

Develop Your Ministry Team

E. Stanley Ott

A ministry team is any group of God's people who gather for the purposes of mutual encouragement in Christ and engagement in the service of Christ. Ministry teams lead fellowship groups, study classes, mission trips, worship services and virtually every other ministry imaginable.

There are two basic kinds of ministry teams: group teams and event/project teams. Group teams lead ongoing groups such as ministries to adults, men, women, teenagers, children, singles, couples and so on. Other ministries are focused on producing an event or accomplishing a project such as a women's retreat, a mission emphasis weekend, a stewardship campaign, short-term missions, and sanctuary sound. Many ministry teams offer both group and event/project leadership simultaneously.

The ministry team is a powerful means of leading and accomplishing ministry. Much as Jesus and the Twelve apostles or Paul along with Silvanus and Timothy, so the ministry team concept today enables people to grow in their relationship with our Lord and with one another at the same time they fulfill some ministry vision. Like committees or the solo leader, ministry teams are task-focused. However, ministry teams also provide *fellowship* for their members. Ministry teams *grow disciples*. Ministry teams *develop leaders and provide for a continuity of leadership*. Ministry teams help members *discover their spiritual gifts and learn to serve*. Ministry Teams *accomplish ministry*.

For a congregation to transition to the ministry team concept means minimally that each ministry will have a leader plus at least two others who will function with the leader as the leadership core of the ministry team. Furthermore, a ministry team will minimally have clarity concerning its vision and a basic plan for the accomplishing of that vision. Ministry teams engage in three basic functions -- team fellowship, people-focus and program-focus. In its focus on its own fellowship the team attends to its own members, their discipleship and friendship. In its people-focus the team attends to the people to whom they are in ministry and in its program-focus the team attends to the tasks the team's ministry requires. Another way to say this is the team focuses on itself and serves in double focus of ministry (people and task). Committees, in contrast, typically focus solely on task.

Basic elements of the ministry Team

Begin and continue praying

As you begin to think about your ministry and the organization of a ministry team, pray, for God to raise up team members to join you. Ask God to give your team unity of spirit and clarity of vision. Jesus said, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:38) So, ask!!! Ask daily in your private prayers and ask together every time you meet with team.

Element One: Clarify Your Ministry Team's Vision

Every ministry team serves within the umbrella of the congregation and participates in fulfilling the congregation's vision. At the same time, every ministry team organizes around a vision for ministry ó a biblical mandate to address (such as evangelism), a specific task to accomplish (such as worship support), a particular burden on the heart (tutoring of at-risk children) and so on.

The defining vision of the Pleasant Hills Church is Reachô Growô Send. This is the ministry cycle in which we reach uncommitted to Christ and uninvolved people, grow with them as disciples, and send them their ministry which in turn will reach, grow and send still others. The defining practices of the congregation flesh out the ministry cycle.

Reach	Grow	Send
Witness	Prayer Care Word With-me	Send

Know your own team's unique vision. Be able to express that vision in a sentence or two. What are you seeking to do, by God's grace?

öOur team vision is to develop senior high school students as disciples.ö

öOur team vision is to feed the hungry by means of a soup kitchen.ö

öOur team vision is to be a worship praise band to lead others in worship.ö

Your total team vision combines our congregational vision and your team's unique vision. So, if your team runs a soup kitchen your team vision might be expressed as:

To öReach, Grow, and Sendö and to attend to the physical needs of those without adequate food by means of running the South Hills Soup Kitchen

Element Two: Identify the team leader

The order of element one öteam visionö and element two öteam leaderö are interchangeable. It just on which comes first. If the idea for a new ministry surfaces first, then the next step is to identify the leader. If a person has a vision for beginning a new team as its leader, her first step is to clarify the team's vision so that she may invite people of kindred spirit and like heart onto the new team. When a planning process leads to a new idea for ministry, then those with the initial vision begin to pray something like, öLord, help us discern who could provide ongoing leadership to this new endeavor? Who has a heart for this vision? Who has the will and skill, the spiritual gifts to lead this endeavor?" The founding leader is identified and invited to lead.

Element Three: Invite the prospective members of the ministry team together and identify the leadership core

The leader invites others who share the vision of the team and agree to join in a fellowship defined by the covenantal agreements we call the seven threads of ministry team relationships (below). The leader identifies and invites two or three team members whose vision and interest to join in the leadership core of the team. The team continues to grow as more people of like vision and interest are invited to join the team.

The Seven Threads of Ministry Team Relationships

Spiritual Disciplines ó our team engages in the disciplines of the Christian faith such as worship, prayer and Bible study (together and alone), fellowship, one-anothering ministry. We prayer for each other by name and our ministry daily.

Face-to-face relationships -- we work to know one another on a personal basis, to trust and serve one another. We work out our differences with mutual respect and love.

Confidentiality ó we keep team conversation within the team. We respect the confidences of others.

Communication -- we communicate directly and thoroughly. We introduce significant issues face-to-face. We use voice mail and e-mail to communicate information. We avoid negative bank shots (triangulation) and resolve differences. We do pass compliments on to one another.

Clear Expectations -- we clarify and understand our common vision, we set team and individual expectations and communicate what we intend to accomplish and by when. We use weekly, monthly and yearly conversations with the team and with the team leader to guide us. We do not ósurpriseö one another but keep one another informed about our plans.

Loose-tight -- we serve with freedom and within boundaries. The team blesses our initiative (loose) while we remain committed to the defining vision and practices of the team (tight).

Loving Loyalty ó we have the freedom to agree and to disagree in team discussion and decision-making while expressing commitment to the team's ministry with those who are not on the team.

Element Four: the ministry team in community

The ministry team develops its community.

- Meetings begin with a time of small group life using the Word-Share-Prayer sequence.
- Monthly team members rotate prayer partnerships.
- Twice a year the team reviews its covenantal agreements (The Seven Treads)
- Three times a year the team shares in a meal.

Element Five: the ministry team organizes to accomplish its vision

The leader and leadership core working with the whole team organize the team to accomplish its vision. The team organizes itself to grow its own community (small group life, prayer partners, shared meals) and to engage in a double focus of ministry (to people, to task). The roles and responsibilities of each person will depend on the nature of the vision the team seeks to accomplish and the capabilities of the team members. Each member has his or her own set of goals and, if appropriate, a timeline for the accomplishment of those goals.

Growing the Community of Your Ministry Team

The great word for Christian community is *koinonia* meaning the complex interplay among Christians who are growing together in love and friendship, caring for one another and encouraging one another to grow in faith in and as disciples of Jesus Christ. To pay attention to community/koinonia is to pay attention to the discipleship of your team members and the fellowship among them.

Four practices most helpful in growing team community are small group life (with prayer partners), shared meals, and an annual retreat.

Enjoy Small Group Life

Since most ministry teams meet on a tight schedule to plan and carry out their ministries, there is usually not the time for a full hour and a half small group meeting. However, if you determine to take the first twenty minutes of your time together to be the people of God, God will grow your fellowship and discipleship.

During that twenty minutes, do the following three things: Word-Share-Prayer. Take about seven minutes to read and discuss just one or two verses of Scripture. This is not an in-depth study, but lets you focus on one or two key ideas. The ministry team leader may bring this short study to a close with a very short (one minute or so) exhortation/teaching for the team based on the Scripture just studied.

Take another seven to ten minutes to Share key happenings in your life, both blessing and needs. Since a small group Bible Study of ten people will take forty-five

minutes to do this, obviously the team sharing is only going to hit the high spots. Take five minutes to pray for one another, by name, including those who may be absent. Then begin the rest of your work as a ministry team. Variations include all studying the Word, all together and breaking into fours for sharing and prayer or studying the Word and sharing in fours and joining all together to pray.

It is perfectly appropriate to schedule longer times of Word share prayer to allow more opportunity to encourage one another in your walk with Christ.

Prayer Partners

Prayer Partners are another helpful means for growing in discipleship and fellowship. Divide your ministry team into two's. Prayer Partners agree to pray for one another daily. They may also agree to one phone conversation or e-mail communication a week to update one another by sharing answered prayer or new prayer requests.

Rotate Partners once a month. In this manner, team members learn to love and pray for everyone on the team. God has a way of giving us heart for those for whom we pray.

A way to give every prayer partnership a basic prayer is to suggest the use of the prayers in the Bible such as Ephesians 1:15-19, 3:16-19; Colossians 1:9-12; and a Psalm such as Psalm 100. Simply substitute your names for those in the Bible's prayer and pray it for each other. A sample is in the box below.

Paul's Prayers	Our Prayers
<p>Colossians 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.</p> <p>10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,</p> <p>11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully</p> <p>12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.</p>	<p>Lord, I ask you to fill Marty and me with the knowledge of your will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And I pray this in order that we may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that we may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.</p>

Share Meals Together

Dick Halverson, the former Chaplain of the U.S. Senate used to say there is something sacramental about a shared meal. He wasn't saying that a shared meal was the same as Communion¹. However, the fact that Jesus regularly broke bread reminds us of his presence whenever we share a meal with other believers. It was in the breaking of bread that Jesus revealed himself after the resurrection to the two disciples on road to Emmaus.

There are a variety of ways ministry teams may eat together. You may simply schedule some of your meetings during a mealtime. You can just plan to meet occasionally just to share a meal. Make this a matter of team discipline and schedule the times you will eat over the next year so that breaking bread together is not a matter of whim but of team lifestyle.

Share a meal at least two or three times a year. If time is precious, then plan to carry out your regular meeting agenda while you eat together.

Meet with a sack lunch at the church, a meal in someone's home; gather at a local restaurant. What you eat and where you eat are not nearly as significant as that you eat together.

As you begin your meal, spend some time in general conversation about recent news and what's been happening in your own lives. You may then conduct discuss issues your team needs to resolve at that time before leaving the table or adjourn to another room to conduct your meeting.

Ministry teams will also find it encouraging to schedule special events to enjoy life with one another. Such special events include activities such as a picnic, a movie night, a Superbowl party, a cookout, or any other event that team members would enjoy doing with one another.

Go on an Annual Retreat

Few experiences are more productive than an annual get-away designed to really bond your team into a Christian community and do more extensive praying and planning for your work. Such annual retreats can be a Friday night and Saturday till 4 p.m. type of schedule or a simple 9am-4pm day retreat. There are a variety of places within an hour of our community that make fine sites for such a retreat.

¹ The Lord's Supper, Eucharist, Mass

People-focus: the ministry team engaged in personal ministry

When Jesus ministered to crowds and in various events, he was always involved in the personal lives of a few people, as were his disciples. Jesus loved the many and focused on a few. He showed obvious concern for the masses (remember his concern for the hungry crowds just before he fed the 5000) while at the same time focusing on the Nicodemusø, Zacchaeusø, the Mary, Martha, and Lazarusø.

Ministry Team members understand their primary calling is to love one another and those to whom they are in ministry with the love of God. øThe only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.ö [Galatians 5:6] So ministry team members seek, according to their individual personalities and spiritual gifts, to love people in such a way that they grow in discipleship and well-being. [My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you ó Galatians 4:19 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest ó Matthew 11:28.]

Learning the skills of personal ministry is a life-long process for followers of Jesus. Help your team members growing into the practice of personal ministry suited to their heart and skill level. For example, every team member can have a simple prayer list with which they ministry to people by praying for them by name. Visiting someone in the hospital, sharing the Christian faith with someone, counseling a person in a time of distress may require a little more training and experience.

For ministry teams engaged in ministry to people such as a youth ministry team or a menø ministry team or a short-term mission team, the people to whom ministry team serves are clearly known. What about ministry teams with tasks that donø seem at first glance to be directed at people such as the worship service sound team or the soup kitchen team or the bulletin assembler team? Donø be deceived, their ministry may be very task focused, but those tasks serve people. Look for ways for your team to have some personal ministry engagement with those they serve in ministry.

Prayer

Prayer is a means of personal ministry that virtually every member of every team can be involved in regardless of the spiritual gifts and ministry assignments of the members and regardless of the ministry assignment of any given ministry team.

Have a list of the names of those you serve. Pray for them on a daily or regular basis. Focus on a few for whom you pray every day. Divide up the list among the team to speak out the number of people being prayed for on a personal, daily basis. If you have no list, pray for those who the Spirit knows you will be in ministry too.

Personal Ministry

In personal ministry the members of the ministry team offer one-on-one intentional encouragement to individuals in their ministryí in order to inspire them to

grow spiritually, experience small group life, and serve with their spiritual gifts. Some of the practices of personal, one-on-one, ministry include the following:

Prayer ó praying daily for a few by name to grow in discipleship and well-being
 Faith Sharing ó telling another person how to become a Christian
 Disciple Growing ó encouraging another person to grow as a follower of Jesus
 Small Group leadingô leading a small group Bible study
 Hospitality (expressing welcome) ó inviting people into your life and home.
 Help ó helping people cope with what faces them (becoming a Paraclete).
 Counsel ó offering wisdom in humility and pointing people to sources of wisdom.
 Grief óshowing presence to the grieving one, talking about the subject of grief.

Follow Up (for teams that lead groups of people)

Follow Up is a form of personal ministry to those on ministry teams that serve groups and gatherings that people attend. Not every ministry team leads meetings. If your team serves a people who attend a function (worship, instruction, fellowship, or outreach), then ðfollow upö can be a powerful expression of personal ministry. Follow up involves the actions you take in response to the needs a person brings to the gathering/meeting.

Follow up occurs in response to questions answered when ministry team meets after the gathering it leads:

Who was new last week?
 Who was absent last week or has been absent several weeks?
 Who is hurting (illness, family problem, work concern)?
 Who appears open to joining a small group?
 Who appears to be eager to grown in Christian faith?

It is between meetings that most of the follow up assignments made during the ministry team meeting are carried out. "Mary is new. Janice, will you touch base with her?" This conversation during the meeting produces fruit when Janice follows through and contacts Mary to welcome her.

Program-focus: the Ministry Team Engaged in Task

In a ministry team's double focus of ministry, one focus is concerned with personal ministry to the people the team serves. The other focus is on the tasks and work responsibilities that the team must accomplish in order to fulfill its purposes.

The particular work a ministry team does in service of Jesus Christ depends on the purpose of that particular team. Group ministry teams have the work of leading groups such as a ministries to children, youth, men, women, marrieds, singles, retirees and so on. Task/event teams lead worship services, fellowship picnics, manage money and property,

organize stewardship campaigns and so on. Many teams fulfill both functions simultaneously.

Regardless of the type the team's ministry responsibility, there are tasks to be accomplished in order for the team to fulfill its mandate and there are people with a variety of spiritual gifts, competencies, experiences and interests.

Ideally, a team will work to discern the gifts, abilities and interests of its team members and on that basis make specific task assignments team members. Not infrequently, there is more to be done and more assignments to be covered than present team member consider themselves "gifted" or even interested. That is why one of the overarching qualifications to look for in calling new members to your team is a servant heart— someone who will say, "my preference is to greet people but I will handle the publicity and the chair set-ups because that is the need of the ministry.

The task performance of a ministry team is no different than any committee or task force. The team reaches for its goals by organizing its members so that each person's service contributes to the accomplishment of the team's purpose.

Notice that if at any given time a team member doesn't have a task assignment, he or she is still expected to be engaged in personal ministry. Such ministry includes praying for people the team is in ministry to, offering follow up as appropriate, and serving people intentionally according to their needs (praying, faith sharing, disciple growing, small group leading, hospitality offering, helping, counseling, grief comforting).

Each team member is to have an fellow-worker, a person who comes along side to help and to learn. The fellow-worker may just be person who is simply trying out whatever the ministry is to see if her gifts and interests "fit" in with that ministry, such as working with youth, singing in the choir and so on. Jesus sent people in two's for mutual encouragement and you can do the same.

Levels of Ministry Team Development

As you consider your ministry team, committee, task force or other leadership/service team begin where they are in team community, experience in personal ministry and in task accomplishment. Committees that have only ever met to divvy up jobs and go home may find the idea of personal ministry or even the time to share meals with one another or engage in Word— share— prayer to be a little intimidating.

Don't demand that a committee used to doing things one way immediately switch to a new format. Lead them. Explain the vision, the "why" and the "how". Move at a pace they can handle. Begin with things they can and will do such as simple meals together and prayer partnerships with one another. Progress to learning the skills of personal ministry and working as spiritual gift discovery as a part of the task assignment process.

Ministry Team Checklist

Team: The Ministry Team in Community

Are we reviewing our covenantal agreements, "The Seven Threads of Ministry Team Relationships"?

Are we enjoying small group life as a team? Do we spend twenty minutes each meeting in Word-shares-prayer?

Are we sharing meals together? Do we have the dates for our quarterly meals in our date books?

Do we have prayer partnerships on the team? Are we rotating prayer partners each month?

People: the Ministry Team in Personal Ministry

Do our team members engage in personal ministry to those we are serving as a team?

Are we praying for them by name?

Do we follow up on people who are new, absent, in difficulty?

Do we focus on a few?

Do we know and practice the skills of personal ministry such as praying, faith sharing, disciple growing, small group leading, hospitality offering, helping, counseling, grief comforting?

Have we engaged those whom we serve in small group life?

Program: the Ministry Team in Task Ministry

Do our team members each have task responsibilities that enable our joint ministry?

Have we sought to identify and engage each member's spiritual gifts and personal interests?

Does our team have a leadership core of two or three who assist in leadership?

Does each team member have a co-worker, along side to help and to learn?

Are we developing each member's leadership skills?