

High-Value Volunteer Leadership Team Meetings

Pastor Molly DuQue - March 2022

In a recent virtual call with post-launch church planters, we processed the question, “How do I add value to someone’s life through them serving on our team?” The practical need exists – we need volunteers to lead and serve in our churches. At the same time, we can create an atmosphere that not only honors them, but invests in them, creates a sense of ownership, and provides life-giving community.

One way I found to do this was through high-value leadership team meetings. By the time I stepped away from leading our church, we had a volunteer leadership team of 18 men and women, ranging in age from 21-62. These amazing people facilitated our home groups, led worship and directed load-in and load-out, set-up and tear-down, provided pastoral care, led devotional times and taught, organized hospitality and oversaw many administrative and technical components of our church. A key component of their development and establishing their commitment to our church was through our leader meetings. In these times they had an opportunity to share their lives, practice valuable skills for leading in the church, learning practical tools and receive theological training, and have a voice in the mission, vision and strategy of our church. Our leader meetings were often attended by all our team members, and if someone was traveling, they would join us virtually. We didn’t require attendance and were always gracious when someone couldn’t make it. We simply made them as valuable as possible, both of the church and the leaders themselves.

Below is an outline of our leader meetings, an explanation of the components, and some tips for success. I hope that some aspect of this will benefit you, as you seek to lead your own team and add value to their lives through their participation.

Outline for Leader Team Meeting

Monthly meetings on a consistent Wednesday evening, 6-8pm

Hosted in our living room, with kids upstairs in our playroom

6pm – Dinner and connection

6:30pm – Updates, worship and prayer

7:00pm – Training – Practical or Theological

7:30pm – Development and Analysis

8:00pm - Finish

Leader Meeting Components

All our monthly leader meetings (with few exceptions) had these four components in them. I found a balance of these created a well-rounded space and opportunities each month for team members to develop their various skills, as well as share their ideas and feedback in a constructive way.

Connection

Each meeting had time to share a meal and connect with one another, hearing about what's going on in their lives. We would pray about needs that came up, and celebrate with them successes they were experiencing, in school or work. Our goal was to show our leaders they mattered to us, beyond their contribution to the church. In addition, we wanted to express the value of their pursuits and accomplishments in their lives, reinforcing that God cared about all of it and that someone could succeed in their careers and still lead in the church.

Practicing Healthy Pentecostalism

We found that a lot of people didn't have any experience with basic leadership tasks in the church, like anointing someone with oil and praying for them. Because of that, we made our leader meetings an opportunity for people to practice leading in a spiritual setting. This included practice hearing from God, laying hands on one another, anointing others with oil and praying. By practicing this in the safe setting of our leader meetings, our leaders eventually felt more comfortable leading in this way in their groups, and in their lives in general.

Training – Practical and Theological

I wanted my leaders to receive theological training, and not feel like they needed to go to Seminary to get it. In addition, it benefitted both them and their groups to receive practical tools for leading discussions. Each month we'd spend time doing either theological training or practical training. We also tried to make these interactive, and create room for group development and contribution. For example, one month we worked together to build a list of best practices for leading a successful discussion. A few of these topics included:

- Theological: Spiritual Warfare and Self Care, Nature of the Trinity, Women in Ministry, Gender and Sexuality
- Practical: Dealing with Difficult People, Asking Great Questions, Creating Culture in Your Group

Development and Analysis

Each month, we created time to develop ministry together. This included brainstorming ideas, analyzing what we've done, and deciding together any changes we wanted to make. We called this a "culture of positive change" – We evaluate what we're doing, we innovate a change, we implement the change, and then we return to evaluate. We also used this as a space where someone could raise a concern or challenge to an idea we were working on. In addition, we made decisions with whoever was in the room (no proxy voting). By doing this, when the team knew we were making a decision (see Tips section on Agendas), they were more likely to be there in person (or virtually).

It was in these meetings that we developed the mission, values, strategy, measurables and vision for our church. By a leadership team being included not just in planning, but in the mission and vision of the church, they feel more ownership and were more prepared to communicate it to others.

Tips for Success

Start on time and end on time. People's time is valuable, especially if they're pursuing success in the marketplace. Starting and ending on time makes it easier for leaders to plan, and expresses to them that you know their time is valuable.

Plan the meeting dates far in advance. By planning 3-6 months in advance, it makes it easier for team members to get the dates on the calendar and prioritize the time.

Provide food. Whether it's a home cooked meal or pizza and salad take out, a leader being able to have dinner (and not bring anything) makes it easier to be there and on time.

Provide childcare. This can simply be the older kids watching the younger kids, while they all watch a movie. Providing childcare makes it's so much easier for parents of young children to be a part of the team.

Provide an agenda. People like to know what to expect. They will come more prepared if they're asked to consider something in advance, or know they'll be participating in some brainstorming time. In addition, it helps to let people know in advance if the leadership team will be make a decision on something during the meeting.

Provide a virtual option. This can be as simple as someone Facetiming in or setting up a computer in the corner with Zoom. There are a lot of reasons why someone may not make it in person, but when a meeting is valuable, they'll find a way to be there. A virtual option is great if someone wants to come while traveling or home with a cold.

Provide a recap the following day. By providing a recap of the meeting the next day, it solidifies in writing the decisions that were made. It's also a way to provide the training content in written form, and include everyone that couldn't make it.