

Using Volunteers in Your Building Program

1. Overview

There are a number of reasons that you will want to consider using volunteer groups to help in your building program.

- ★ The most prominent reason is the reduction of construction costs. The use of volunteers can reduce the cost by as much as one-third.
- ★ There is the spiritual benefit of having others share in your labors. Many a volunteer team has brought a revival with it as the members worked together to build for the Lord.
- ★ The visiting volunteers gain as much as the host church.

There are also some drawbacks to the use of volunteers that need to be considered.

- ★ When volunteers are used, the church becomes its own contractor and assumes the risks that a general contractor would assume.
- ★ Scheduling can be more difficult since most volunteer teams have a narrow window of availability.
- ★ Some cities restrict the use of volunteers. The church should verify that volunteers may be used and for what parts of the construction process volunteers are allowed.

2. Where to Find Help

There are a number of agencies that coordinate the many teams of building volunteers that are available. Some of these agencies are:

- ★ Texas Baptist Men
- ★ Volunteer Christian Builders
- ★ North American Mission Board / SBC
- ★ Campers on Mission

3. Making Contact

Start Early! A church needs to start calling potential volunteer teams as soon as the decision is made to use volunteers. Volunteer Building Teams try to plan a year in advance and volunteers who are in the work force must plan vacation time many months in advance. These facts require early contact. Once team leadership has shown interest in your project, you

need to develop a one-on-one relationship so there is a single point of contact between the volunteer team and your church. This relationship will provide a clear line of communication and avoid confusion as the project progresses.

4. The Church's Responsibility

Acting as the contractor, the church will be responsible for obtaining the necessary construction documents, with proper seals and required permits. The church will need to have all funds necessary to complete the project.

The foundation should be in place and all building materials and special tools at the site when the volunteer team arrives. All subcontractors that will need to interact with the volunteer teams should be committed in writing to work with volunteers. The church will be responsible for Builders Risk and Liability Insurance.

5. Relating to the Volunteers

The church is usually expected to provide the following services or accommodations for the volunteers:

- ★ Supervision relating to building decisions;
- ★ Some meals and snacks, as negotiated;
- ★ Housing or RV space, as negotiated;
- ★ An opportunity to participate in the spiritual and fellowship life of the church;
- ★ and, although the volunteers do not seek praise or reward, the church should express their appreciation at every opportunity.

6. The Volunteers Responsibilities

The volunteers will usually provide the following:

- ★ Their transportation to and from the work site;
- ★ Supervision regarding individual task assignments;
- ★ Work clothing and personal tools;
- ★ Personal medical insurance;
- ★ They will often want to participate in community surveys, Bible schools and other ministry activities.