

Ways to Keep Volunteers Engaged

Volunteers are an integral part of a church's everyday operations. Many churches not only need volunteers to perform important tasks, but smaller churches may even rely on them to do the work for which larger churches hire employees.

You may have noticed that there are different types of volunteers. There are those stalwart people who, week after week, year after year, are willing to pitch in no matter how onerous the task. There are others who show up for planned special events at specific times of the year.

As the holidays approach and services get busier and churches begin to host special events, more volunteers than usual might be needed to keep things running smoothly. Because volunteers can burn out quickly and stop showing up for their shifts, here are a few ways to keep volunteers engaged:

Show Appreciation

Volunteers who have been part of the fabric of your church for several years may start to feel as if they're taken for granted. A simple "thank you" from church leaders can go a long way toward helping those volunteers understand that their service is noticed and appreciated.

You may also consider holding volunteer appreciation events, such as a potluck dinner party, or bring in refreshments to events where many volunteers will be working. One of the most effective ways to acknowledge their hard work to the church is by publicly recognizing their contributions during services or special events.

Help Volunteers Feel Like Part of a Team

Consider the different ways in which you can build a team of volunteers. Are there longtime volunteers who can act as leaders to initiate and welcome new volunteers into service? Is there someone who new volunteers can turn to with questions and concerns? Are there activities during which many volunteers can work together to accomplish something and create a sense of camaraderie?

Creating an environment where volunteers feel as if they form a team will help them understand that they are a part of something greater than themselves — and they'll be more likely to stay involved.

Help Volunteers Understand How They Can Serve

Sometimes volunteers will sign up to work at a certain event, but they aren't sure what to do when they get there. It's easy for longtime volunteers to see where help is needed and pitch in, but new people might not know the protocol and feel uneasy, or that their time is being wasted.

When asking for volunteers, tell them the specific tasks they are signing up for so that instructions are clear, and there are no surprises. Being organized stops volunteers from wandering around wondering what to do — and gives them the opportunity to help.

An engaged group of volunteers can help make a church into a well-run community. Taking the time to show appreciation, building a team, and assigning discrete tasks can help keep volunteers coming back again and again.