



# How to recruit care ministry leaders

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You know the frustration—finding more volunteers, and not just able bodies, but committed lay leaders whose lives demonstrate they are full of wisdom and the Spirit and able to take on care ministry responsibilities. You are blessed by the faithful few you have, but, frankly, you need *more* strong, committed care ministry leaders.

Here's a six-step process for helping you identify people who can help lead your church's care ministries. Use this yourself or share with your church leaders who are responsible for recruitment.

## **1. Clarify your vision for care ministry**

Get clear in your own mind your vision for care ministry in your church. You cannot recruit care ministry leaders until you have an idea of what needs they'll be caring for. What struggles are you seeing in your congregation and community? What form could the care ministry take? What support and resources are available? Where do you envision the care ministry five to ten years down the road?

## **2. Write a position description**

It's good to come up with a position description for the volunteer. This could include a position title, responsibilities, whom the leader answers to, and the duration the person is requested to serve. Make sure potential leaders will understand up front the length of the commitment. Another important point to include is how to resign from the ministry position. Most people will be committed at the start, but if they later desire to step down and are unsure how to do so, the ministry can suffer as a result of their indecision or ebbing commitment level.

### 3. Define what you're looking for in your care ministry leaders

As you think about potential care ministry leaders in your church, make a list of the characteristics they should exemplify—a profile of your ideal candidate. Here is a checklist of ideas to consider:

- **Others-oriented:** This person should be driven by a genuine concern for others and an eagerness to serve, understanding that it will sometimes be a sacrifice on his part. Some people who volunteer for leadership positions can get caught up in the idea of the “position” of leader and the status they perceive it brings.
- **Shepherd:** Sheep without a shepherd are floundering, are confused, and don't know which way to go or whom to trust. Your leader should demonstrate that he's able to develop trust with people. Those who approach him feel welcome, comfortable, and free to share their thoughts and feelings. Your ministry leader should then be able to gently point them toward God and His direction for their lives.
- **Comforter:** People who've lived through trials and struggles (and have experienced God's help and healing) have an intimate understanding of the needs of someone who is hurting. They will have a special sensitivity as they interact with people (2 Cor. 1:3–4). It is encouraging for hurting people to see someone who has survived and substantially healed from life's hurts; who has faced many of the same struggles, fears, and hardships; and who exemplifies a life of peace, joy, and inner strength.

But, it should be noted that even if a person has *not* faced significant trials or struggles, he still may have a calling and a sensitivity to care ministry and can be an excellent ministry leader!

- **Healed from past hurts:** It's important that potential leaders demonstrate substantial recovery from past hurts before leading a care ministry. Sometimes people have a heart for helping others and show great enthusiasm for ministry, but don't be tempted to place them in a leadership position too early. We strongly encourage you to protect these people and your ministry by resisting this temptation. *It's almost impossible for people to effectively lead a care ministry until they have experienced*

*considerable healing* (even if they are highly motivated). We've found that people who are still healing are also prone to quickly burn out.

- **Moral purity:** It's essential for the sake of the leaders, their families, the people who are being ministered to, and your church that your group leaders be morally pure. One report of immorality might cause serious emotional damage to a church member, jeopardize the ministry, affect the church's public reputation, and sidetrack an individual leader from public ministry indefinitely.
- **Accountable to church:** Your leaders must support your church and embrace its key values and policies. Any ministry they lead becomes an extension of your church and represents your church to people from the community who have turned to your ministry for help. If you do not already have some in place, we recommend that you develop guidelines for the leaders in your church to be accountable to. Expectations of behavior, relationships, dress, time, confidentiality, interactions with opposite sex, etc., should be clearly defined.
- **Spiritual gifts:** Potential leaders will be aware not only of their spiritual gifts, but also of their limitations and weaknesses. Help people to discover and understand their spiritual gifts. Encourage people to use their giftedness through ministry.
- **Intercessor:** Mature ministry leaders will pray for those they care for. Inquire about the person's prayer life.

Depending upon the nature of the care ministry you're recruiting for, you'll need to add other skills, gifting, experiences, or traits to your list. The key is to have a clear idea in your mind of who the ideal person is for this ministry.

#### **4. Share the vision for care ministry**

Now that you've clarified your own vision for care ministry, talk with current care ministry leaders in your church about their vision. Then share these thoughts with your congregation from the pulpit or in another large-group setting.

**Share your vision:** Potential leaders will not follow you in your vision for care ministry unless they can see where you are taking them. Show

them the need. Bring the need to them. People need to be aware of what the needs are before they can effectively pray and seek what God would have them to do as it relates to care ministry. You can make your people aware of needs by sharing regional/local statistics on specific needs, personal testimonies of people in the church who struggle with a need, general statistics of people in the congregation with a specific need, video clips showing the need, and detailed descriptions of what the need is and what would be truly helpful to those people.

**Allow current leaders to share their vision:** If a current leader shares his testimony and his passion for a certain ministry area, his word can inspire and motivate others to consider serving in ministry.

**Help potential leaders develop their own vision:** Ask questions to put ideas or options for ministry into people's minds. Help them understand that they have a place to serve and you're willing to help them find that place. Ask them to consider, "Where is God at work around me?" and "Where does God want me to join Him in His work?"

**Share the profile of the ideal candidate for the job:** Use the profile you created earlier to let people in your church know exactly the kind of person you're looking for.

## **5. Calling all potential ministry leaders—Hold an info meeting**

Consider setting up and promoting an information meeting for those interested in hearing about opportunities to start up and lead new (or existing) church ministries. Publicize it as an info-only meeting, and communicate that attending the meeting should carry no commitment.

Sample agenda:

- Present your church's vision for care ministry:
  - Overview of current care ministries
  - Specific care needs in the church
  - Ideas for new or expanded ministry
  - Short- and long-term goals for your church's care ministry

- Share leadership opportunities for new ministries and current ministries. Share training opportunities (see next section).
- Put out a call for new leaders to step up.

At the end of the meeting, provide a form to gather people's contact information and interest level. You could also pass out a "potential leader questionnaire" with questions for potential leaders to fill out and submit later, regarding their personal testimony, sense of calling from God, vision for ministry, prayer life, commitment to studying God's Word, experience, etc.

## **6. Provide and communicate training opportunities**

Many people are apprehensive about doing ministry because they think they can't. People may be more apt to volunteer if they know how they will be trained. Here are training ideas that will help you discover people's interest and commitment levels and whether the ministry is a good fit for their gifts and talents.

**Apprenticeship:** A potential ministry leader could serve as an apprentice in a current ministry. An apprentice's role would be to observe, listen, and learn from a seasoned leader, allowing time for confidence building.

**Visiting other churches:** A potential leader could visit another church with an established ministry in a certain area and shadow that ministry leader.

**Other training ideas:** Books, videos and video programs, online training, and courses offered by your church (or another church) will help a potential volunteer become more familiar with the ministry need and determine if this is where God is leading him to serve.

Above all else, pray! Pray for God to provide the workers. Pray for the workers that God will provide. Pray for discernment, sensitivity, and wisdom as you seek out care ministry leaders for your church.