

How to Run a Ministry Fair

August 3, 2006

Goal: The purpose of a Ministry Fair is to augment the stewardship effort by increasing levels of participation, involvement, and awareness of ministries within the parish community.

The Ministry Fair is multi-purposed:

- A celebration of the work of the Church.
- A “thank you” to all those who carry out the parish’s mission.
- A time to highlight services available within the parish.
- An occasion for those already involved to develop a greater sense of who they are and what their mission is.

A ministry extravaganza is an event in which all ministries, programs and services are showcased at one time, each having its own table, booth or space. This is an occasion in which all parishioners are able to meet people and gather information about the various ministries within the parish. This event allows parishioners to ask questions and also brings them to a greater awareness of all the opportunities the parish has to offer.

When: After all masses during a weekend in the Social Hall or outside under tents, with food and beverage. You may want to consider a parish picnic, pig pickin’, or coffee and donuts. It is important to have events that will capture the attention of children and offer multiple reasons for adults to linger.

Hosting a Ministry Fair requires much time and preparation. Take the time to plan your fair well and start early. Developing teams of people who are responsible for specific aspects of the Fair can lighten the workload for you, the parish staff and the Stewardship Committee. Also, the more people involved in the event fosters a stronger sense of ownership and contributes to its success. **The following are a list of teams that can aid with you in these efforts:**

- In consultation with the pastoral leadership, plan a date and reserve a site (usually the Social Hall). (If outside, please make rain contingencies.)
- Establish a budget, again working with your pastoral leaders.
- Mark the weekends (3) on the parish calendar and gather a team to coordinate the project. The first weekend should be lay witness talks. The following weekend is for the ministry fair. The last weekend is for the parishioners the opportunity to turn in their commitment cards during the collection.

- Determine which ministries or individuals should provide lay witness talks.
- Contact all organizations/ministries/programs/activities by a letter to invite to participate in the Time and Talent Fair. Be careful not to exclude anyone, even a group that may do something only once a year. If you want the ministry to provide a lay witness talk, please extend the invitation in the letter. If the organization chooses not to participate in the fair, request that they still turn in the Ministry Descriptions Form or request an updated description form (if one is not available) of the ministry to include for the brochure. Give deadlines to RSVP for participation and for their updated information to be returned to the committee.
- Begin to develop a brochure outlining ministries, descriptions, and contact names.
- Plan layout configurations for all participating parish groups.
- Make sure that every table/booth has someone available at all times during the fair in order to answer questions. Please make this expectation clear in your invitation letter.

Planning Teams:

Communications/Public Relations:

- Prepare bulletin announcements, and give to parish secretary.
- Post information on the parish website.
- Design signs/posters for parish and local community to advertise the fair.
- Design special flyers to school, community and other organizations.
- Prepare a media release.

Set Up/Decorations:

- Signs for all organizations.
- Tables (does the parish have enough, need to borrow, or does group need to provide?)
- Table cloths or banners.
- Balloons.
- Name Tags.

Two/Three Weeks before the Ministry Fair:

- Bulletin announcements.
- Broadcast email to parishioners or prominent placement on parish website.

The Week before the Ministry Fair:

- Parish Brochures/Booklets are distributed.
- Use one or a combination of homily, lay witness talks to promote time and talent opportunities in the parish.

The Day of the Ministry Fair:

- Pastors/pastoral administrators should make announcements at all of the masses.
- The day before or that Saturday, organize tables, signs and set-up for food/beverages.
- Have a sign-in sheet with names, phone numbers, email addresses for all parishioners who attend the fair.
- Have a team to help with the clean-up of the hall/site.

Ministry Commitment Sunday (the weekend after the fair):

- Collect Ministry Commitments before and after Masses. Encourage parishioners (who have not yet decided) to bring commitment cards to the parish office within the next week.
- Priests/pastoral administrators should thank all parishioners who have decided to become more actively involved in parish life.

Follow-Up:

- It is critical to have an acknowledgment process ready to take effect once the information is collected. One suggestion is to have the Stewardship Committee send an acknowledgment/thank you note, telling them that he/she will be notified by a specific date from the ministry chair. The parishioner is to be encouraged to contact the Stewardship committee (provide contact information) if they have NOT heard from the ministry chair by that date. This allows a good follow-up plan to be implemented and centralized, and reduces the frustration of people who sign up and then feel ignored.
- Make a listing available of all new volunteers to all ministries.

Additional Ideas:

- Have a picture collage of ministries.
- Have a contest between the ministries for the best or most creative display.
- To encourage traffic at all tables, have a prize drawing which may be entered by attendees once they collect signatures from a certain number of tables.
- Have a booth for welcoming new parish members. New member packets should also be available.
- Have extra ministry brochure/booklet and commitment cards available for the vestibules. This will encourage greater awareness and further participation for the ministries throughout the year.