

HOSTING A MEETING

For those selected to be a parish leader or the member of a core team, this could be their first time entering into a parish leadership role. The following tips and suggestions for hosting a meeting may be helpful as they begin the Year of Service. Even those who are familiar with parish leadership roles may find these suggestions and best practices helpful.

SCHEDULING

The first step in hosting a meeting is selecting an appropriate time and place to gather together. Contact your parish staff for information on how to reserve a meeting space for your group. Depending on the size and resources of your parish, you may need to make arrangements well in advance. Be sure to follow any local policies. It is good to have a sense of what times meeting rooms may be available at your parish as you work with your core team to find a time that works with everyone's schedule.

Reach out to your core team members and inquire about their normal availability for meetings. You can ask them for their overall availability in general, or you can even propose a number of days and times you think might work best. As you move forward, you should get a good idea of a typical timeframe and day or days of the week that work well for your team members and reservations for parish meeting space.

When you are ready to set the time for a specific meeting, contact your core team members to confirm their availability and adjust as necessary. A number of online tools are available that allow you to poll the members of your group to see what days and times work best for the majority of your members. (Two popular tools are [Doodle](#) and [SurveyMonkey](#).) While these tools often offer subscription-based services, many also offer very basic scheduling tools free of charge.

COMMUNICATION

Once you have determined your meeting time, be sure to communicate this information clearly to your group. Talk with your team about the best way to communicate meeting times. Email is typically the most straightforward way to share this information; however, your team may prefer a Facebook event, a group text message, a calendar invitation, or even phone calls. *Do what works for your team.* (An [email invite template](#) is available online.) Whatever method you choose, ask team members to RSVP so you can plan accordingly. You may need to make adjustments or take more detailed notes if a member is unable to attend. We also recommend sending a meeting reminder the day before your scheduled gathering to help ensure attendance. Consider scheduling an automatic reminder email when you set the date of the meeting.

PREPARATION

In preparation for your meeting, take time to set an overall agenda. An agenda doesn't need to be formal or complex; it can simply be a few notes on what you'd like to accomplish during your time together and a general idea of the order you'd like to complete each task. (A [sample meeting agenda](#) is available online.) You may even want to share your agenda in your meeting invitation or reminder so team members will know what to expect. When thinking about your agenda, be realistic about how long each task or discussion might take. It's okay if things move slower or more quickly than you anticipate. Simply having some sort of plan will help you make the most of everyone's time.

Think about what materials you might need for your gathering. Consider providing notepads and pens. Are there any specific materials or handouts that you need to have copies of prepared? If you think you might



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be utilizing a white board, be sure to have markers and erasers. Is there a need for a computer or video player? Take time in advance of the meeting to become familiar with your parish's technology setup and how to work various pieces of equipment. This can save an enormous amount of time and keep you from spending half your meeting trying to get a video to play. (*We've all been there!*) If you need assistance with any technology, ask a member of your core team or someone on the parish staff for help.

You also want to consider the space you will be meeting in. Think about the size, location, furniture arrangement, and any other details of the space that may impact your meeting. Will you be meeting at larger tables, individual desks, or simply just chairs? Perhaps you'd prefer for everyone to sit in a circle, but the space you are using is set up in a classroom format. If you are allowed to move furniture to create a more conducive meeting space, try to do so before everyone arrives. Sometimes you will not be able to make changes to the space you are using. *Just do your best with what is available.* And remember, if you do move furniture, always move it back and leave the space in the condition that you found it. Again, your parish may have specific procedures you will need to follow.

HOSPITALITY

When hosting a meeting, one of the most important elements is hospitality. You want everyone to feel welcome and comfortable. Be ready to greet members of your core team as they arrive. Try to anticipate any specific needs as best you can. For example, help them find a place to set down their coat or purse. Simple gestures such as this extend a sense of kindness and welcome.

If you have the resources, consider having light refreshments available. Perhaps you can bring some cookies to share. Or your core team members may want to take turns bringing in something for the group. While refreshments certainly aren't necessary, having coffee, sodas, or juice and light snacks available can make your time together more enjoyable. Just be sure to check that you are allowed to have food in your meeting space before enjoying any refreshments.

PRAYER

Following all your preparations and when you are finally all gathered together, we suggest beginning each meeting with prayer. This gives everyone a time to collect their thoughts, place themselves in God's presence, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time together. To begin you may want to lead an extemporaneous prayer, or perhaps take time for silent prayer followed by a simple communal prayer, such as an Our Father or Hail Mary. Ask if core team members would like to take turns leading the opening prayer. If you plan to pray a formulaic prayer together, try to have copies for everyone.

Remember to close your meeting with a prayer as well. Consider using the "[Prayer for Pregnant Mothers](#)" to close each of your gatherings. You may also want to pray for specific items that came up during your discussions. Maybe you would like to pray for guidance or the resolution to some conflict or challenge. And you can always pray for your combined efforts during the *Year of Service*.