

Introduction to Hospitality Ministry:

- Where First Unitarian Church was then/ where we are now: Were at a plateau of 240, now certified at 474.
- Implemented with when we were around 375 members

Every church is different, what works for us may or may not work for you. Take and adapt what you want toss the rest away. We are not saying we have the perfect solution for everyone. We have what works for us. And even that is not perfect and we are always adapting and dealing with imperfections.

Old Style of Hospitality:

- Silo Method. Each area of hospitality working independently both for recruiting and for completing tasks.
- Recruitment was a continual, and even increasing, drain and we came to understand that we had a very small percentage of members were repeatedly doing the all the tasks.
- Realized we were using a system that was only functional for a smaller size church where everyone knew everyone. Where the “ask” was personal and more likely to be responded to with a yes.
- We experienced a huge influx of families and we needed to break volunteer tasks down to bite sized pieces for busy families.
- Burn out was experienced by both those doing the recruiting phone calls and those receiving the recruiting phone calls.
- There was not a sense of shared knowledge about how things got done on Sunday am. This also caused a lack of ownership of the church and the welcoming process. Ushers only knew how to usher, etc..
- No real opportunity to get to know others providing service on Sunday AM

How we started:

- Found this idea in St Paul Minneapolis from (then Membership Staff/ now Rev) Justin Schroeder.
- Were intrigued by the idea of cutting back on the constant recruiting and making the tasks of hospitality into a community building opportunity.
- We selected 16 leaders that we knew had the skill to manage a team
- Let each team leader pick as many of their own team members as they could, knowing working with their friend would be fun and also guarantee they could count on them. We filled in the rest of the teams, mostly from people who had history of volunteering in our old model.

- We held a number of trainings for the leaders and the team members.
- Set the schedule for the year, so that all participants could block their calendar a year out. Team leader simply needed to send a reminder e-mail (or phone call) and coordinate/ assign specific tasks.

Benefits of Hospitality Team Model:

- Does not matter what size your congregation is this model can work: larger churches with more services simply add more teams, have teams work more often, and or add more tasks within each team.
- Focusing on Teams: building relationships and fostering personal connections between team members.
- Distribute labor from a few individuals to many.
- Cultivate leaders and provide low pressure leadership opportunities.
- Encourages cross training of tasks, where someone maybe had been only a greeter they are encouraged by their team leader to try to the kitchen. We have found that we have many more people in the church who understand how the dishwasher works, etc...
- Transition to a culture of “we all have responsibility to be welcoming to visitors”.
- No weekly recruiting: we do one major team reshuffle over summer and then add in new members as they join, annual opportunity for trying on a leadership role.
- Room for each team to create their own culture and style of welcoming visitors
- Helps new members understand there are specific concrete responsibilities with membership. Ups the structure of what it means to be a member. Easy first volunteer gig.
- Every member can offer something to hospitality, introverts, extroverts, only need to do this 6 times per year.
- Opportunity for children and youth to be engaged in service with their family. Handing out Orders of service, putting out treats, cleaning, etc.
- Re-engaging some of our more long term members who come to serve with their team

How we are doing it now:

- After two years we transitioned to requiring all members who join the church be assigned to a team. This is explained to all new members when they join the church and works to change the culture for the future. Naturally some ignore us. But they are on a team and we try to engage them in at least bringing treats, etc. This is easier than making it mandatory for long term members who might be more resistant to cultural changes.
- What Our Hospitality Coordinator Does: Assigned new members to teams, supports and recruits new Team Leaders as needed. Coordinates trainings one time per year,

normally in August/ September, and acts as resource throughout the year.

Communicated with Staff when problems are identified in process, equipment broken, supplies needed, etc...

- What our Team Leaders Do: Contact their teams prior to their shift, assign roles/ tasks, arrive early and provide on the spot training as needed, support relationship building between members.

Challenges:

- Sustainability: Finding Coordinator, both the Coordinator and team leaders are always in need of refreshing.
- Making sure that new members to a team are trained and welcomed into the group.
- Creating the culture of welcoming is always a work in progress.