



MINISTRY BLUEPRINTS

HOSPITALITY BEST PRACTICES SAMPLER

**SIMPLE WAYS TO MAKE SURE
HOSPITALITY IS A PART OF
EVERYTHING YOU DO!!**



MINISTRY BLUEPRINTS
FOR HOSPITALITY AND WELCOME



BEST PRACTICES

The pandemic has changed us in so many ways as a church. We have learned to adapt, let go, change up and do the best we can.

It has asked much of us and yet, there is still so much to do.

This resources is just a way to incuse hospitality and welcome into all you are doing no matter what format, what phase of re-engagement you are in, or who your staff is at this point of the crisis.

God calls us to creatively meet the needs of the people around us. It all starts with hospitality - it sets the stage for an ecouner with Christ.



Youth Ministry

1. Youth Ministry is a vital part of parish life. Youth and their families are the busiest and most fragmented in the community, but have a great desire to be a part of a welcoming community. So that's what parishes must provide; family- friendly youth ministry, family sensitive calendaring, events, sacrament preparation and faith formation. It is the role of the youth minister or coordinators to advocate for teenagers and all they need. Invite a variety of parents and teens to be part of planning and calendaring so the efforts of the parish reflect the needs, hopes and dreams of those you serve.

2. Pay special attention to hospitality when gathering teens virtually or in person. It isn't easy for a teenager to come to a ministry event if they aren't regulars or are new. Have your team think through what that might feel like and then design your hospitality accordingly. That means, lots of people to welcome, greet and mingle. Eat at the start of a session or event. Name tags, community builder games, someone to be with a new person through the activities. Post it and announce it. No one likes a surprise! Do a fabulous job right at the beginning and it will set the stage for a successful event.

3. Food. That might seem like a given in youth ministry and it is. But if you are going to welcome and offer hospitality, do it well. Don't just fall back on pizza and soda - but ask the young people what they would like at events. With people being more health-conscious - they might appreciate a yogurt bar -with tons of great toppings to add. They might like a salad bar, baked potato bar or smoothies! Check out acai bowls on Pinterest too. Step it up and make it memorable! Treats and snacks can be dropped off at homes for events too! Think simple, easy and safe

4. Thank you's. Don't forget to affirm and thank young people for their leadership, help, volunteering, serving and being present at things. A hand-written note is a rare thing today - try to do that each week for those who helped in any way. This builds trust, depth of relationships and creates a willingness to say yes to community!

5. Model and teach hospitality. Your teens should be encouraged to look out for those who are new, feeling out of place or looking for a friend. Teach them how to reach out and say hello, invite in to conversation, and feel at home - like they belong. Youth ministry that looks like a club or a group - isn't the fullest it can be. It is always inviting, welcoming, and helping people find a place to belong. A community of faith that is real and authentic. Teach, model, and practice!

Catechists

1. Catechists are really the first people parents and children often meet in the parish or learning setting. The most important thing a catechist can do is to welcome! Have lights on, the room set, places ready, name tags or lanyards ready and some community builders set so they can settle and feel at home. When meeting virtually, think about all the distractions they might encounter, and try to do things in short increments. Parents and children or youth should always feel welcome and know that you truly care about them - not just in the church setting, but beyond. So spending time checking in and asking about how they are doing is important! Hospitality is key.

2. The lesson planned is really a means to an end -it isn't the end. So, listening, building community, praying together, sharing faith and doing something together that will model how one is to BE Christ is the most important thing you can do. Be sure to pray together, not just memorized prayers, but spontaneous prayers and keep little lists of answered prayers. Teach them to pray for each other, the parish community and for the world in need.

3. Practice hospitality in your space. Teach them how to think of each other and serve each other. Welcome, greet, share treats, listen, stay connected beyond their time at church. Sending cards to them during holidays, holydays and birthdays builds friendships and authenticity. You may want to call during quarantines and other moments that occur because of COVID -19.

4. Be there for other events in their lives -school concerts, plays, sports and such. Take church to where they are! This act of hospitality touches both children and their families. Let them know that church matters and their parish community loves them! If these events are virtual these days - then be there too! We are missionary disciples forming missionary disciples.

5. If our parishes need to become more welcoming, it starts with the children. Teach them how to be ministers - how to greet and welcome, how to usher and how to be kind to others at church. It all boils down to noticing. Do they see a family in need of a little help with their children? An elderly person who needs a door open? A person who needs a seat when the pew is full? A person who is new and is looking for restrooms, the parish office or where coffee and donuts are offered? They can help in these areas and bring a little life and joy to the ministries too! Practice these with them and let them find their passion!

Service and Outreach

1. Hospitality and welcome when we are serving in the community and beyond are about extending the Eucharist to those in need. Many parishes have concerted efforts in justice and service and parishioners doing things in the community without much fanfare. How can we make the most of all those opportunities? Have a plan and commit to sharing the love, welcome and joy from your parish with others. There are so many needs out there because of the pandemic. Be bold!

2. Bring things from the parish to those in need. Do you have ministries in your parish that make things? Quilts? Prayer shawls? Meals? Picnic tables or benches Perhaps rosaries, stained glass or screen print tee-shirts? Find out what amazing gifts your parishioners have and invite them to share. This acknowledges their gifts, invites them to engage and brings joy to others through the offering. People are searching for ways to serve in the pandemic - make it easy and fulfilling!

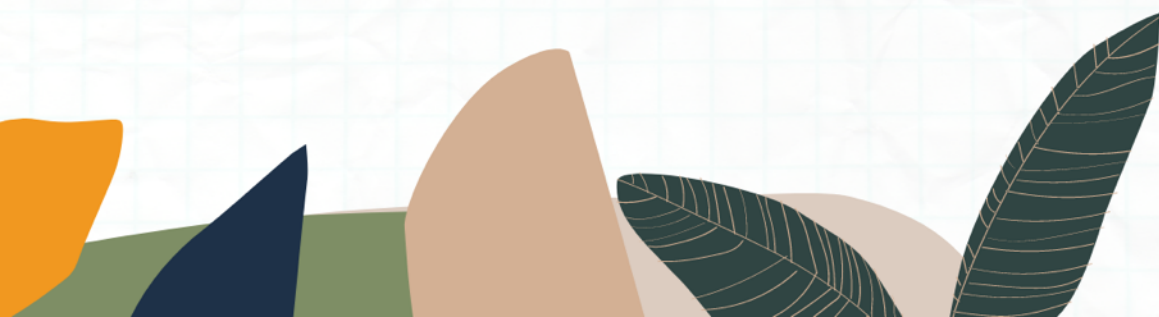
3. Serving with joy. In *Evangelli Gaudium*, Pope Francis encourages Catholics to share their faith with joy. Don't have dour faces or look grumpy or irritated - no one will want what you offer. Instead, offer a smile, a bit of light and joy - that will bring people to want to know the source of your joy! Those in need in our communities are hungry for love, for peace, joy and hope and we have these in abundance - but must consciously try to share them with others.

4. What exactly do the poor and marginalized need around hospitality? They need to be acknowledged as people with an inherent dignity - created in the image and likeness of God. The hospitality offered should be food, shelter, clothing, attention, kindness and all the things Jesus encourages in Matthew 25. When we serve on behalf of our ministry or parish - we are an extension of the Eucharist. We are formed by the sacrament and sent in mission to bring joy, welcome and hope!

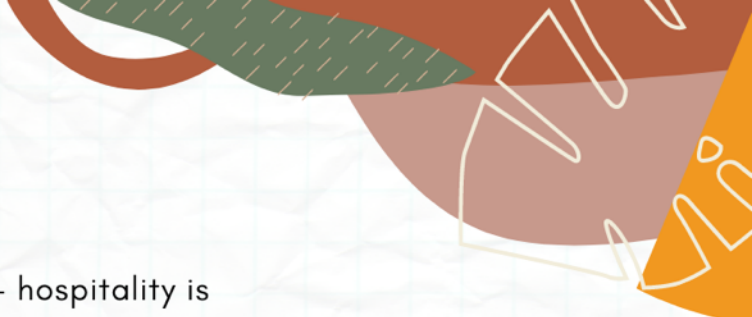
5. Make service a regular part of your parish life. When it is an everyday occurrence - our parishioners begin to see that it is part of our faith to offer hospitality, service, time and love to others. Make a commitment to monthly events that all can participate in!

Baptism Preparation



1. This beautiful sacrament offers parishes the opportunity to welcome, invite and connect with parents in a very powerful way. Hospitality is key for making people feel welcome, affirmed and hopeful. Every meeting must include a great atmosphere - good snacks, a warm welcome and a good learning environment! Those in the ministry need support, resources, affirmation and a budget for refreshments and fun.
 2. Parents coming for the sacrament may be coming back after a time away, new to the church or encouraged by a family member to seek the sacrament. However, the parents arrived, it is imperative that they feel accepted, honored, affirmed in their role as a parent and supported by the church.
 3. A welcoming community is a good place to raise up children. New parents need to be encouraged to connect in other ways after the celebration of Baptism. Give them good reasons to come back. Parent events, children events, family activities etc. And now with the pandemic, it's more important to connect new parents with others - assign mentors, partners and people just to check in periodically. It's stressful to have a new little one - and even more so now.
 4. The parish community should be invited to welcome those in baptism preparation. Cards, meals, banners or some way to commemorate the baptism could be created by children or teens in other ministry settings. Announcements, pictures, a write up on the website or in the bulletin is great too! Extra effort is needed while in various stages of reopening the parish. Don't let these lovely events go unnoticed!!
 5. Have a plan to invite the newly baptized and their families to upcoming events. Don't let go! Stay connected and continually invite, including them in planning and doing things together. We don't just welcome at the sacrament, but extend the invitation in the days, months and year to come. Let them know they are important to the parish community!
- 

Religious Education



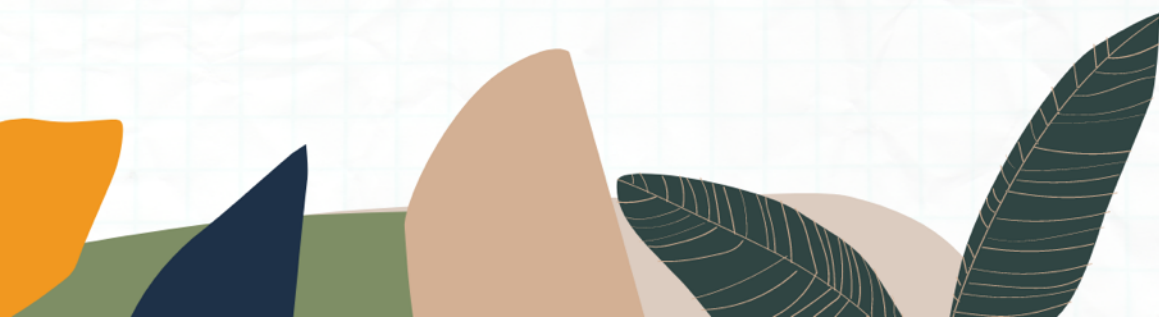
1. At the heart of your ministry's mission and vision - hospitality is there. Children, youth and families come from all walks of life and it is the privilege of the DRE to invite, welcome and make all who walk through your doors feel like they belong. Take a look at your mission and vision - and make some updates to include words of welcome, hospitality, friendship and openness.

2. The DRE is the advocate for children, youth and families. The parish serves the people and all decisions must be made for the good of the all. How is money allocated in the parish? Are Religious Education families on the boards, councils and active in ministries? Find ways to make the connections so everyone and anyone would feel welcome to be a part of parish life. Advocate for hospitality!

3. Do the children and youth in your programs learn hospitality basics? How to greet and welcome? How to think of another person before themselves? Would they give up their seat, offer the last donut, share a hymnal or move over in the pew? Observe a bit and then add some good training and mentoring into your gatherings!

4. A Director should insist that the very first thing a catechist must do before starting with prayer is to make sure each child or teen is greeted, welcomed and called by name. It may mean being prepared earlier, being intentional or inviting some other youth to help with it - but it will make any lesson a better lesson when all feel welcome and part of the little community created in catechesis!

5. Where do parents go while their children are in programs or sessions or at events? You may wish to offer classes or speakers for them, but often they just need a rest from the chaos of life today. Offer coffee, fruit infused water, and some great snacks along with a place to sit and chat with other parents. No agenda - no expectations. Just space. Hospitality experienced is hospitality shared! This can be done virtually too! The food may need to be delivered, but the purpose is to create space for parents to connect,



Parish Ministries

1. Parish volunteers and ministry staff are the very heart of a faith community. Their commitment, creativity, strengths and passion shape and drive a parish in amazing ways. It is for this reason they need affirmation and encouragement along with incredible hospitality. They should receive that which they regularly give. Most likely they will scoff at any attempts at this, but there is a humility in being able to receive as well as give. When they can receive - they become truly authentic in their service and ministry. Give them opportunities for authenticity.

2. Regular celebrations are important. Successes of programs, events and outreach are reason to gather and affirm those involved. It should become the culture of the parish to take time to reflect on things accomplished before jumping right into the next things. A little party, snacks, ice cream, cake, great coffee from a local place - anything to take the time to be together and acknowledge effort, work and a job well-done. These can be packages dropped off at homes, online meetings with delivery - any creative way to do this virtually!

3. Take some time to list all the people who make the parish run. Then - next to their names write something you know about them. Then, next to that - a way that their presence and work at the parish might be acknowledged. A card? A hand-written note, a call from the pastor? Be creative. This is practicing hospitality. They will do this too when it has touched their hearts - and the gift will continue to bless the parish community.

4. Staff, the pastor, or a seminarian who might be leaving or retiring needs attention. No matter how long a person has been employed, they need a good send-off and thank you. Gather a team to brainstorm on how to do this well. A parish is the living sign of Jesus in the world today - we must live up to that and treat our people with respect, dignity and graciousness. Often, the church has not said good bye well - especially if there has been some situation that called for letting a person go. They still should be acknowledged and leave knowing they were treated well. You may have had furloughs and lay-offs due to the pandemic - manage those well - be gracious too.

5. Ways to affirm: notes, flowers, funny Catholic things, public acknowledgement, a visit or call from the pastor, a lunch date ,special treat, gather the team or staff to do a special cheer or song (anything fun will do), have a mass, pray over and with them, balloons, posters, etc. Be creative. The parish that lavishes love like this is contagious. Try it and see!

Parish Meetings

1. Get to know those on your committee, planning team or council. Play, break bread, go on retreat, and pray together in person or virtually. Be a community built on a common purpose and common faith. Share faith at your meetings - take time for this before getting to the difficult or heady decisions. Be open to each other - listen before speaking. Pray for wisdom and discernment. This creates a welcoming place. Begin with questions that are deeper than how was your week?

2. Make sure you have diversity on the council.

Members are advocates for ministries, house-holds and the most vulnerable in the parish. They all need a voice! Welcome them warmly and offer the best hospitality - see what they need to be able to be a part of the committees and offer that. (Transportation, child care etc.)

3. Continue to grow and learn in your role - attend seminars, share leadership books and webinars -let the parish know you are doing this so you can serve them well. Keep confidences. Be truthful and honest. Let your decisions be made with love, mercy and kindness. Learn what it means for your parish to be a sacrament to the world. Discuss this, pray on it and keep it ever in your mind as you make important decisions in regard to staff, facility, stewardship and the future. This all creates an environment where hospitality thrives.

4. Don't see spending money or time on hospitality as a luxury. It is the heart of growing disciples, strengthening parish life and keeping parishioners well-served. It makes for the welcoming community that people hunger for. Give people a reason to come on Sunday and invite their friends. Be creative with parish funds while things are virtual - shift some things in order to serve people in new ways.

5. Be transparent and vulnerable. This creates a community of authenticity and honesty. Share minutes and documents. Let people drop in on meetings and be a part of your team, ministry or event. Cliques are a thing of the past and have no place in a vibrant parish today. Offer to share skills and abilities with others, offer leadership training and let people get to know the parish leadership. That extension of welcome and openness will bring gift and blessing to the parish.

Young Adults

1. Young adults are looking for a place to be welcomed. They hunger for the holy, community and belonging. Do you have someone who has a ministry to this age group? Find someone! Young adults range from 18-39 and have every configuration of work, life, school and family. Their presence in our parishes is vital and they need an advocate in the parish. This demographic has suffered greatly in the pandemic - socially, mentally, physically and spiritually. It is important to take time to listen, serve and offer all you can in a variety of ways.

2. Ask them often what they need and what the church can do for them - then do it. We like to do surveys and gather information, but at some point we have to make changes that will engage young adults in our parishes. It won't look like what we are used to, but get used to that! They are looking for vibrant parishes and have ideas on just how to do that! Offering opportunities for involvement and leadership will be a gift to everyone!

3. We imagine that we have to make over our churches with lasers lights and coffee shops for young adults, but really it's much less complicated and less expensive! They have expectations for things to be done well; music, liturgies, meetings, communication methods and gathered activities. They are busy, used to the latest technology and customized everything. However, at the heart of things is that they are holding churches to a different standard and are asking us to give them a reason to stay, belong and be involved. Make some simple changes to your website, social media platforms and ask at every meeting, "Have we considered our young adults?"

4. Food, faith and follow through. Gatherings should include elements of all we are good at and love; prayer, sacraments, theology, social justice, catechesis, Scripture and saints. Share the amazing ways the Church is alive today. Do this in a casual atmosphere with some great food - be creative and spend some time on Pinterest! The follow through is to offer a great event, and to continually invite young adults into relationship -- with Jesus, with the parish community, with one another. Be creative during this pandemic - be outside, socially distanced, virtual or a combo of both.

5. Offer intentional invitation to be a part of parish leadership - with their lifestyles in mind. Young adults have great ideas, but a long-term commitment on a council or committee isn't going to work. Find ways to include their expertise, opinions and ideas. Make it easy for them to get involved! The key here is really to get to know the young adults in your parish and to commit to making the church a home for them. For a deeper look at Young Adult Ministry - look on a bookshelf in the parish office for "Sons and Daughters of the Light" - the USCCB original document on Young Adults - and the next book, "Connecting Young Adults." Connect with The Young Adult Initiative housed at St. Meinrad Seminary - sponsored by USCCB - directed by Michal Horace. mhorace@stmeinrad.edu

Welcomers and Greeters

1. These ministers are the shining stars of weekend worship. They open doors, greet, help people find their way to restrooms, coat rooms, coffee and donuts, and a million other places. They are the first people anyone sees when walking through the doors. People in this ministry must be warm, welcoming, happy to be there, informative, joyful and helpful. Take a minute to think of the people in that ministry in your parish community. Do they fit the description? Do people comment on how welcoming the parish is? If so, then you are doing a fabulous job. But most of us need a wee bit of work. And with the pandemic, have their roles been re-considered, revamped? If not, it's time.
2. Offer training to those interested in being welcomers and greeters. Teach them how to do a great handshake, how to open doors and help people with strollers, walkers, wheelchairs or crutches in. Have them practice a joyful welcome and happy smile. It might seem silly, but we take it or granted that everyone knows how to welcome or what we even mean by that - and they don't. So, make a list of what's important to the parish with this ministry, create job descriptions and train. It will show - and it will make a difference. Include the ministry team in the conversation and include ways they can take their ministry outside the church doors.
3. You may have people who have been doing this ministry for a long time and don't think they need training. They do. If they don't fit in with the mission of the ministry, it might be time to help them find a new place to use their gifts and talents. Weekend masses are crucial and we can't get hospitality wrong then -we may not have a second chance with a visitor or someone coming back after a time away. Put those who are great at this ministry right out in front. It will help become a place of welcome that is authentic and genuine when you have the light people on board. Looking at ways to extend this ministry during the pandemic may just bring new people to the team and give it a fresh new look and purpose!
4. This is also the job of every parishioner - to welcome and greet. They need to be told! You might help them become good at it too. Have them warmly greet and welcome those sitting in the pews with them. You might have a list of how to be a welcoming person on the screens before mass, in the bulletin or on your parish social media platforms. Let people know it is an expectation. It takes time for the culture of a parish to change, but it can happen! Invite them to share how they do that at home, school and work too!
5. This ministry is one people might skip if they are scheduled - they assume that it isn't important, or someone else might fill in. If everyone sees themselves a welcome or greeter - they can jump right in and help. So, maybe put that out to the people - that the parish never wants to be without a welcome or greeter and to step up and help if you see the need. Practice makes perfect. And soon, everyone will take responsibility for being a parish of hospitality and welcome!

- The practice of hospitality will become second nature in your Parish with some diligence in the beginning. Especially if you are looking to expand its effects beyond the main hospitality committee.
- Hospitality is contagious...even if it makes more work, the results are worth it.
- Christine Pohl asks: "Who needs Welcome? Who needs to know they are precious to God and his People? Whose absence keeps us from being whole?"
- Absolutely ALL of us need of hospitality, and all of us need to practice hospitality.
- Hospitality – the radical kind...is such an ancient concept and Jesus was really good at it. For us today it's like it is fresh news, hot off the press! It's the key to a thriving community.
- One act of hospitality will lead to another, soon it will be spilling out the church doors, to the neighborhood and beyond. With just a little bit of teaching and leading by example. You won't be able to stop the wave. The world is starved for authentic relationships, whether people are aware of it or not.
- We need each other, we all need the same welcome at some point. We even need to know how to be the one with the open door, the plate of cookies, the smile, the handshake. It takes practice – but it can't be dismissed as someone else's job or something unnecessary. It is vital to parish life.
- Think of the church as a collection of wrapped gifts, or medicine that will bring health, or a beautifully prepared meal...then think of hospitality as the means to get those things to the people who need it...like a serving tray or gift basket.
- Hospitality is merely the container...a vessel that can take on many forms. One must constantly be on the lookout for how to offer and provide it!
- You are in control of the packaging...how elaborate or simple is up to you – just make sure it is beautiful and given with love. Who will be able to resist?

Lord, we ask you to help us grow into a parish where all are welcome and friendship, kindness, mercy and joy are gifts we offer to all we meet. Teach us to become people of hospitality and to look clearly and honestly at our parish community and see where love, openness and generosity are needed. Help us to know how to offer hospitality and in turn receive it. We ask that you help us become a community that will bring people closer to you, on fire with their faith and joy enough to change the world.

We pray this in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

MINISTRY BLUEPRINTS
3902 SABAL SPRINGS BLVD
FORT MYERS FL 33917

www.ministryblueprints.com

