

MINISTERING ALONGSIDE VOLUNTEERS

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Based on the gift they have received, everyone
should use it to serve others,
as good managers of the varied grace of God.
(1 Pet 4:10)

If the church would see the life and work of
each member as part of the mission of the church,
then every member would be active.¹

The Green Meadow Blues

Bro. Luis Sánchez, pastor of Green Meadow Baptist Church, sensed his apprehension mounting. Time was nearing for him to meet with Olga and Brian, the co-chairs of the committee that recruits and nominates volunteers to serve in various church ministries. He prayed for an optimistic report. Surely things would be different this year, considering they had added two staff positions and the membership had increased significantly. A knock at the door interrupted his thoughts. It was Olga and Brian, looking exhausted and frustrated. Olga explained that once again they had a shortage of volunteers to fill the vacant slots for the upcoming church year. Brian added that most of the volunteers that had been serving for the last few years were either burned out or unreliable. They

¹ G. Nelson, *Service Is the Point: Members as Ministers to the World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 7.

knew that it was time for an extreme makeover of the volunteer ministry, but where would they begin?

Sound familiar? Perhaps you, too, have encountered a similar situation and have wondered what to do. Regrettably, this is a recurring dilemma that has many churches singing the blues. But what is the source of the problem? Is it spiritual? Is it administrative? Is it a leadership issue? Is it a lack of commitment? Or is it all of the above? There is no one simple answer to this complex issue, but there are viable solutions.

In this chapter we will examine the terms *volunteer* and *laity* and the perceptions associated with these. Then we will establish a biblical and theological rationale for volunteer service in the church. Finally, we will focus on the practical aspects of recruiting, placing, training, monitoring, motivating, and retaining lay leaders.

What Is in a Name?

The purpose of this section is to dispel negative implications that may be associated with the words *volunteer* and *laity* in reference to the unpaid servants of the church. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines the two words in this manner. *Volunteer* is one who enters into or offers himself for a service of his own free will. *Laity* refers to the people of a religious faith as distinguished from its clergy.

Although the definition of *volunteer* itself is impartial, numerous negative perceptions are associated with the word. In the minds of some, *volunteer* may create erroneous images, resulting in faulty concepts: "Volunteering in the church is optional." "No expectations can be placed on volunteers; they are not paid employees." "No commitment is required of volunteers." "If the work is done poorly, well, they are only volunteers."

The definition for *laity*, however, helps to perpetuate some of the negative connotations associated with the term, such as "second class," "lower standard," "not as capable," "perform only menial jobs." As the definition indicates, *laity* is distinguished from *clergy*, which is defined by *Webster's New Collegiate* as "a group ordained for religious service." In other words, it is unpaid versus paid, common

versus elite, mediocre versus excellent. This distinction lends itself to an unwholesome and unproductive attitude resulting in a “we” and “they” mentality. Such distinction, not present in the early church culture,² produces a ministry that is mainly clergy centered, that determines the validity of a ministry according to remuneration, and that hinders the work of the church by minimizing the involvement of all believers in service.

Throughout this chapter, the terms *congregational minister*, *servant*, and *leader* will be used interchangeably with *volunteer* and *laity*. These terms are regarded as titles of honor because volunteers have been called into the body of Christ, sharing the same privileges and responsibilities as other believers. Thus, any negative meaning associated with the words *volunteer* and *laity* is discouraged. Lay leaders are equal partners in ministry with paid staff.

What is your opinion? What are your beliefs or perceptions concerning church volunteers? Since our beliefs drive our perceptions and behavior, let us review the basis of our beliefs. We will examine the Scriptures to establish a foundation for Christians serving in the church.

Serving God Is Not Optional: A Biblical and Theological Rationale

Bestowing the privilege and responsibility of service on all believers had its inception in the mind of God. “For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). God designed a strategy of service for His chosen people. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). Jesus modeled it. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

God, our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, *called*, *gifted*, and *empowered* each of us for service. Let us look at each of these verbs more closely.

² See Ephesians 4.

Called

The term *church* in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, a compound Greek term of *ek* and *klesis*, literally meaning “the called-out ones.” This Greek term was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament that referred to the nation of Israel convened before God, submitted to His divine authority, and called out for His purpose.³

The New Testament church succeeded the Old Testament Jewish community. The early church was a close knit body of believers, Jews and Gentiles, who lived in a new relationship to God. The term *church* in the New Testament has a twofold meaning. First, the term most often refers to a local group of born-again, baptized believers of Christ, who are called out to accomplish God’s purposes. Second, the church is regarded as the body of Christ, which includes the redeemed of all the ages.⁴

Paul states in 2 Tim 1:9 that God “has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.” Christians have been set apart to carry out God’s mission. We are God’s servants called by God Himself.

Gifted

Through the Holy Spirit, God has gifted each believer with one or more spiritual gifts to fulfill the call. “A spiritual gift is an expression of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers which impacts them to serve the body of Christ, the church.”⁵ The gifts are exercised by the believers under the direction of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to respond to the call of God. Diverse yet working in harmonious unity, spiritual gifts are the spiritual tools for service with the purpose of building up the body of Christ. The spiritual gifts are discussed in Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; and 1 Peter 4.

Just as each part of the human body has a particular and necessary function, each gift is essential and equally needed in the proper functioning of the body of Christ. Paul expressed it this way: “From Him

³ Morlee H. Maynard, comp., *We’re Here for the Churches* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2001), 7.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ C. G. Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Becoming a Servant Leader* (Nashville: LifeWay, 1996), 38.

the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part" (Eph 4:16). Each of us has a contribution that is ours alone to make. There are no worthless parts in the body of Christ. Therefore, "based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God" (1 Pet 4:10).

Called and gifted by God, each Christian has a significant contribution to make to maintain the church in proper working order as intended by God. Romans 11:29 reminds us that "God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable." Each one of us has a sacred call, a solemn responsibility to identify our gifts, and a blessed privilege to exercise them for the glory of God.

Empowered

At the moment of salvation, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit: "when you believed in Him, you were also sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. He is the down payment of our inheritance, for the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:13b, 14).

Once saved, we remain in God. "This is how we know that we remain in Him and He in us: He has given to us from His Spirit" (1 John 4:13). We know that God has given us diverse gifts to accomplish His work. "Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different activities, but the same God is active in everyone and everything. A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial" (1 Cor 12:4–7).

Serving our Lord is a high privilege and a weighty responsibility. We may feel overwhelmed by the realization that we are inadequate of ourselves to accomplish anything for God. This is a human reaction, indeed, but rather than responding from a place of scarcity, let us be encouraged in knowing that God has empowered us by His Spirit.

We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ: not that we are competent of ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is

from God. He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor 3:4–6)

We are made competent, that is, we are empowered by God to serve Him. Thus, maintaining our focus on God's possibilities rather than our impossibilities encourages us to persevere in His service.

We have established that each believer is called, gifted, and empowered to serve God.

Let me ask again: What are your beliefs or perceptions concerning church volunteers? Unless we understand and believe what constitutes a biblical and theological basis for serving in the church, our actions will be based on uninformed practices and unfounded habits that will produce negative results. Therefore, it is crucial that the church staff as well as the trained and experienced congregational leaders understand their role in equipping potential church leaders.

The Role of the Staff and Experienced Laity

At any given time in the life of the local church, God places the number of servants needed to do the work of ministry. Thus, staff as well as experienced laity should be intentional in instructing members in the knowledge of their role as ministers as well as in helping them to accept that role. Randy Pope underscores the need for an informed and committed laity when he states, "The first Reformation gave the Word of God back to the people of God. Today we need a second Reformation that gives the work of God back to the people of God. That will not happen until the laity accepts their role as ministers."⁶

This is possible when the staff and experienced leaders accept their responsibility to identify potential leaders, encourage them, help them to identify their giftedness, and provide them opportunities to serve according to their giftedness, abilities, and passions. Lynn Anderson admonishes us about the importance of our role as equippers: "If a Christian leader is not equipping someone to live

⁶ R. Pope, *The Intentional Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 131.

the Christ-life through works of service, then to that degree that Christian leader is not living up to his or her calling.”⁷

In Matt 20:25–27, Jesus describes the kind of behavior that is to be exhibited by and expected of the equipping leaders:

But Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and the men of high position exercise power over them. It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to be become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave.”

Kenneth Gangel inspires us to apply the teaching of Jesus by reminding us that “we are the servants of the servants of God.”⁸

Blanchard and Miller offer an acronym for *serve* that outlines important principles to assist church leaders in responding to the noble call of equipping others.

See the future.
Engage and develop others.
Reinvent continuously.
Value results and relationships.
Embody the values.⁹

The church’s ministerial staff as well as established lay leaders will find great success in equipping members for service as they apply the principles outlined by Blanchard and Miller: (1) to visualize the church mission and vision; (2) to share these with the potential leader; (3) to enlist and equip the leaders; (4) to perpetuate the need for improvement; (5) to esteem the individuals, not merely the accomplishments; and (6) to model integrity and credibility.

As we prepare others for works of service, let us express our concern by genuinely caring for them, respecting their efforts, and treating them as equal partners in ministry. Let us be faithful to our calling as Christian leaders to equip believers to serve. Let us be committed to help volunteers reach their God-given potential in pursuit of the call of God in their lives.

⁷ L. Anderson, *They Smell like Sheep, Volume 2* (New York: Howard, 2007), 235.

⁸ K. O. Gangel, *Feeding and Leading* (Wheaton: Victor, 1989), 35.

⁹ K. Blanchard and M. Miller, *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2007), 95.

A Strategy to Equip the Saints

The goal of equipping the laity is attainable when there is an effective strategy in place, which is undergirded by prayer and aligned with the mission and vision of the church. The strategy proposed here is made up of seven basic components: (1) establish the standards; communicate expectations; (2) commit to ongoing recruitment; (3) achieve a good fit: placement; (4) provide quality training; (5) monitor to promote spiritual growth and improve performance; (6) be mindful of retention generators; and (7) provide a nurturing environment that motivates volunteers to achieve great things for God and to stay committed to their area of service.

1. Establish the Standards; Communicate the Expectations

If we expect nothing, we will get it every time. On the other hand, when expectations are placed on the membership, they will rise to the occasion. Therefore, standards, expectations, and qualifications for service in the church should be established and communicated clearly, upfront, and in writing. This will result in a strong sense of ownership and commitment on the part of the volunteer to accomplishing the task at hand.

In his book *High Expectations*, Thom Rainer observes:

- (1) "Churches that expect more from their members are more likely to retain them in active membership." (2) "The vast majority of the churches [surveyed] (95 percent) believe that a new Christian should become involved in a place of service as quickly as possible."
- (3) "Churches that have a system for spiritual gifts discovery and utilization had a higher assimilation rate than other churches."¹⁰

The unwillingness on the part of some church leaders to inform volunteers of what is expected of them will yield mediocre results. Low expectations are just as detrimental. We pay dearly in integrity and effectiveness when we water down expectations of volunteers simply because they are unpaid. We secure many benefits when we set high expectations for all leaders, whether remunerated or not. There is no place in the body of Christ for qualifications such as "a warm body," "alive," or "with a pulse," which ignore the God-given

¹⁰ T. S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 27, 125, 136.

talents and gifts that each believer has received to serve God and others. Such terms are counterproductive and inappropriate, but most importantly they violate the essence of God's call on His chosen people.

Generally qualifications will vary from church to church; however, some may be more universal. For example, for several decades, the acronym FAT—faithful, available, and teachable—has been quoted in reference to the qualifications of volunteers, especially as it relates to volunteers in the educational ministries of the church. An updated version is FAST—faithful, available, Spirit filled, and teachable.

Here is a third set. I call it the three Cs of service: *Calling*, *Character*, and *Competencies*. *Calling* refers to the call of God to serve and the empowering of the Holy Spirit to obey the call. It includes passion, attitude, and timing. *Character* pertains to holiness, integrity, and humility; that is, evidence of maturity toward Christlikeness. *Competencies* involve knowledge and understanding, abilities and skills, and attitudes. The three Cs of service emphasize the importance of having a sense of God's call and the Spirit's guidance, maturing spiritually toward a Christlike character, and developing the competencies needed to serve God.

Expectations are two-way propositions. Just like there is a set of expectations for the volunteers, the same should be true for the church. Congregational leaders can expect the church to support them in a number of ways: (1) commit to pray regularly for lay leader; (2) identify and record volunteer's giftedness, interests, skills, and abilities; (3) maintain open and clear lines of communication; (4) provide adequate resources, competent training, effective supervision, and hefty portions of encouragement; (5) provide documents that communicate expectations such as service (job) descriptions, church or workers' covenants, service applications, and samples of Bible study literature when applicable; and (6) conduct a responsible level of screening, including background checks that verify the existence or absence of prior criminal or other injurious behavior.

Standards are the boundaries within which one must navigate. Standards serve their purpose best when they are established, communicated, and monitored. Expectations help volunteers serve ef-

fectively within their commitments as well as guide leaders in the recruiting effort.

2. Commit to Ongoing Recruitment

Effective recruitment is ongoing and applies the rule of reproduction. A once-a-year recruitment effort does not suffice if we are to have the number of volunteers needed to minister effectively. Keeping our eyes and ears open as well as being consistently sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit will help us identify potential servants. As mentioned previously, the expectation is that the staff as well as the recruited volunteers will in turn recruit others who will recruit others because “if you can successfully inspire your existing volunteers to replace themselves, volunteerism has the opportunity to grow exponentially. The grassroots goal is to make sure every volunteer makes it his mission to recruit another volunteer.”¹¹ This will result in significant growth of the church’s volunteer base.

Of particular import to effective recruitment is the use of proper techniques. Gangel underscores this when he states, “Remember, people rarely perform above the level at which they were recruited.”¹² In other words, if in a desperate effort to recruit, we tell members that “there is nothing to the task” or “that anybody can do it,” we should not be surprised when volunteers do not prepare beforehand, do not attend worker’s meetings, and sometimes do not even show up for their assignments. In such cases we are not only underestimating the God-given potential of the volunteer and being untruthful; we are also “underselling” the work of the Lord. Instead, let us respect and affirm the laity by offering them meaningful ministry opportunities with clear expectations, specific goals, built-in accountability, and training. Let us believe in the abilities of the volunteers and in the importance of the ministry.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

1. Think in terms of a ministry opportunity rather than a need. There are more responses to opportunity than to need.

¹¹ A. Stanley, R. Joiner, and L. Jones, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2004), 163.

¹² Gangel, *Feeding and Leading*, 146.

2. Ask for a commitment to serve rather than to “help,” which connotes temporary, short-term, or one-time assignments. The highest call deserves the highest level of commitment.
3. Seek for mutual understanding and commitment to the expectations by communicating them clearly, thoroughly, and in writing.
4. Ask for servants or ministers instead of “volunteers” to communicate the importance of the call and ministry opportunity.
5. Allow potential leaders adequate time to pray before giving a response.
6. Appreciate their willingness to consider the position regardless of the answer.
7. See a no response as an opportunity to minister to the member.
8. Continue to respect and love the members as well as pray for them even when the answer is no.

The effectiveness of the recruitment process depends largely on the commitment of the staff and the experienced leaders actively to enlist potential leaders, using appropriate recruiting techniques. Essential also is for leaders to believe in the importance of the church’s ministries and in the potential of the volunteers as well as to accept their responsibility to equip the laity for effective service.

3. Achieve a Good Fit: Placement

Placement is matching potential leaders with ministry opportunities. Placement is more than just filling a vacant spot. The idea is to achieve a good fit, which will result in a win-win-win situation for congregational leaders, ministries, and the church at large. When lay leaders minister according to their giftedness, skills, and passions, others receive the benefits of an effectively led ministry.

Without a good fit, however, the results are burned out and frustrated volunteers who generally shy away from serving in the future if ever. Thus, insisting on forcing “a square peg in a round hole” yields adverse results for everyone involved. For example, placing a congregational leader who does not have the gift of evangelism or the passion to share Christ as the outreach leader for the church’s educational ministries because “after all, there is nothing to it” is irresponsible and inconsiderate.

Achieving a good fit requires having the pertinent information about the potential leader and the service position. Information about the service position may include purpose, qualifications, requirements, specific tasks, and accountability. Information about the potential leader may comprise spiritual giftedness, talents, passion, abilities, skills, experience, and so forth.

Interviews are indispensable links in the placement process. Such interview links are easy ways to exchange information effectively and build rapport with potential volunteers. Interviewing potential leaders helps to secure a good fit between them and the positions.

So the placement process involves a number of intentional steps from identifying qualified potential leaders, to asking them to consider prayerfully a position that may be a good fit, to placing them. When we depend on God's wisdom and discernment to guide us in the process, He enables us to accomplish this momentous, ongoing task.

4. Provide Quality Orientation and Training

When cutting down a tree, a sharp ax is preferred to a dull one. Thus, God can use us more effectively when "sharpened." Training sharpens our spiritual sensitivity as well as our ministerial skills.

Imagine any company launching a new product or service without training its personnel. Absurd, right? Corporations train their personnel extensively before any product or service is available for public consumption. However, this is not the case in many churches. Sue Mallory's statement alerts us to this ludicrous reality: "The church is one of the few, if not the only, nonprofit organization that does not require training for service in leadership. Churches tend to assume that people of faith will automatically have the kind of commitment, skill, and experience to carry out whatever is asked of them."¹³

Several factors may contribute to this situation. A church may not have a philosophy of training, may have a faulty one, or may lack understanding of the one that is in place. This results in training that is haphazard, lacking intentionality and direction. I call it "popcorn" training.

¹³ S. Mallory, *The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 150.

When working toward a sound philosophy of training, consider this: First, recognize that training is an integral component of discipleship. Training is for spiritual development as well as for skills development. Second, align the training needs with the mission and vision of the church. Such alignment will result in training that is purposeful and relevant to the accomplishment of the church mission. Volunteers in particular and the church as a whole will profit from training.

Marlene Wilson offers a succinct definition of orientation and training as well as some of the benefits.

In a nutshell, an orientation program answers the question: What is it like to live or work here? A training program answers the next question that usually follows: what does it take to be successful here?

When a volunteer has the answers to both those questions, you dramatically increase that volunteer's comfort . . . effectiveness . . . and likelihood of sticking in the job.¹⁴

An effective orientation program sets the tone for the staff and the lay leaders. It communicates the importance of preparing volunteers adequately and the commitment of the staff to support them in their various ministries. Other benefits of training include (1) preparing the lay leaders to teach the Bible properly, (2) equipping more members to assume leadership roles, (3) developing a better understanding of the job, (4) giving clear direction to the volunteers' efforts, and (5) motivating them to do their best.

There are many ways to train congregational leaders. These range from certification courses to apprenticeship opportunities, mentoring, online training, training DVDs, CDs, or audiotapes, and so forth. We improve attendance at planned training events when we (1) focus training on the needs of volunteers, (2) schedule training at times that are convenient for them, and (3) ensure that the sessions are helpful and interesting.

¹⁴ M. Wilson, ed., *Volunteer Orientation and Training*, Group's Volunteer Leadership Series, Volume 5 (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2004), 6. Group's Volunteer Leadership Series, comprised of six volumes, and Group's Church Volunteer Central Web site www.churchvolunteercentral.com offer practical and valuable helps for staff and lay leaders.

It is important to have a budget to support quality training. Such a budget would include funds for training materials, guest speaker fees, training retreats, and conferences. Expenses such as the cost of registration, mileage, and meals associated with attending a training conference should also be included. Providing the financial support for training is another way to show volunteers that the church is committed to equipping them to reach their God-given potential.

5. Monitor Performance Effectively

Overseeing the work of volunteers is an important administrative task for staff and other experienced leaders. Although sometimes misunderstood, ignored, or abused, monitoring is a crucial component of the overall strategy to equip congregational leaders. Monitoring performance for growth provides an avenue to keep the church mission and vision in focus while enabling lay leaders to serve to the best of their ability.

Terms associated with monitoring are *overseeing*, *accountability*, *relationship*, *commitment*, *improvement*, *evaluation*, and such. For Christians serving together, the terms *relationship*, *cooperation*, and *commitment* take on a special meaning. Since supervision exists in the context of a relationship, it is vital that the worker and the overseer maintain edifying relationships that demonstrate their spiritual maturity as well as strengthen their relationship in Christ. Mutual cooperation and commitment place the responsibility for results on both the volunteer and the supervisor.

Standards are crucial to the process of measuring, evaluating, and correcting performance. Without standards we cannot monitor progress. We cannot ask the question: How are we doing? Thus, it is vital that standards be established and communicated clearly and in writing and that there be a mutual understanding and commitment to the expectations as well as the goals and objectives. See Chapter 23, "Evaluating the Teaching Ministry," for more details.

Effective supervision is possible when there is a support system for the personal and spiritual enrichment of the volunteer as well as for the improvement of performance. Walter C. Wright Jr. offers a simple strategy, which he calls the CARE Plan for Volunteer Development:

- Clarify expectations.
- Agree on objectives.
- Review progress.
- Equip for performance and growth.¹⁵

When performance is inadequate, the supervisor and the volunteer should identify the cause. Subsequently, they should admit their responsibility for the failure and proceed to remedy the situation. The solution may involve reviewing or clarifying the expectations, the procedures, or the guidelines. Other situations may require re-training. And still others may involve reassigning volunteers to other ministry areas where their giftedness, abilities, and talents are better matched with the tasks and responsibilities of the ministry position.

Monitoring the level of performance of volunteers is central to the accomplishment of the church's mission. Successful monitoring is conducted through an adequate plan that enables the unpaid ministers successfully and effectively to achieve ministry goals and objectives as well as to grow in their competence and confidence.

6. Retention Generators

Most challenges related to the attrition of volunteers may be resolved at the front end by the proactive application of the principles in this chapter to each phase of the equipping process. Having the proper procedures and guidelines in place from the beginning will help to prevent or circumvent many of the recurring problems. In the same way that placing a bandage on a cut that has severed a bone is counterproductive, so is providing a simplistic solution to a problem that has compounded due to inattention. Retention, however, is generated when we: (1) offer meaningful work that has specific goals and is supported by budget and training; (2) hold workers accountable for results and offer appropriate recognition; (3) schedule orientations that promote a deeper understanding of the church's mission, establish a firm basis for effective communication, clarify expectations, and instill a sincere sense of belonging; (4) schedule training as needed; (5) respect volunteers as they are; (6) model community; and (7) show appreciation frequently, specifically, and personally.¹⁶

¹⁵ W. C. Wright Jr., *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Influence and Service* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2002), 161–79.

¹⁶ D. Pinsoneault, *Attracting & Managing Volunteers* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2001), 83–88.

In most situations we can enhance retention. Modeling perseverance in our lives and ministries, letting the volunteers know that their contributions count, remembering to minister to and with them as well as applying the principles mentioned above will reduce the attrition rate of volunteers. Let us make this our prayer: “May the Lord direct your [our] hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness [perseverance] of Christ” (2 Thess 3:5 NASB).

7. Provide a Nurturing Environment: Motivation

“Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you” (1 Sam 12:24 NASB). God’s love and grace toward us are powerful internal motivators. Likewise, loving our fellow servants with God’s unconditional love as well as loving them for who they are—and not just what they can contribute—helps them experience God’s love and be motivated by it. They, in turn, share God’s love with others as they serve faithfully and joyfully.

We certainly cannot motivate others. This reality is illustrated in the old saying, “You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink.” However, we can jump-start people by encouraging or stimulating them. Thus, providing a nurturing environment in which volunteers flourish, grow, and serve joyfully is essential. Here is an approach to consider. It comprises four simple but powerful words: *being*, *connecting*, *caring*, and *serving*.

Being refers to being physically present to guide and help the lay leaders as well as being spiritually fit in character and integrity in our dealings with them. *Connecting* pertains to finding meaningful ways to relate to volunteers. This requires that we know them and their needs. *Caring* involves demonstrating genuine concern for the lay leaders, their family, and their ministry. Part of caring is being sensitive to our demands on their time. *Serving* reminds us to use the towel and basin as our symbols of Christlike service, calling for an attitude of humility that puts the volunteers first. Notice that the important progression from “being” to “serving” requires intentionality. One can be present physically and spiritually without connecting, or one may decide to connect but not to care, or one may choose to care

but not enough to serve. We are most effective when we choose to be present, to connect, to care, and to serve.

A pervasive nurturing environment and a climate of acceptance will include delegating responsible tasks with built-in accountability, valuing the volunteers' contributions, recognizing that each lay leader has differing needs, appreciating them, and celebrating with them. Such an environment is fertile ground for creativity, vitality, and efficacy.

Let us be mindful that our actions can stimulate or hinder motivation. Our attitudes and motives make a difference in whether we *motivate* or *manipulate* volunteers. Since there is a fine line between motivation and manipulation, how can one know the difference? It boils down to motive. For example, if we approach a potential church leader regarding a service opportunity with the mind-set of "task at any cost," we have crossed the line to manipulation, possibly resorting to techniques such as guilt. On the other hand, if we give the member the freedom to choose and respect the volunteer's response, then we stimulate internal motivation. Crossing the line from motivation to manipulation occurs inadvertently sometimes and intentionally at other times. Whichever the case, the line is crossed too often to everyone's detriment.

As leaders we can foster a nurturing environment where motivation will thrive by following the suggestions found in this section and by avoiding the trappings of manipulation. Most importantly, realizing that true motivation comes from within, let us rely on the Holy Spirit to motivate us all to serve God as He deserves and others as He expects.

Singing a Different Tune: The Green Meadow Blues Revisited

After much prayer the church staff and congregation of Green Meadow Baptist Church hired a church consultant to help them resolve their volunteer dilemma. The consultant worked with the congregation to clarify the essential role that the church mission and vision play in the accomplishment of God's purpose. They established a clear understanding of the biblical perspective regarding congregational ministers, identified and specified the qualifications and expect-