

# A Nursing Home Ministry Handbook for Staff

## Section 3 - Mobilize and Implement Christian Volunteers

### Building Bridges to Pastors and Christian Ministers in the Community Around Your Facility

"Christian Minister" refers to any believing Christian who has the blessing of their pastor to minister in a long-term care setting and who satisfies the staff that they have the necessary skills to do what they desire to do for the care facility residents. See the ["Pastors Recommendation Form"](#) .

#### Feed Them and They'll Come - A Strategy for Establishing Relationships with the Christian Community in Your Area.

*(NOTE: if there is more than just your facility in your area, we suggest coordinating with them to do a joint event. Many hands make light work! Also, you are essentially asking the local churches to work together to meet your volunteer needs, so it would be great if you could model a cooperative relationship with your "competitors." It might be good to remind everybody that ultimately, the goal is to bless the elderly and infirm residents in all of the local facilities.)*

**Contact the church secretaries** of local churches by phone. She/He may be your most important contact at the church. Be patient – they often work shortened hours and shortened work weeks. BRIEFLY tell them you are having a special breakfast (or some meal) for Christian ministers in your area and you would love to see the pastor or another person or a group from their church attend. At the breakfast you will be sharing the various volunteer opportunities for Christians (highlighting your specific needs) in your care center and there will be a tour of the facility. (It is best if you have a written script to use when you make your calls.)

#### Ask the secretary these types of questions:

- Pastor's name and personal phone number and/or email address. (Even if it is apparent that the pastor will delegate this to someone else, be sure, if at all possible, to contact that pastor about it, get his/her blessings, and encourage him/her to promote it.)
- Would it be better to talk to someone other than the pastor about beginning an outreach from their church to your facility? [e. g.: "Missions Committee" chairperson, Youth Pastor, Sunday School Superintendent, etc.]
- What is the best mailing address for the church?
- When on their church calendar (and what time of day – our experience leans toward a breakfast) would be the best time for your event?

**Mail out an invitation** with an RSVP, once you have a good list. Follow the mailing up with a phone call to the appropriate person. If you get 20% participation you will be doing good. *NOTE: you never know when you might "hit" it just at the right time for any specific congregation – so, doing this periodically, every year or so, is a good idea.* Remember, there are many needs in the community and

in the world that have legitimate demands on the resources and the people of every Christian church. You must be patient and gracious – if you are, it will come back to you.

**Make up a flyer** (it can be simple, but carefully prepared) for them to take with them. Be sure it contains all the major things you want them to know – don't forget a comprehensive list of ways to contact you **personally**. It is a good idea to get someone else to proofread your last draft of the flyer before you make the copies.

**Get Feedback from Attendees!** At the event, ask everyone who attends, if they will, to print their name and contact info on a slip by their seat. Ask them to indicate if it is OK for you to contact them about special events and volunteer opportunities at your facility. Ask them to indicate if they are interested in some specific ministry at your facility (one-on-ones, "church services," Christian sing-alongs, Devotions, transporting residents to their church services, etc.)

**After the event**, prioritize your feedback slips and follow-up on EVERY one of them with at least a message on their phone.

### **Recruiting by Phone:**

In lieu of a breakfast/lunch/dinner scenario there is another very practical way to reach the potentially large pool of volunteers sitting in pews around your facility: do a web search for the phone numbers of churches in your area and take five or ten minutes to call them one per week.

Befriending secretaries is a great step toward reaching the Pastor and the pew.

Prepare a short phone script and have it before you when you call. Refer to the previous section for suggestions on the type of questions to ask.

If you have no success at a particular church, keep calling every year or so unless you are asked not to.

If they ask you to send information - that is great! Send them a flyer about your facility and a simple list of the volunteer opportunities in your care center with your direct contact information. Even if you do not hear from them, use your discretion, but it may be appropriate to resend this information once a year or so

## **Helping Christian Volunteers to understand the Variety of Your Volunteer Needs**

In the course of recruiting and training your Christian volunteers, be sure to expose them to the full list of volunteer needs and ministry opportunities at your facility. There may be many in the local church who do not see themselves "preaching" or leading the singing at a facility, but they may get really excited about the opportunity to play games or call bingo.

Prepare basic materials and guidelines for the more important ministry needs at your facility. You are welcome to refer them to our ["A Nursing Home Ministry Handbook for Volunteers."](#) or our ["A Short Primer for Nursing Home Ministry."](#)

Provide resources for the novice that will help give them confidence and steer them away from the potential pitfalls of ministering to your residents. Although, you should keep in mind that some nursing home ministers may have been doing services in facilities as long as you have been alive! It seems best to us that the input from staff be tailored to the individual volunteer.

Be as lenient as possible about requiring attendance at special training classes: volunteering time is very precious to everyone.

The greatest help you can give a Christian minister is to attend the event that the volunteer is conducting. Just be there. Affirm their activity with the residents and applaud generously when appropriate. Also, your being available to help with the residents is crucial, especially for those who volunteer once a month or less.

## **Corrective Guidance for Volunteers**

If possible, when you need to give advice or direction to a volunteer, interact with them in a positive, supportive, affirming manner in the course of their normal volunteer time-slot. Suggest thoughtful ways for the Christian minister to improve their service, including things you and your staff can do to help.

Christian volunteers often need to be exposed to the idea that they are in the facility by invitation only and they must be respectful to all residents, regardless of their religious preferences. The volunteer must understand that the facility is, in essence, the private home of each resident. The volunteer needs to know that their invitation to participate in the facility is subservient to the fact that the job of the staff is to see to the welfare of all the residents, not just those who attend "church services."

NOTE: the Christian Minister, as is the case so often with anyone involved in showmanship, is often very vulnerable to being hurt by criticism – therefore, an air of affirmation and encouragement is most important. If correction is necessary, do so privately, away from the residents and others in the ministry group. In extreme cases, after talking with them privately to no avail, discuss the matter with their group leader or pastor, asking him/her to help.