

# **Central Texas Fellowship of Catholic Men**

## ***Essential Pillars for Sustaining a Vibrant Ministry to Men***

### **I. Mission and Vision**

**Name of Group**

### **II. Core Team Formation**

### **III. Pastor's Enthusiastic Involvement**

### **IV. Growing the Core Team**

### **V. Small Group Coordinator Role**

**Small Group Formation and Facilitation**

### **VI. Attracting More Men**

### **VII. Retention**

## **I. Mission and Vision**

Men – especially younger men – want to be involved in something bigger than themselves. They want to respond to a challenge.

Too often men go to Mass without any real sense of purpose. They participate in activities because they are supposed to, or because someone asks them to, but they don't really know why they are involved. Most of them have never been given a compelling reason why the Church should be a priority in their lives. They have never heard - - *in language they can relate to* - - that joining Christ in transforming the world is the adventure their hearts have always longed for.

Many men in parishes are “tapping their feet” with no idea why. They may continue to be engaged for a while, but eventually they will get tired, bored, and discouraged. And, then, their hearts will begin to grow cold, wither, and die.

These men know down deep inside that they were made for something more.

### **THE POWER OF VISION**

Are you communicating with them in a way that connects with them emotionally? We need to go beyond simply conveying information to our men. In most cases, they don't need more information... they need God to awaken their hearts. Our job is to faithfully communicate in ways that stir the passion of our men for His glory!

The first step in building the right strategy for your ministry to men is to formulate your *vision*. God desires for the parish to reach men with the gospel of Christ and help them grow to maturity. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus calls us to make disciples by sharing His message.

It would be impossible to overemphasize the importance of developing and sharing the vision for your men's ministry. It is the single most important ingredient for creating the kind of atmosphere God uses to change men's hearts.

Your vision should be a resonant call to action, a compelling challenge, and a promise that men will go someplace worthwhile.

Use "No Catholic Man Left Behind", Chapter 8 - Vision, to develop your vision, mission, name and message.

## **II. Core Team Formation**

Your ministry to men will become whatever your leadership becomes.

Encourage each leader to live his life in such a way that others can tell he has been "with Jesus" (see Acts 4:13). As a team, encourage the men to become to each other what they want their parish to become. That will create a model so attractive that other men will want to be part of it. As Tom Skinner, the late evangelist, often said, "We must become the live demonstration here on earth of what is happening in heaven, so that any time anyone wants to know what is happening in heaven all they have to do is check with us."

It is hard work to build your leadership team. It is very easy to tear it apart. If your ministry is effectively discipling men, your leadership team will be attacked by the Enemy. That's why it's so important that each member of your leadership team be accountable to other godly men. Every man needs someone who can look him in the eye and tell when something doesn't seem right.

Also, living in a fallen world means that leaders may be taken out of the game by events beyond their control. Family illness, a job transfer, or other circumstances may prevent a man from continuing on your leadership team.

Meet regularly, at least monthly, with the primary purpose of building fellowship and forming your members as disciples.

### **III. Pastor's Enthusiastic Support**

Tom is a lay leader in his parish. An accomplished businessman, Tom was adept at organizing and influencing. Luckily for his parish, Tom also had a heart for small groups.

For years Tom labored with the blessing and public support of his pastor, building up a small-group ministry in his parish. He prayed, recruited group leaders, oversaw training, organized curriculum, counseled, and worked his heart out. After seven years, he was able to build a small-group ministry in his parish with over one hundred adults each week.

#### **When a Pastor "Catches the Bug"**

Then, his pastor caught the small-group "bug." Suddenly, he realized how effective small groups could be for the spiritual development of his parish.

So, one spring, with the counsel support of the parish council and Tom himself, the pastor began a series of homilies about community and small groups. Over the course of several months, he laid out before the congregation the importance of relationships. He decided to cancel some of the normal activities and replace them with a designated "home group night."

That fall, the new initiative, drew over seven hundred adults to participate in small groups. Tom worked for seven years to build a small-group ministry with one hundred people. Then the pastor sets a date, preaches a few sermons, reorganizes the schedule, and—voila!.....seven hundred people get involved. Clearly, a pastor's involvement is important.

Your pastor will ultimately determine where the primary intellectual, financial, and spiritual resources of the parish are invested. If the pastor is involved in a program or initiative, it will get a budget, staff support, rooms when they need it, and plenty of publicity.

Support is not involvement. Research suggests that support of the ministry by a pastor is good, but involvement is a lot better. If your pastor takes a personal interest in the process and health of your discipleship ministry with men, you have a huge head start.

This issue is one of the major complaints we hear from men's ministry leaders. "My pastor is just not behind us." "Our pastor never attends our men's events." "The men's activities barely get a mention from the pulpit."

That's ironic; because every pastor wants to see his men become disciples. But many pastors have been burned by men's ministry. In the past they have supported it, defended it, invested their time, and given it creative energy. But men's ministry didn't want to work. This was repeated for two, three, and maybe even four failed attempts.

If you were the pastor, and for the fourth time in eight years, some enthusiastic (or perhaps naive) guy excitedly said to you, "Father! I've got this great idea! We should start a men's ministry!" what would you do? You'd smile, and nod, and wish him well. Then you'd just wait.

This is not cynicism, just reality. Pastors are responsible to a multitude of constituencies—all of them wanting the pastor to make their ministry his top priority.

### **Bringing the Pastor Aboard**

So, if your pastor does not jump on board at the beginning, that's okay. Be patient and persevere. There are also some ways you can help your pastor get involved in the men's ministry faster.

- *Pray for and with your pastor.* Here's one idea: Gather your men on Sunday mornings before Mass and have a time of prayer for your pastor. Ask for specific requests. And don't just do it with the ulterior motive of getting him on board. Before even telling my men what I had in mind, I asked them to pray for me and my special intention as well as the pastor for a full month.
- *Support your pastor.* The men's ministry leadership team needs to have a reputation of enthusiastic support for your pastor. For example, discover

his area of passion in ministry and rally around him to make him even more effective.

- *Inform your pastor.* Your pastor should never be surprised by what's going on in your ministry to men in the parish. For example, copy him on your summary e-mails after meetings, and forward him stories of changed lives.
- *Include your pastor.* Invite your pastor to your events, but include him in the way he wants to be included. He may not want to say the blessing or close in prayer; let him be one of the guys.
- *Love your pastor.* Find tangible ways for the men's leaders to show your pastor their appreciation. For example, offer to wash his car or take it in for servicing to give him more time for his activities.

A pastor, who is prayed for, supported, informed, included, and loved tangibly by his men will be much more likely to be involved in their efforts to grow closer to Christ. In fact, that pastor will want to participate in making that happen, throwing the full resources of the parish behind the effort. It will be good for men and good for your pastor.

#### **IV. Growing the Core Team**

The height of your ministry to men will be determined by the depth of your leadership team. Your ministry will become whatever your leadership team becomes. In other words, your leadership team should look like the guys you are trying to reach.

We can't reiterate this point too strongly. If your leadership team is doing all the work, you can either disband now or wait a few years for it to fall apart. Your ministry with men will not last unless you are constantly expanding the circle of men who believe in the vision.

Recruiting is hard work. It is often easier to just do it yourself. DON'T. DON'T. DON'T! If you want your ministry to last, constantly give away the work of the ministry to men who may become your future leaders.

Men's leaders often tell us they are exhausted. It doesn't take long to discover they are trying to do small groups and a retreat and a softball team and a bus to a men's conference and an outreach event and on and on. Why? Because they think that's what men's ministries are "supposed" to do.

This brings about two problems:

- (1) First, they're burning themselves out.
- (2) Second, nobody else wants to join the leadership team because they see how much work it is.

**See Appendix A: The ARTT of Recruiting Leaders**

## **V. Small Group Coordinator's Role**

The Small group coordinator is one of the two most important men of the core team. Ideally, he should have experience in organizing and facilitating small groups.

With the help of the core team, the coordinator selects small group leaders and helpers. He is responsible for training the small group leaders and helpers in their respective roles. It is important the leaders and helpers understand and agree to fulfill the responsibilities of their role.

The Coordinator assigns all registered men and walk-ins to a small group.

The ideal small group size is 8 to 10 (minimum of 6 regular attendees), with a diverse socio-demographic mix, which provides for an intergenerational sharing valued by most men.

It is very important that he meet with the small group leaders and helpers, individually and as a group throughout the year. The purpose of these regular dialogues is to monitor the health of each small group and the fellowship as a whole. The small group leader and helper should communicate their evaluation of their small group to the coordinator. If necessary, plans for strengthening or reshuffling the small group, as necessary, should be made to ensure well-functioning small groups.

These discussions with small group leaders can also provide the coordinator with ideas that would benefit other groups and the fellowship as a whole.

**The coordinator also plays a critical role in the attraction of new men and the retention of existing men.**

## **Small Group Formation and Facilitation**

The greatest determinate of long-term success of men's fellowship groups is the ability of men to form substantial bonds of fellowship with other men in the program. For the majority of men these bonds are formed within the context of their small groups. As such, the formation and facilitation of small groups is one of the most critical elements of the program.

The two greatest indicators of small group effectiveness are attendance and quality of the group discussion. The group leader and helper should share their evaluation of their group with the coordinator.

**See Appendix B: Small Group Formation and Facilitation**

## **VI. Attracting More Men**

Attracting new men to the program should be a proactive effort throughout the year, not just at the start of a new year.

Make attracting new men a regular topic of discussion for the entire core team. The ideas in Appendix C, can be used to stimulate the discussion; the creativity of the team will likely surface additional ideas. Through discussion, the best elements can be incorporated into a plan which also considers available resources.

In considering how the plan will be executed, it is important to think beyond the current members. Rather than thinking of this as another "job" for a core team member, this can be a great opportunity to invite more men to take an active role in the fellowship.

A suggested method to encourage men to step up is described in Appendix A:

A committed Leadership Team.

Personal invitation is the best way to attract new men. Nothing gets a man's attention more than knowing he is thought of as an individual.

## **VII. Retention**

The regular monitoring of the small groups by the Small Group Coordinator can help ensure the engagement of each man.

If any man seems to be disengaged or drifting, the group leader should talk with the man, one-on-one to determine whether he is experiencing a challenge with the dynamics of the group, the program content, personal issue or maybe just not comfortable yet sharing within a group. Whatever the reason, the leader should ask what would be of help to the man. This help could be as simple as moving him to another group, or possibly continuing to meet with him and walking with him during these challenges.

Tracking attendance at each session is another important step to retention. If a man misses two consecutive meetings the leader or helper should call him to see how he is doing, letting him know that he is missed and affirming him as an important member of the group.

During any breaks, over Christmas or the summer, the leader should call each member, reminding him of the re-start, letting him know that he is looking forward to seeing him at the first meeting.

## **Appendix A:**

### **A COMMITTED LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Surrounding the leader should be committed men who share many of the attributes of the leader himself. The height of your men's ministry will be determined by the depth of your leadership.

#### **Reflecting the Men You Want to Reach**

Your men's ministry will become whatever your leadership team becomes. In other words, your leadership team should *look* like the guys you are trying to reach. If you want to reach men of different ethnic backgrounds, your leadership team needs to be ethnically diverse.

Everyone on your leadership team does not have to have the same level of spiritual responsibility or authority. Some members can play more of an implementation role while you are mentoring them for leadership. So, if you want to reach men at various levels of spiritual maturity, you might want to invite some guys at various places on their spiritual journey.

Encourage each leader to live his life in such a way that others can tell he has been "with Jesus" (see Acts 4:13). As a team, encourage the men to become to each other what they want their parish to become. That will create a model so attractive that other men will want to be part of it. As Tom Skinner, the late evangelist, often said, "We must become the live demonstration here on earth of what is happening in heaven, so that any time anyone wants to know what is happening in heaven all they have to do is check with us."

#### **Involving Others and Staying Fresh**

Finally, don't turn your leadership team into an "operations" or event committee. Your leadership team should be a prayer and strategic planning team, not a "doing" team. If you are planning a men's BBQ,

then the leader who is responsible for the food should not decide on the menu, make a shopping list, buy the groceries, cook the food, and do the dishes. Rather, this is an opportunity to recruit men to do these various tasks so they can begin to catch the vision. Bringing sodas is building the kingdom, but most men won't know that unless a leader shows them how their contribution reaches men with the gospel. (Again, that's casting the vision.)

We can't reiterate this point too strongly. If your leadership team is doing all the work, you can either disband now or wait a few years for it to fall apart. You may want to go ahead and make a tee time for Saturday because your ministry with men will not last unless you are constantly expanding the circle of men who believe in the vision.

Recruiting is hard work! It is often easier to just do it yourself. **DON'T....DON'T....DON'T!!** If you want your ministry to last, constantly give away the work of the ministry to men who may become your future leaders.

One question we often hear is, "How big should my leadership team be?" You might be tempted to decide by thinking through potential areas of responsibility: A small-groups coordinator, a big-events coordinator, a retreat coordinator, and so on. Sounds pretty well coordinated, doesn't it? But this approach is dangerous.

Men's leaders often tell us they are exhausted. It doesn't take long to discover they are trying to do small groups and a retreat and a softball team and a bus to a men's conference and an outreach event and on and on. Why? Because they think that's what men's ministries are "supposed" to do.

This brings about two problems: First, they're burning themselves out. Second, nobody else wants to join the leadership team because they see how much work it is.

*"The size of our ministry determines the size of our leadership team" is hazardous. Instead, look at it this way: "The size of our leadership team determines the size of our ministry."* God has placed certain men in your parish with the desire to reach and disciple men. But for the most of them it's not some vague calling; it's specific. Some feel passionate about softball, some about getting guys to go to men's conferences, some are into small groups, etc. Your ministry should flow out of the passions of your leadership

team. If you don't have a guy who's passionate about retreats, then don't have a retreat. Believe it or not, "Thou shalt take thy men into the wilderness to retreat" is not actually in the Bible.

The men God has given you are not assets to accomplish the tasks set forth in your strategic plan. They are leaders. Their passions are wonderful clues to what God would have you do for the men of your parish. If you allow them to pursue their calling, they will be more engaged, your ministry will be more effective, and, best of all, more leaders will be attracted. Your ministry will grow naturally and in God's own time.

## **THE ARTT OF RECRUITING LEADERS**

Recruiting leaders is a process. Here's a nice way to remember how this plays out in relationships: Appointment-Relationship-Trust-Task, or ARTT. How does this work?

### **Appointment**

Create value for leaders by getting the *appointment*. The first time we saw our future wives, most of us didn't walk up and say, "Would you like to get married?" Instead, we asked for the appointment: a date for Friday night. So, don't set your sights on a man and ask him to join your leadership team. Instead, ask for the appointment.

*"Hey John", I'd really like to get your feedback about our men's ministry.*

How would you like to get together for coffee one morning?" The value for John is that you are asking him for feedback. If he really is a potential leader, he'll be happy to meet with you.

### **Relationship**

During your appointment, start building a *relationship*. Tell him about your involvement and why it is important to you. Listen to his heart. *But don't ask him to make a commitment to anything!* Be satisfied with becoming his friend.

## **Trust**

After you share your passion for men's ministry, be ready with a right next step. If he is indifferent, ask him how you can pray for him. If he is too busy to be more involved, offer to pray for him and ask him to pray for you and the men. If he is interested in going further, ask him to come to your next leadership team meeting as a guest. He can sit in and hear what's going on. Then you can meet again and talk about it.

By offering a next step that is appropriate to his level of interest and availability, you show him that you are interested in helping him fulfill God's mission for his life, not your mission for his life. *Trust* begins to develop.

## **Task**

Trust is the key to actually doing something together. Once he shows an ongoing interest, then you can offer him a *task*—either through asking him to pray, or to explore getting involved. Don't rush this process or you will scare away your potential leaders.

## **DOUBLE THE SIZE OF YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM....**

If there is one common complaint about leaders, it's this: There are not enough of them. So, here's an easy way to double the size of your leadership team.

Let's say you have four committed men on your leadership team. Make a covenant with each other to take one man to coffee or lunch each month and share why discipling men is important to you. Use your "elevator speech" (see chapter 8). Follow this process for a year. Assuming each of you misses a month here or there, you will have conversations with at least forty men.

Your passion will not mean much to many of these men. Others will be glad for you but too busy to get involved themselves. But if just two out of every ten men express an interest in sitting in on a meeting (that means eight of your forty men), and half of those decide to get involved, you will have doubled the size of your leadership team in just a year!

## **...OR CUT YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM IN HALF**

It is hard work to build your leadership team. It is very easy to tear it apart. If your ministry is effectively discipling men, your leadership team will be attacked by the Enemy. That's why it's so important that each member of your leadership team be accountable to other godly men. Every man needs someone who can look him in the eye and tell when something doesn't seem right.

Also, living in a fallen world means that leaders may be taken out of the game by events beyond their control. Family illness, a job transfer, or other circumstances may prevent a man from continuing on your leadership team.

But the quickest way to cut your leadership team in half is this: Try to sculpt a man into a better leader. It's a mistake to try chiseling away the ungodly parts of a man so that only the good stuff is left. It very rarely works that way.

Leaders need to be cultivated. Cultivation is an agricultural term. You cultivate a crop by choosing good seeds, preparing the soil, fertilizing it, and watering it regularly. Then you reap the harvest.

Leaders need to be polished, not chiseled. You polish leaders by encouraging them, not criticizing, and by affirming them, not correcting. Make sure your leaders have plenty of opportunities to be exposed to the love of Christ. If you want a better leader, help him become a better disciple.

Many times, you might think it is a good idea to “light a fire” under people. That is just plain wrong. The idea is to find people already on fire and just pour some gasoline on them.

## **THE HIGH CALLING OF LEADERSHIP**

It is a high calling to be a part of a team of men who desire to disciple men. Our prayer is that God will use your team to raise-up scores, hundreds, or even thousands of men who would be valiant warriors for Christ’s kingdom.

To summarize, the three foundations of a sustainable disciple-making ministry to men in your parish are:

- a philosophy of ministry that says discipleship is the portal priority;
- an environment that communicates the proper man code to men; and,
- a leadership strategy focused on three strands—your pastor, a leader, and your leadership team.

As you establish the foundation for your ministry, the next step will be to define the process you want to engage men in. The wide-deep continuum illustrates the path to become a mature disciple.

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## **Appendix B:**

### **Small Group Formation and Facilitation**

#### **SMALL GROUP COMPOSITION**

- Each small group should have an assigned facilitator and helper.
- Maximum number of men on an ongoing basis should be 14. Once a small group has attendance consistently above 12 men, many men will find it difficult to participate in the discussion... and keep the discussion within the 30-minute time-frame.
- Minimum number of men on an ongoing basis should be 6. Most small groups can experience difficulty in stimulating discussion when the group becomes too small.
- It is advisable to have a diversity of socio-demographic groups represented in each small group since most men benefit from the intergenerational sharing.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SMALL GROUP LEADER**

- Pray for every man before, during, and after the group.
- Foster an environment of open discussion. Help everyone in the group feel like they have ownership in the group and its discussion.
- Help make the discussion happen. Guide the group to the truth rather than dictate terms or sit in judgment.
- Look for opinions. Don't give answers. Ask what a person thinks or feels.
- Do not allow anyone (including yourself) to dominate the discussion.
- Come prepared regarding current material and objectives.
- Attend to practical details – including helping men find their group and room.
- Summarize notable discussion points for the Small Group Coordinator so that they can be shared with the larger group.

#### **RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SMALL GROUP HELPER**

- Pray for every man before, during and after the group.
- Come prepared regarding current material and objectives.
- Help the discussion stay on course by asking questions.

- Assist the facilitator in any way he asks.
- Keep track of attendance. Contact those men who have missed. *Never push anyone to attend.* But, do not allow someone to drift away because of lack of personal contact.

### **SMALL GROUP GROUND RULES**

- Show mutual respect for every person and for their opinion. No put downs should be made even when they are made “in fun”.
- There is no such thing as a dumb or stupid question.
- No one has to talk.
- Only one person should talk at a time.
- Meet the time contract. The small group should close with a brief prayer on time, so that those needing to leave may do so without feeling awkward. Individual men may remain after the session to continue their conversations if they so desire.
- *Respect the confidentiality of conversations.*
- *Begin and close each session with a brief prayer.*

### **FACILITATING SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

- Ask short, uncomplicated, thought-provoking questions.
- Ask open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no.
- Only one or two questions such as “what do you think” or “what do you feel” are typically needed to begin the discussion.
- Allow full range of answers, without specifying the “right” answer.
- Allow everyone an opportunity to talk. *Do not force anyone to talk.*
- Validate/affirm all contributions equally with statements such as “Yes” or “Thank you” or “Ok”.
- Do not answer your own questions. Respect moments of silence for reflection.
- Do not be afraid to gently coax someone with questions such as “can you give me an example” or “can you help me understand what you mean a little better?”
- Validate one person’s opinion while leaving the door open for others to offer differing opinions with questions such as “what other ideas do people have” or “does anyone have a different way of looking at this?”
- Consider the teachings of Scripture and the Church by asking questions such as “what does the Bible say about that” or “what does the Church teach about that?”

- Ask people to apply the material to their life: “How does this apply to your own life?”
- Ask people what concrete actions they are going to take in their lives based on the discussions.
- Leave space for people who may be struggling with difficult issues.
- Always allow the opportunity for anyone to talk privately with you or any core team member.

## **PRAYER**

- Prayer is the most important task of the Core Team, Small Group Leaders and Helpers.
- Each session should begin and end with a brief group prayer.
- Small Group Leaders and Helpers should specifically pray for members of their group.

## **Appendix C:**

### **Attracting More Men to your Fellowship**

Attracting new men to the program should be a proactive effort throughout the year, not just at the start of a new year.

Make attracting new men a regular topic of discussion for the entire core team. The ideas below can be used to stimulate the discussion; the creativity of the team will likely surface additional ideas. Through discussion the best elements can be incorporated into a plan which also considers available resources.

In considering how the plan will be executed, it is important to think beyond the current core team members. Rather than thinking of this as another “job” for a core team member, this can be a great opportunity to invite more men to take an active role in the fellowship. A suggested method to encourage men to step up is described in the [Appendix A - A Committed Leadership Team](#).

Personal invitation is the best way to attract new men. Nothing gets a man’s attention more than knowing he is thought of as an individual.

The Small Group Coordinator plays a key role by regularly reminding the group leaders and helpers of the vision of “No Catholic Man Left Behind” and having them ask the following of the group members:

How have you benefitted from participating in the fellowship?

Why do you come each week?

Who do they know that they would like to receive the benefits of the fellowship?

Ask them to invite two men to the meeting next week.

Pray for the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit.

Make a personal invitation to men coming off the ACTS, CHRP retreats and similar programs. A personal invitation to RICA candidates.

Extend a personal welcome and invitation to new parishioners. With the pastor's prior approval, contact the parish secretary every 2 to 3 weeks for the names of new parishioners.

Reach out to women's groups, such as the Catholic moms group, share how fellowship has affected men and impacted their families. Ask if you can share this with their group..... encouraging their husbands to attend, and willing to make the sacrifice of time to their regular schedule.

Identify the impact the program has had on the parish, i.e., more men regularly attending Sunday mass, daily mass, adoration, participation in ministries, increase in giving, etc. Meet with the pastor to discuss and actively engage his support asking who he knows that should be invited.

Host a guy's night out, i.e., Monday Night Football with hots dogs and soda or volleyball. Be creative, different events will appeal to different demographics. This is great way for men to meet men, forming friendships, leading to personal invitations.

Invite a group (3 to 5) of committed Catholic men from the demographic group you would like to attract. Create a dialogue about the impact of the fellowship and seek their input as to the ways to attract men in their age group or state in life. Ask for their help in inviting men they know.

Do a relaunch of the program, this could be a new name for the group or new programming. Create a buzz for men that this is new and that by coming now they don't need to be concerned with having missed what came before.

