be afraid to stop and pray with people. If you feel moved to pray with them and over them, don't reject that stirring of the Holy Spirit. It can be intimidating, but even asking them if you can say a Hail Mary over them can mean more than you expect.

Faith, Service, and Social: Understanding the Pillars of Young Adult Ministry

“Our world is not full of mediocre persons, rather it is full of extraordinarily gifted people living in mediocrity and in subsequent frustration.”

-Prayer, Our Deepest Longing, Ronald Rolheiser

If prayer is the foundation of your ministry, the pillars rooted in the foundation are faith formation, service to others, and social outreach.

A group should not rely solely on social events, faith formative, or service projects to keep them afloat. A mixture of all of these events is necessary for feeding young adults regardless of where they are in their faith walk.

Social and service events may draw in young adults who might not be interested or feel comfortable in a bible or faith study. These events should be well advertised and organized to be accessible for anyone coming in.

Service

“Wherever there are people suffering, make it your task to serve them.”
-St John Paul II

A sign of a healthy community is one that goes outside of itself to serve the least in society. Service should never be a secondary thought to studies and social activities, but a core component of all that we do.

Components of Catholic Social Teaching

- 1) Dignity of the Human Person- each of us is precious: people are more important than things; and the measure of every institution is whether it threaten or enhances the life and dignity of the human person
- 2) Call to Community and the Common Good- Human person is sacred and social, marriage and family are central social institutions
- 3) Rights and Responsibilities- Fundamental right to life and right to those things required for human decency
- 4) Option for the Poor and the Vulnerable- Basic moral test is how our most vulnerable are faring in society
- 5) Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers- the economy must serve people, not the other way around
- 6) Solidarity- one human family, no room for globalization of “indifference”
- 7) Care for God’s Creation- requirement of our faith, called to protect people and our planet

Planning Service Events:

- Begin by looking for service ministries in your parish that need assistance and would fit into the schedule of the young adults
- In the beginning, it may take trying out some different service activities that are of interest to the young adults to find a few that the ministry will want to stick with.
- Find out what kind of service projects your group is interested in: are they looking for direct contact with people or service with more “grunt work”
- Contact the group or individual in charge of the service opportunities you would like to participate in and find out the needs, including:
 - What they need, how often and when there are opportunities, how many people can serve, will this be ongoing or a one-time need
- If you say that you will bring a certain number of people to an event/ commit that you will be there, show up. Honor your commitments. Particularly in your own parish.

Social

Social events should include a mixture of planned and unplanned outings both large and small. Make it a challenge for both the core members and group members to invite at least one new person for each event.

Warning: Social events have the potential to become closed off and “cliquey”. Make it a priority with leadership to set the example and encourage others to mingle with those who are new or they do not know well.

Examples:

- Going to dinner before or after study
- Potluck/ party for holidays
- Informal gatherings for community events
- Formally organized events at the parish and regional level with the purpose of social outreach in mind:
 - Bonfire
 - Holiday Party
 - Attending a local gathering
 - Dance lessons

Running Your First Meeting (and all other meetings)

Your first meeting is going to be awkward. The more tense and nervous you seem, the more uncomfortable everyone else is going to be. Make it as warm and inviting as you possibly can.

Before, During, and After:

Your first night is going to be a little awkward and has potential to remain that way. That's ok if the first night it, but remaining awkward is not! Be prepared! Do not plan out an intense study your first night, even just starting out with something simple such as going over the coming Sunday's gospel reading OR a bible passage that you would like to theme the group around. Comfort levels and community develop over time, but take energy and effort on you as the leader. Knowing your group and their needs by asking directly and observing how they act will help guide you.

- Make it comfortable: make sure the set-up is conducive to discussion and make sure that you appear as comfortable as possible.
- Bring food- you don't have to do this for every single meeting until the end of time, but having chocolate chip cookies your first meeting or two helps break the ice and make everyone a little bit happier
- Greet people warmly, if you can remember their names or anything about them from the launch, use that! If you are visibly excited that people are there, they will recognize it and ease their nervousness.
- Start on-time, people are probably already tense, why make them angry?
- This also means that you do not keep people for hours on end and end on time. People are giving up their time to be there, be cognizant of that.
- The facilitator should be the one to open in prayer and thank people for coming
- Don't be afraid of silence. Give people a few moments to think, perhaps you have to start the discussion, then gently digress from there.
- Ask about topics and events they are interested in
- Go out for social time to get to know one another better
- Personally follow up with people after. If someone hasn't attended for a while, check in. If someone seems like they are having a rough day, check in. If someone announces exciting news, let them know it did not fall on deaf ears and follow up.