



# Planning Guide Faith Encouragement Ministries

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## Quick Reference

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## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the leadership and guidance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the years of the Faith Alive programs and in our present and future years of both classic and flexible Faith Encouragement Ministries renewal programs.

We thank the thousands of volunteers who have prayed for Faith Alive and now Faith Encouragement Ministries and the volunteers who have provided their witness of what God has done in their lives. Without their prayerful decision and willingness to serve God by traveling at their own expense to participate at churches that are hundreds and even thousands of miles away, the renewal programs could not take place.

We thank our donors who make it possible for us to continue and our ministry to thrive. Your donations have made it possible for us to stay in business and to envision new programs for God's people.

We thank you, the churches and the church leadership, who have opened and are opening your hearts, minds, and doors for renewal. We know sometimes the idea of sharing one's faith is outside the familiar comfort zone. We are very excited and grateful, however, because you are offering us the opportunity to be a part of your Faith Journey.

And most important of all, we thank God as we take the message of His Love to His people. First, last, and always – to God be the Glory!

God bless us all.

## Introduction

The Faith Encouragement Ministries provide Christian spiritual renewal. The programs are short – typically one weekend – uplifting experiences for the whole congregation that take place in their home church.

The programs are led by a group of lay volunteers who come to the church at their own expense and are lodged in church members' homes. The Faith Encouragement Ministries Visiting Team members facilitate group discussions and share what God means to them in their daily lives.

The 'business' of Faith Encouragement Ministries is kept alive by the donations from current and former team members and others whose lives have been impacted by a Faith Alive program at their church. It is those faithful people who are encouraging and supporting the Faith Encouragement Ministries programs that are keeping the ministry strong.

The Faith Alive program began in the early 1970's to establish a renewal weekend led by Episcopalians as an outgrowth of experience with the Methodist Church Lay Witness Missions. Faith Alive weekends have been held in Episcopal, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian churches as well as other denominations.

In 2013, the Episcopal Faith Alive Board of Directors recognized the ecumenical appeal of Faith Alive by opening the Board membership to faithful Christians of other denominations. The Board further recognized the needs of churches to provide more flexibility in the program's content and schedule for their members.

The Board reorganized the unchanged "classic" Faith Alive program under the banner of Faith Encouragement Ministries and approved development of new programs, Faith Journey.

Faith Journey provides flexibility of a renewal program to serve the specific needs of a congregation. For example, there is a program designed specifically for smaller churches and missions. We anticipate even more Faith Journey programs!

## Overview

### Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of the Planning Guide is to provide the church preparing for a Faith Encouragement Ministries program with a "go-to" source of information for the clergy, general chairperson, and all the committee chairpersons.

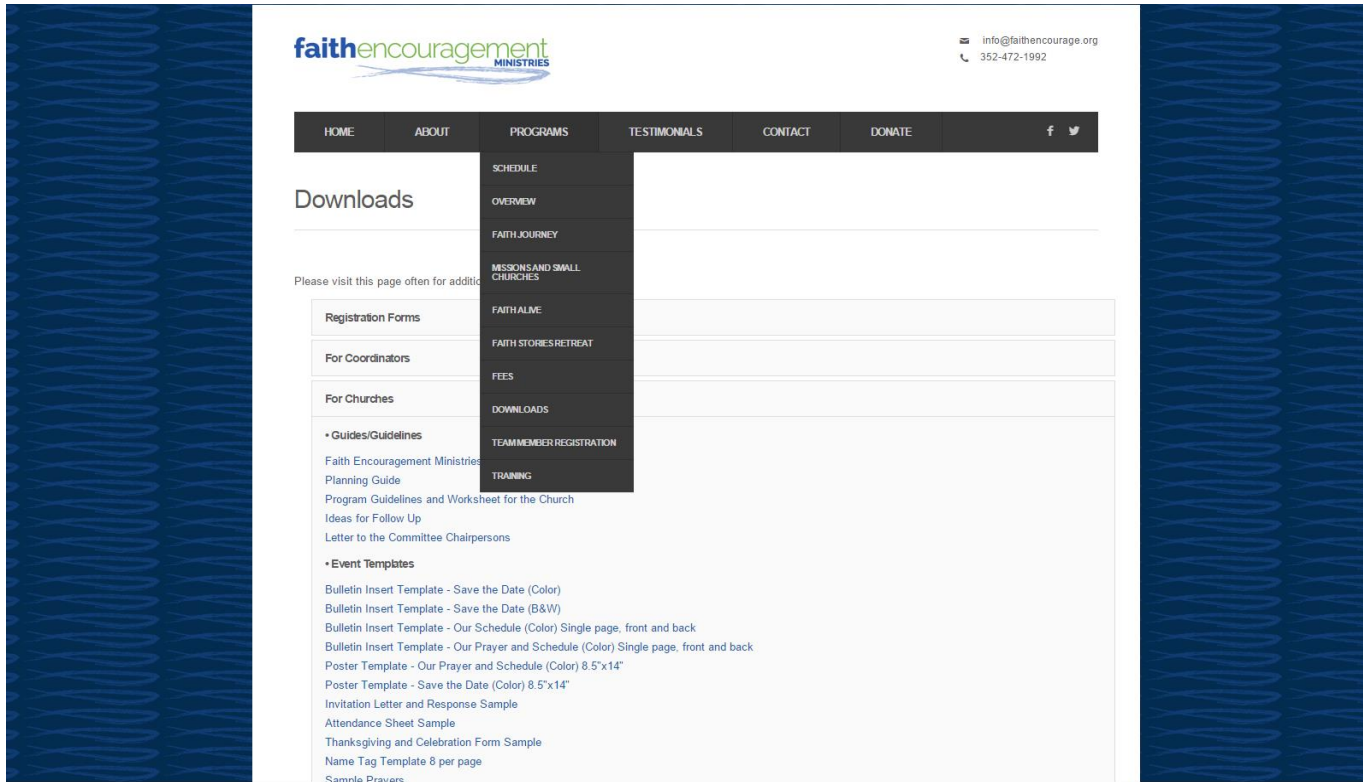
The Planning Guide is based on years of experience and provides an excellent view of the responsibilities of each committee leading to a successful renewal program for the church.

Not all committees are required for all churches, and not all outlined activities are required for every committee. The general chairperson, clergy, and committee chairpersons should work with their Faith Encouragement Ministries Coordinator to plan their committee activities.

## Documents are Online

All of our documents are online. You can read, reference, or download a document from your computer whenever you like – no need to wait for someone to send it to you!

<http://faithencouragement.org/downloads/>



## Importance of Safeguarding Children and Teens

Faith Encouragement Ministries is committed to the church safeguards, policies and procedures established for the protection of children and teens. All of the Faith Encouragement Ministries volunteers who work with the children's or teens' programs are required to have completed the *Safeguarding God's Children* training prior to serving on a weekend.

The Faith Encouragement Ministries Children's Coordinator, any Assistants, Teen Coordinator, and any Assistants are all under the authority of the senior pastor and are an extension of the church's on-going program of Christian Education.

## Terminology

### *The Church Team*

"Chair or Chairperson" is used to refer to a leader from the church for the Faith Encouragement Ministries program. So, for example, the General Chair(person) leads and coordinates the church Faith Alive or Faith Journey team. The Prayer Chairperson leads the prayer committee.

The church team is sometimes referred to as the “Home Team” to differentiate and to remind us all that any Faith Encouragement Ministries weekend requires *both teams* for a successful program.

### ***The Visiting Team***

“Coordinator,” and in the case of Music, “Leader,” refers to the person from the Faith Encouragement Ministries visiting team who is leading the program or a portion of the program. The Weekend Coordinator leads and coordinates the Faith Encouragement Ministries program and visiting team and also works very closely with the Clergy and General Chairperson to guide and make recommendations for the weekend. The Children’s Coordinator and Teen Coordinator lead the children’s and teen programs, respectively.

“Visiting Team” refers to the Faith Encouragement Ministries’ people from out of town who have been recommended by the Coordinator and invited by the church to attend their program.

### **What a Weekend Might Look Like**

Your Faith Encouragement Ministries Coordinator will provide you with your schedule. The following is a sample of events.

#### Thursday

*Prayer Vigil* begins

#### Friday

*Arrival* of visiting team members

*Team meeting* of visiting and home teams

*Evening Meal* for all church and visiting team

*Program* – Music, faith stories of visiting team

*Small Group Session* – Facilitated by visiting team

*Program* – Reports from Small Group sessions

*Visiting team* goes home with housing hosts

#### Saturday

*Team meeting*

*Teens and Children* meet at church

*Neighborhood Groups* in church member homes; simple meditation facilitated by visiting team

*Separate lunches* for Men, Women, Children, Teens

*Team Meeting*

*Evening Meal* for all church and visiting team

*Program* – Music, faith stories of visiting team

*Small Group Session* – Facilitated by visiting team

*Opportunity for personal prayer* – frequently at the church altar

*Visiting team* goes home with housing hosts

#### Sunday

*Church Services* (Clergy discretion: combined service or usual service times)

*Lunch* for all or sack lunches for visiting team

*Departure* of visiting team

## **It All Begins With Prayer**

### **Prayer**

Prayer is the common thread beginning when your church first considers a Faith Encouragement Ministries program and continuing on even after your program has ended.

After your Clergy and lay leadership have prayerfully submitted the registration for your church, a Program Weekend Coordinator for the church's program is designated after prayer by the Faith Encouragement Ministries leadership. The registration is announced on the Faith Encouragement Ministries website, initiating even more prayer coverage. The continuing prayers of Faith Encouragement Ministries' members and your own church lie at the very core of the program's success.

### **Costs**

As a good steward of scarce resources of both time and money, cost is certainly a concern; however, if the church has prayerfully determined that spiritual renewal is what the church needs, then the value of the program cannot be measured with money.

Costs include the registration fee and the following additional costs managed by the church:

1. *Food*
2. *Promotional material*
3. *Additional help (nursery, kitchen cleanup)*
4. *Facilities or equipment rental*

While food is most likely the highest cost item, there are ways to manage the costs to the church and its people with careful planning. Other churches have kept their food costs under control through simplifying the menus, working with local caterers, having church members provide side dishes, etc. Without planning, the food costs will be much higher than they might have been.

### **Determining Your Program**

Included in the Information Packet sent to your church is the *Faith Encouragement Ministries Guidelines for the Church*. Your prayerful responses to the questions help the Faith Encouragement Ministries leadership to determine, again with prayer, your program needs and schedule.

1. What are your church's greatest strengths?
2. What are your top 2-4 ministry priorities?
3. What would you like to continue and encourage?
4. What are possible opportunities for your church?
5. What obstacles do you face for the weekend?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit guiding your church?



Your Coordinator, who is assigned after your registration is received, will finalize your weekend date with you and plan your Faith Alive or your Faith Journey program and schedule based on your church's needs.

## Preparations

### Getting Started

The Faith Encouragement Ministries programs are lay-driven and lay-led. The selection of the General Chair and the Follow Up Chair is most important because there is much planning, organizing, and work to be done for the program to be as effective as possible. These lay people, who are selected by the Senior Pastor, must have outstanding communication skills and should be fully willing, capable, and available to serve for this important event in the life of the church.

The Clergy and the General Chair should pray together and then select and talk to prospective people to head the various committees. It is essential these people are interested in the program and are also willing to carry out their duties.

The Committee Chairs should meet with the Clergy and General Chair as often as needed and certainly no less than three or four times during the course of the planning and preparations with more frequent meetings as the weekend gets closer. At least one meeting should be held with the Faith Encouragement Ministries Coordinator who will visit the church early in the planning stage.

Consider asking the leadership of a neighboring church to provide assistance with meals or facilities if needed. It is very important to free your people of tasks during the program so they can attend all events.

## Leadership

### Clergy

Unless the senior pastor is enthusiastic and supportive of the weekend, there will not be good participation from the congregation as a whole. Because of their leadership standing in the church, this applies to other clergy and staff as well.

While the program is led by the lay Faith Encouragement Ministries Coordinator, this in no way decreases or encroaches on the pastor's role as the spiritual leader of the church. The clergy's guidance, in preparing and enabling lay people to exercise the ministries into which God leads them, is important for the success of growing their skills.

The role of clergy when the church's program begins is that of chaplain, spiritual director, and observer until Sunday morning. The Faith Encouragement team certainly submits to the authority of the senior pastors of the church.

The visiting team depends on the clergy to provide an accurate description of the church, including areas of sensitivity, style of piety and his/her hopes and plans for the future of the church. We strongly recommend the pastor and committee chairs attend all team meetings.

Sunday morning worship is under the full direction of the pastor, although it is common for the Coordinator to speak at the services either briefly or in the place of the sermon two weeks prior to the weekend program and again in the place of the sermon on the Sunday of the program.

An important part of the weekend is the opportunity on Sunday morning for church members to commit, recommit, or rededicate their lives to Christ. The Coordinator will discuss this with the pastor in advance.

It is generally helpful for the Coordinator to be lodged with the pastor, if possible, to facilitate communications. If not, he or she should be lodged with the General Chair.

### *General Chair*

The focus of the Faith Encouragement Ministries program is on the laity, and it is important that lay people in the church exercise leadership in the planning and preparations and in encouraging church members to participate.

The General Chair sees that all details are handled effectively. One goal of the General Chair is to involve as many church members as possible by giving them responsibilities. There is sometimes a tendency for a General Chair to handle too many details and take on everything! However, the more people who are involved, the more who will show up.

The General Chair needs to be encouraging and communicating regularly with the Committee Chairs and at the same time, praying and expecting God to guide them. Encourage the Committee Chairpersons to take advantage of the handouts, samples, and templates that are on the website as downloads for the churches. <http://faithencourage.org/downloads/> Feel free to contact the Program Office if a committee is looking for a template or a sample that is not currently on the downloads list for churches. All of the documents that are currently available were either provided by a church from their Faith Alive weekend or were requested by a church.

There may be difficulties and problems, but God will work them out as we hand the problems over to Him. Prayer removes obstacles and provides new ideas that can lead to resolution.

The General Chair can certainly lean on the expertise of their Coordinator who has experienced similar problems to those the General Chair may be facing.

Discussing the following facilities and logistics concerns early on helps to lay the foundation for subsequent decisions: (assumes a typical Friday night/Saturday schedule)

- Brainstorm ideas to keep food costs within the expected budget
- Where to hold the Friday night meal and program session.
  - Plan on about 50-70% of the adults who are normally in church on a Sunday to come to the first meal and then count the visiting team members, teens, and children.
  - Ability to feed people and clear tables rapidly
- Availability of space for small groups Friday and Saturday nights.
  - Plan for a room or a space for every 10 adults expected to attend.

- Separate space for the children.
- Separate space with no interruptions for the teens.
- Facilities for the men's and women's lunches.
- Parking facilities.
- Acoustics. A good public address system is critical for the large group programs. Some voices are soft and don't carry well, and some ears don't hear as well as they used to.

### *Follow Up Chair*

The Follow Up Chairperson has three major areas of responsibility.

The first is to meet with the Clergy and General Chair and other church leaders and to prayerfully discuss and respond to the questions in the *Faith Encouragement Ministries Guidelines for the Church*. After the Follow Up Chair summarizes the responses, the Clergy, General Chair and Follow Up Chair meet with the assigned Coordinator or Faith Encouragement Ministries leader to review and finalize the priorities of the responses. The Coordinator/Faith Encouragement Ministries Leader develops program, program content, and schedule for the church based upon the church's needs and priorities.

The second is to facilitate the church-wide "Evaluation and Feedback" session which is held at the end of the program. This gathering becomes a landmark beginning for new and updated church programs. As part of the session, the Follow Up Chair provides a handout or questionnaire for everyone in the church to complete. The Follow Up Chair and Committee collect and summarize the responses and provide their report to the Clergy. There are sample handouts on the website. <http://faithencourage.org/downloads/>

The third is to encourage the church members to sign up for the Faith Encouragement Ministries newsletter or to sign up as a team member. One to two weeks after the event, the Follow Up Chair reminds the church to consider the impact of the weekend and to sign up for the Faith Encouragement Ministries newsletter. For those who feel called to serve on a Faith Encouragement Ministries team, the Follow Up Chair sends a reminder to register as new Team Members on the Faith Encouragement Ministries website.

The Follow Up Chairperson may be asked by the Correspondence Chair to provide a brief post-weekend summary for the visiting team to be included with the final *Thank You* from the church. A short paragraph summary of the Follow Up Committee's observations from the weekend will be greatly appreciated by the Coordinator and visiting team.

### **Committees**

#### *Attendance*

The Attendance Committee is responsible for ensuring that everyone in the church is invited to and encouraged to attend. The most important quality for committee members is they need to be enthusiastic and committed to attending themselves. Be sure to reflect the church members in the

Attendance Committee. For example, having men, women, younger people, older people, etc. on the committee will help every person in church to feel included.

The Attendance and Publicity committees work very closely. Publicity makes the church members aware and keeps reminding them of the upcoming program.

Attendance provides the *person to person* invitation and collects the names of those who are going to attend the different events, including the names and ages of teens, children, and babies!

Attendance may also work closely with Transportation by collecting the names of those who need a ride for certain events and those who are willing to give their neighbor a lift.

The Committee determines the expected attendance for Adults, Teens, Children, and Nursery for each time period (again assuming the typical Friday night/Saturday program):

- Friday Evening Meal
- Saturday Morning Neighborhood Groups
- Saturday Lunches
- Saturday Evening Meal

Initially, the Attendance Chairperson will be only able to provide rough estimates of numbers of people based on expectations and hopes – *Best Guess*. While many of the other committees rely on the estimated attendance, the Best Guess will have to suffice until the weekend gets closer and it becomes evident that the Best Guess may need to be revised or is good enough. The Food Committee needs an idea of how many adults, children, and teens to expect. The Neighborhood Group Committee must decide how many host homes are required for Saturday morning. The Welcome Committee needs to know how many name tags or badges to provide for church members including children and teens. Facilities needs to know how many to be able to seat for the Friday night meal.

### *Children*

The Coordinator will provide a Faith Encouragement Ministries Children's Coordinator and program for children ages 4 through the fifth grade.

The FEM Children's Coordinator frequently brings an assistant to help with the program, but it is important for the church's Children's Committee to ensure there is at least one church member who is familiar to the children present at all the children's sessions. Additional church members may be needed, depending on the number of children who attend, and to provide an opportunity for all church members to participate in at least some portions of the adult program.

The following are the basic responsibilities of the Children's Committee, working closely with the Children's Coordinator prior to the weekend:

1. Describe the church children: the number expected and their ages; types of activities they enjoy; what topics they have studied recently in Sunday School.

2. Arrange for a room with ample space for the children's program. Note that nearby restroom facilities are important.
3. Identify outdoor facilities for some physical activities
4. Have any materials and equipment available that the Children's Coordinator requests.
5. Arrange for lunch for the children on Saturday, keeping it simple, healthy and kid-friendly.
6. See that appropriate snacks and drinks (being aware of allergies and sugar content) are provided for the children.
7. Arrange for publicity for the children's program, emphasizing the children's schedule.
8. Review the planned children's schedule and then the final (more detailed) plan of activities and the schedule.
9. The visiting teens may volunteer to teach Sunday School. Work closely with the Sunday School teachers to keep them informed.
10. Encourage different church members to volunteer for different sessions of the Children's Program.
11. Stay in close communication with the Children's Coordinator, sharing ideas for success.

### *Church Liaison*

The major responsibility of the Church Liaison Committee is to seek assistance from other churches for space for events, for example meals; or with different activities to supplement the church's members, for example, assisting in serving food or clearing dishes.

Housing visiting team members or hosting Neighborhood Groups are reserved for the church or churches (for those who are co-hosting a joint weekend) that are sponsoring the Faith Encouragement Ministries weekend. The hospitality activities are part of the overall experience to encourage getting to know and welcome the visiting team and to involve even more church members in the events of the weekend.

### *Correspondence*

The Correspondence Committee has four major responsibilities:

1. Sending invitations to the list of prospective Visiting Team members provided by the Coordinator
2. Acknowledging receipt of acceptance
3. Providing the names, addresses, and additional information about the Visiting Team to the Housing, Transportation, and Welcome Committees
4. Sending thank you letters or emails after the weekend

The invitation letter is sent two or three months before the weekend only to the visiting team members on the list provided by the Coordinator. The letter should include a list of all the prospective visiting team to allow for shared transportation. Enclose a stamped and addressed return card or envelope for their reply. There is a sample invitation letter on the website. <http://faithencouragement.org/downloads/>

Ask for specifics such the names of everyone in the family who is coming, ages of any children or babies, special needs, physical limitations, date and time of arrival, mode of travel, need for local transportation if traveling other than by car. Ask for a prompt response or an indication of possible acceptance if a definite reply cannot be made at once.

Check with your General Chair or the Coordinator about four weeks prior to the beginning of the program with an update of responses. The Coordinator may decide to give you a list of other people to be invited or may request you contact those who have not responded.

The committee may also organize church members to send personal notes to each visiting team member, welcoming the team member to their church.

After the weekend, the committee sends a formal thank you letter to the Coordinator and visiting team members. They will appreciate hearing about what has happened as a result of the Faith Alive or Faith Journey program.

### *Facilities*

The Facilities Committee is responsible for making sure arrangements are made for sufficient tables and chairs for meals, determining the location of small groups for the two different sessions, and providing clear identification of the rooms. Include maps showing the layout of the buildings with locations indicated.

The Facilities Committee makes sure there is enough space available and accessible for all the activities that take place. There will need to be a safe room for children with easy access to restrooms, a room set aside for the teens, and a room set aside for the nursery with running water for hand washing.

The weekend team meetings are often held in the church to provide the musicians access to the equipment and facilities needed for music/worship during the team meeting.

### *Follow Up*

During the program, the Follow Up Committee pays close attention to the portions of the program that seem to spark a particular interest for themselves and other church members. These ideas can be used for further discussion at the Evaluation and Feedback session.

The Follow Up Committee plans the Evaluation and Feedback gathering along with the Food and Publicity Committees. Follow Up provides the evaluation handout or questionnaire for everyone in the church to complete. The Committee collects the handouts and tabulates the responses which are then summarized by the Follow Up Chair.

### *Food*

Because the Food Committee has much to do with all the meals, clean up, and the short amount of allotted time, the committee could easily be subdivided so that different groups were responsible for each meal. Advance planning will definitely pay off.

There are a total of three major meals for a typical weekend: Friday night, Lunch on Saturday, and Saturday night. Adults, children, and teens eat together at the evening meals. The third meal, Saturday lunch, however, might be counted as four meals in and of itself because the men, women, children, and teens all eat separately.

After you have your overall plan for the food, work with the General Chairperson and the Facilities Committee to finalize the locations for the meals, and then plan each meal in more detail, beginning with the Friday night meal.

The Food, Follow Up, and General Chairpersons work together to plan the church Evaluation and Feedback, which could be a full meal or light snacks.

Avoid tying up church members in the kitchen; instead, use catering, ask other churches to help, have church members bring standard dishes or side dishes, use paper plates, etc. For example, sandwiches or subs can be purchased ready-made rather than having church members spend Saturday morning making sandwiches.

In holding down expenses for the church, remember to keep costs down for your members, too. Be sensitive to ensuring no one is excluded from meals because of cost. If you collect a love offering or nominal fee for meals, make it clear that the visiting team members are exempt as guests of the church.

The entire meal (from the blessing of the food until the last person has finished eating) should take about 30-35 minutes. In the interest of time, serve buffet style using double lines for speed.

The following are suggestions for the menus for meals.

- Friday night: Casserole, like lasagna, in throw away aluminum pans
- Saturday lunch: Premade sandwiches for the adults; pizza for the teens; sandwiches and fruit for the children
- Saturday night: Large pot meal (like chili) or purchased meat entree supplemented by side dishes provided by church members
- Sunday lunch: Light potluck lunch of salads or premade sandwiches
- Be aware of food allergies. Labeling food, particularly with multiple ingredients like casseroles or salads, is helpful.
- In menu planning, you may want to include simple vegetarian, vegan or gluten-free alternatives based on the needs of your church members. Visiting team members with special dietary needs or preferences frequently either bring their own food or make do with what is provided.

Remember to minimize the food preparation and clean up so that everyone can participate. The program is too important to be preempted by kitchen duty.

The keys to success are

- Planning and Flexibility Will Save Your Sanity

- Keep Menus Simple
- Think Efficiency and Speed
- Don't Try to Do It Alone (because you can't)
- Be Mindful of the Cost Impact

### *Housing*

The primary responsibility of the Housing Committee is to secure lodging in church members' homes for the visiting team members. While it might seem easier to assign each committee chair or vestry member as a housing host, it is critical to consider those who are not necessarily the "core" of the church. Invite the church members who are on the periphery to become involved by hosting a visiting team member.

Begin lining up potential housing hosts early. You may want to also gather details about the home environment which will be invaluable later in matching up hosts and guests. There is a sample form on the website. <http://faithencouragement.org/downloads/>

In planning the housing assignments, spouses or families are, of course, housed together. Teen witnesses are lodged with church teens of the same sex and approximate age where possible or with the Teen Coordinator or any Teen Program Assistants. In matching up lodging hosts and their guests, a sense of propriety and sensitivity are good guides for making the lodging assignments. For example, do not house a lone woman in a house with no woman in residence (and the same for a man) or house a woman and an unrelated man in the same home. Be aware of potential appearances to any casual observers. If there are any doubts about a lodging arrangement, it might be prudent to err on the side of caution. You can always ask your Coordinator for advice.

As soon as a visiting team member has been assigned to a home, send the visiting team member the contact information for their host. Suggest the host write a brief note of welcome. Make sure the hosts know to provide breakfast for their guests on Saturday and Sunday.

Let your lodging hosts know that their guests may go straight to the church on Friday; however, encourage the hosts to contact their guests directly. Lodging hosts attend the Friday evening meal so that they can meet their guests, or, if that isn't possible, they should make arrangements for someone to provide transportation to their home at the end of the Friday evening program.

The Housing Committee should have some homes lined up on a tentative basis in case of unforeseen changes or last minute additions.

### *Literature*

Readers will be thrilled by a book table. Good Christian books are not always easy to find, especially for children, tweens, and teens. And to complicate your assignment even further, studies show that most avid readers prefer to read a book, including the Bible, on their iPad, tablet, or e-reader.

For your electronic readers, consider providing a list of e-books that have been recommended by other readers. Providing reviews or comments about the books would be a plus.



For your traditional book readers, consider a book exchange or 'Take Me' table. There may be an avid reader in your church who would love to stand at your book table and make recommendations. Another alternative would be to obtain books from a Christian book store on consignment if someone at church has those contacts.

Provide a sign-up sheet for the Faith Encouragement Ministries Newsletter at the Literature Table for those who might be interested.

### *Music*

The Coordinator assigns a Faith Encouragement Ministries Music Leader who will lead and be in charge of the music for all program sessions.

The Faith Encouragement Music Leader's responsibilities are the following:

- Select songs for the weekend in conjunction with the Clergy and Coordinator and Music Chair.
- Prepare an electronic list of hymns, song sheets, or other visual aids to support the music.
- Select the music team.
- Advise the Music Chairperson of any equipment needs.
- Lead the music/worship for team meetings and program sessions.
- Provide appropriate reverent music during the altar prayer time at the Sunday services.

The Church Music Chairperson's responsibilities are the following:

- Contact the Music Leader to determine if it would be appropriate for musicians from the host church to join the music team and to make recommendations.
- Provide the Music leader a list of hymns the church is familiar with in addition to copies of any supplemental music used by the church.
- Help with duplicating song sheets or booklets for the weekend.
- Coordinate equipment for the Visiting Music Team.
- Serve as a member of the Follow Up committee.
- Plan appropriate joyful music for the Sunday service(s).
- Collaborate with the Music Leader, particularly for music in support of special events during the Sunday service.

### *Neighborhood Groups*

#### Neighborhood Groups in Homes of Church Members

The Neighborhood Groups are held in the homes of the church members and last about 1 ½ - 2 hours. Similar to Housing, it might seem easier to assign each committee chair or vestry member as a neighborhood group host, but it is critical to consider those who are not necessarily the "core" of the church. Invite the church members who are on the periphery to become involved by hosting a neighborhood group.

Because the Neighborhood groups are typically held mid-morning and are immediately followed by lunch, the hosts should plan on coffee, tea, water and only simple refreshments. The visiting team members will lead the program.

The following are the tasks of the Neighborhood Groups Committee.

- Divide the membership of the church geographically to ensure all neighborhoods or areas have a host home.
- Confirm host homes and give each host a portion of the families or households to call and invite to their home, using the Neighborhood Group list from Attendance as a starting point.
- Alternate homes can be selected to take up any overflow with the alternate hosts assisting in calling people.
- Plan on no more than 12 church members in a group.
- Verify the neighborhood group home addresses before the weekend to ensure drivers have the correct address.
- Typically, the General Chairperson and Coordinator along with the Senior Pastor host a group at the church for the last-minute participants.

#### *Alternative to Neighborhood Groups*

The membership of some churches comes from a widespread geographical area with no clearly identifiable “neighborhoods” of members. As an alternative to having parishioners and the visiting team members spending more time on the road driving than they are in attendance at the Group meditation and discussion, some churches have hosted the Groups at the church itself. This might appear to be a less complicated solution, but there are still responsibilities for the Neighborhood Group Committee.

The following are some of the ways to make the alternative as successful as a Neighborhood Group:

- Plan on coffee, tea, water, and simple refreshments.
- Using the Neighborhood Group estimate from Attendance as a starting point to determine the number of groups, divide the membership of the church among the different groups.
- Consider designating “hosts” for each group at the church to provide the simple refreshments for their group and to invite parishioners who are assigned to their group.
- Rather than having simple refreshments, some churches have hosted a parish-wide breakfast prior to the beginning of the morning’s program.
- If space allows, plan on smaller groups of 8-10 church members.

#### *Nursery*

Providing nursery care is very important for families with babies and toddlers who might otherwise not be able to attend the weekend functions. Preferably, paid personnel are used so the church members can attend the program. The Attendance Committee can help with determining an idea of how many to expect; however, a warm invitation from the Nursery Chairperson to all the families with babies or toddlers will help them to feel welcome and included in the weekend.

## *Prayer*

Without taking away from all the hard work all the committees are doing, a most critical activity in preparation for the program is prayer. The Prayer Committee develops the Faith Encouragement Ministries prayer, with approval by the Pastor, at least four months prior to the weekend. The prayer is prayed on Sundays and published in bulletins.

The Prayer Committee plans the 24-Hour Prayer Vigil, at the church if possible, or if not, in homes. Ask church members to take half-hour or hour time slots. Provide a format for Scripture reading, meditation, and prayer.

Arrange for prayer coverage to continue for two weeks to one month after the program. Pray for inspiration and direction for the initiated programs and for all those who are personally touched by the weekend.

## *Publicity*

The primary task of the Publicity Committee is to heighten the interest of the entire church. It is difficult to motivate those members who are not normally involved in the church activities – those who are on the periphery. Asking them to volunteer in some way often helps them to participate.

The Publicity Chairperson may want to review the promotional suggestions and material available on the website for ideas as they develop the overall plan for publicity with the goal of heightening awareness as the time for the program grows closer. The website has examples of “Save the Date,” printed weekend schedules, and other publicity materials that have been used successfully by other churches. Ask your Coordinator if you are interested in having a Faith Encouragement Ministries, Faith Alive, or Faith Journey banner in the church to promote awareness before and during the weekend.

The Publicity Committee and the Prayer Committee may work together to create a prayer card with information about the weekend as a reminder. Your Coordinator can provide examples of promotion strategies that other churches have found effective.

## *Teens*

The Coordinator will provide a Faith Encouragement Ministries Teen Coordinator and teen team members who are responsible for the middle and high school age teen program. It may be possible to split the large groups – middle school and high school – into logical groups for discussion and small groups. If this is a possibility for the church, discuss the idea early in the process with the General Chairperson, Clergy, and Weekend Coordinator.

The church’s Chairperson for the Teens is typically, but not always, the regular Teen Leader for the church. For continuity, the church’s Teen Leader/Youth Minister is encouraged to attend the Teen program throughout the weekend.

The following are the basic responsibilities of the Teens Committee, working closely with the Teen Coordinator prior to the weekend:

1. Provide a profile (who they are) of the church teens: the number expected and their ages; types of activities they enjoy; how often they meet; where they are in their spiritual journey.
2. Arrange for a large room specifically reserved for the teen program with smaller rooms for breakout sessions, if possible.
3. Have any material or equipment available that the Teen Coordinator requests.
4. Check with the Food Committee to make sure that lunch on Saturday is planned.
5. Discuss and arrange possible teen activities for Saturday afternoon.
6. Arrange publicity for the teen program and schedule of events, preferably involving the church teens.
7. The Teen Team may be available to lead Sunday school on the Sunday of the Weekend. Discuss with the Teen Coordinator.
8. Church teens are strongly encouraged to bring friends who are not church members to the weekend if this is approved by the church.
9. Arrange for the church's Youth Minister or other adult involved with the church's teens plan to attend the Teen Program so there will be continuity with the program after the weekend.
10. Review the planned schedule and activities with the Teen Coordinator.
11. Stay in close communication, sharing ideas for success.

### *Transportation*

There are four major areas of responsibility for the Transportation Committee:

- Visiting team arriving and departing at airports
- Visiting team to and from Neighborhood Groups
- Visiting team without cars to and from the host homes and the church
- Church members to and from church for those unable to drive; for example, after dark

Make sure the Weekend Coordinator has been provided with the area's preferred airport for arrival and departure if the area is served by more than one airport. Arranging the pick-up and delivery from and to airports of team members may be simplified after reviewing flight schedules for times within an hour or so of each other.

Providing transportation for the visiting team from the church to the neighborhood group homes Saturday morning is important. Obtaining the names of those attending the different groups will make it easier to find drivers. It might seem that giving maps to visiting team members with cars would suffice, but too often the maps either aren't detailed enough or are not correct. A passenger who is familiar with the area and can serve as navigator is invaluable. Check with the Neighborhood Group Team to be sure addresses for the homes are correct.

Discuss the need of transportation for the visiting team without cars to and from the host homes and church with the Housing Team to make sure that transportation can be covered by the hosts.

Work with the Attendance Committee to identify church members who would welcome riding with someone else and those who would be willing to give a neighbor a lift.

## Visitation

Visitation is optional; however, if there is interest, it is very rewarding for all.

The Visitation Committee makes arrangements for both church members and visiting team members to visit a local assisted living facility or homebound folks together. Those being visited, especially long-time church members, who are unable to attend, are drawn into the weekend. Suggestions include: singing an old familiar hymn, providing an overview of the weekend, or presenting a Bible reading and devotional.

## Welcome

There are two major functions of the Welcome Committee. The first is to make the visiting team members feel welcome and appreciated when they arrive at the church on Friday. A Welcome Committee member should be on hand when the visitors arrive to welcome them with light refreshments, coffee, tea, water and directions to the nearest restrooms.

A Welcome Packet or bag for the visiting team members could include a distinctive name tag or badge, a map of the church, a map of the area, lodging host information, etc. The Welcome Committee introduces the visiting team member and their local host as soon as possible.

The second major function is to ensure that everyone in attendance has a name badge or tag. Because the weekend will be bringing together people from different services, the visiting team name badges or tags should be visibly different than the church members' badges; for example, a different color. Name tags that hang from a lanyard or clip on are preferable because they can be reused throughout the weekend. The Committee makes sure that everyone is provided a name tag for all sessions, including children and teens.

## Timetable

The following suggested timetable can be used to initiate or check planning progress of preparations for the church's program. The time references are in terms of the amount of time prior to beginning the program. Details are omitted because they are covered in other places.

As always, if you or your committees have any questions or need ideas for implementing a particular aspect, your Coordinator or the Program Director are excellent resources.

## Six Months or Earlier

- Clergy selects General Chair and Follow Up Chair.
- Clergy sends Registration Form with fee to the National Office.
- Church office receives the Preparation Packet and gives the material to the General Chair.
- Clergy, General Chair, Follow Up Chair and other church leaders prayerfully meet to discuss and respond to the questions in the *Faith Encouragement Ministries Guidelines for the Church*.

- Clergy, General Chair, and Follow Up Chair meet with Coordinator or Faith Encouragement Ministries leader to review and discuss the responses to the *Faith Encouragement Ministries Guidelines for the Church*.
- Clergy and General Chair select Committee Chairs and give each a copy of their Committee's Planning Guide information.
- Coordinator/Faith Encouragement Ministries Leader finalizes program, program content, and schedule for church.
- Clergy, General Chair, and Coordinator finalize the weekend date after carefully reviewing church calendar as well as scheduled community and school events.

#### ***Four Months or Earlier***

- Committee Chairpersons start selecting committee members and providing information to them.
- Prayer Committee develops the Faith Encouragement Ministries prayer to be prayed on Sundays and published in bulletins.
- Food Chairperson develops the plan for food for the weekend, including estimated costs.
- Clergy or General Chair arranges for the Coordinator to visit the church to meet with Committee Chairpersons and if available, to speak briefly at Sunday Services.
- Clergy, General Chair, and Committee Chairs make basic decisions about Friday night dinner location and reserve facilities. Discuss with Coordinator.
- Publicity Chairperson, after reviewing plan with Clergy and General Chair, begins publicity at church.
- Housing Chair begins recruiting lodging hosts.
- Literature Chair reviews plan with Clergy.
- Attendance Chair prepares church lists from which other committees can work.
- Nursery Committee finalizes plan for Nursery and notifies Publicity.
- Facilities Chair finalizes plan for public address system.

#### ***Three Months or Earlier***

- Committee Chairpersons and Clergy meet to pray and review planning.
- Correspondence Committee sends out invitations to prospective Visiting Team Members as soon as list is received from Coordinator.
- Music Chairperson contacts Coordinator or Music Leader to determine music needs: acoustics, speaker system, overhead projector, printed song sheets, etc.
- Music Chairperson and Faith Encouragement Music Leader discuss songs for the weekend and determine placement of the Faith Encouragement Ministries Music Team in the Sunday service. Clergy is involved in any decisions regarding selection of music.
- Clergy begins to prepare church members through sermons and teaching.
- Teen Chair discusses weekend with teens after talking with Teen Coordinator and makes arrangements for the Teen Meeting, lunch and activity options on the Saturday of the weekend.

- Children’s Chair makes plans for the children’s program, after talking with the Children’s Coordinator.
- Food Chairperson, General Chair, and Facilities finalize the plan for the Friday night meal.

### *Two Months or Earlier*

- Committee Chairpersons and Clergy meet to pray and discuss progress.
- All committee members are prayerfully selected and informed about the program and their assignments.
- Food Chair, working with the General Chair, finalizes decisions about food arrangements and notifies the Publicity committee.
- All Committee Chairs meet to review progress, settle details, etc.
- Clergy, General Chair, and Publicity make arrangements for lay speakers at Sunday Services.
- Follow Up Committee begins meeting weekly to pray and discuss how the church might respond to the expansion of existing programs and needs that may surface during planning.
- Neighborhood Group Chair recruits hosts.
- Prayer Committee Plans Prayer Vigil.
- Publicity Chair submits brief notes about the weekend in bulletins and newsletters.
- Correspondence Chair acknowledges visiting team responses and gives names and addresses to Housing Chair and travel plans to Transportation Chair.
- Attendance Chair recruits telephone callers and provides instructions for calls.
- Housing Committee prepares preliminary list of hosts and guests.

### *One Month or Earlier*

- Committee Chairs and Clergy meet to pray, discuss progress, and resolve issues.
- Attendance Chair initiates phone calls and registration for events.
- Publicity Chair publishes weekend schedule and other notes about weekend including offers to provide speakers for regular meetings of church groups and organizations.
- Clergy and General Chair consider having a Committee Chair report briefly during the church services, with the Follow Up Chair being one of those reporting.
- Welcome Committee assembles material for Visiting Team packets, obtains the name badges for everyone, and completes the welcoming refreshment plans.
- Facilities and General Chairs review all physical arrangement plans and prepare room maps and signs.
- Correspondence and General Chairs update Coordinator with response status of Visiting Team members and follow up or invite new team members as directed.
- Transportation Chair lines up drivers and provides instruction.
- Prayer Chair completes sign up and plans for Prayer Vigil.
- Clergy and General Chair discuss weekend Sunday worship plans with church Music Chair, musicians, organist, choir, and Sunday school teachers.
- Follow Up Chair and Committee meet with Clergy and church leaders to discuss potential follow up actions.

- Publicity Committee promotes the church's evaluation to be held at the conclusion of the weekend.
- Clergy continues to encourage attendance at the weekend and at the Evaluation and Feedback.
- Clergy delivers teaching on lay ministry, witnessing, being open to God's will, and baptismal vows.
- Housing Committee notifies hosts and guests of each other's contact information.

### *Two Weeks or Earlier*

- Coordinator speaks at Sunday services, presenting a faith story homily at the sermon time.
- Follow Up Committee finalizes plan for the evaluation and feedback.
- Clergy, General Chair, and Follow Up Chair meet to pray for God's blessings and finalize follow up plans.
- General Chair meets with Committee Chairs or checks individually to review status and the Planning Guide items to ensure all details have been considered and planned, stressing prayer and trusting God to provide answers to problems.
- General Chair verifies handout materials have been copied and are ready.
- Neighborhood Group hosts call assigned church members.
- Music Chairperson and Director of Music finalize music plans with the Music Leader and Clergy including plans for the Faith Encouragement Ministries musicians and music for the Sunday service and what is included in the Sunday bulletin (for example, the words to songs).
- Music Chair ensures that equipment for the Faith Encouragement Ministries Music Team and any song sheets are finalized.
- Literature Chair completes plans for Book Table.
- Correspondence Committee sends a final note to the Visiting Team with directions to the church with parking information and contact information if not already sent.
- Neighborhood Group Chair provides a list of host homes with addresses and phone numbers for the Coordinator.
- Housing Chair provides a final list of lodging homes with addresses and phone numbers for the Coordinator.

### *Thursday of the Weekend*

- Clergy, General and Follow Up Chairs meet to pray for the weekend and to review preparation details.
- Facilities and the Music Chairs check out the public address system and equipment for the Music Team.
- Church members begin the Prayer Vigil.

### *Friday of the Weekend*

- Prayer Vigil continues.
- Welcome Committee greets arriving Visiting Team members at the church.



## *Weekend begins with Prayer*

### *Sunday of the Weekend*

- Coordinator presents a faith story homily and an overview of the weekend at the sermon time.

### *Evaluation and Feedback*

- Follow Up Chair facilitates the discussion and collects evaluation and feedback forms.

### *One Week after the Weekend*

- Clergy, General Chairperson, and Follow Up Chairperson complete weekend evaluation survey that is sent via email.
- Follow Up Chairperson provides the Faith Encouragement Ministries newsletter sign up and team member registration links to the church members.

### *Two Weeks after the Weekend*

- Follow Up Chair and Committee review church member responses to questionnaires and provide a summary of the feedback to Clergy along with the completed forms.
- Follow Up Chairperson provides Correspondence with a one paragraph summary of the weekend to be included with the note to the visiting team.
- Correspondence Chair sends Thank You letters to the Coordinator and Visiting Team members with the summary provided by the Follow Up Chair.
- Clergy sends check for the church's donation or from the Loose Plate Offering, to the National Office.

### *One Month after the Weekend*

- Clergy, General Chair, and Follow Up Chair review the *Faith Encouragement Ministries Guidelines for the Church*.
- Follow Up Committee encourages those church members who are interested in becoming Faith Encouragement Ministries team members to register online.



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