

## Contacting parishioners by phone to update a parish directory/list of parishioners

### Tip sheet for handling calls

By Pam from Holy Cross Parish, Winnipeg. She is willing to offer training sessions and role playing in parishes who will be calling their parishioners to update their parish directory list.

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### FIRST BE PREPARED

1. Get your list of names, a pen and note pad/computer
2. Grab a glass of water
3. Remember that your phone call is most likely not anticipated and so, give the person you are calling a moment to understand why you are calling.
4. If you engage a person in conversation and they wish to share their story, it might be uncomfortable for you. However, this is how they feel/felt. Sometimes, we connect in these moments. PEOPLE WANT TO FEEL HEARD AND WANTED!
5. Prepare yourself and tell yourself not to take any negative comments personally and that this information will be of use, either for the individual coming back to Church or just for your Church to do better in the future. Either way, at the end of the day, you will have updated your parish list.
6. Speak slowly, clearly, enunciate well (but don't 'talk down'). Repeat questions as necessary.
7. Do some role playing to become more comfortable in handling calls.

## LET'S BEGIN

### QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

*Hi, may I please speak with..... (name of parishioner)*

*My name is ....., I'm calling on behalf of (name of Church/parish)*

If you have confirmed that you are speaking with the right person follow the next steps:

1. *I'm calling regarding our Parish Directory/List of Parishioners/Persons who attend our Church (or, for ex. we are putting together a photo directory, much like a high school year book). We are updating our contact information which we have about you. Can I confirm that information with you now?*

2. *I wish to confirm your: name(s), phone, address, email and other.*

Include confirming spouse, children etc.

### QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

-ask open ended questions which invite conversation and provide information

-avoid closed questions which could result in a 'yes' or 'no' response

-engage in the person's story, find out the details.

R. *I don't go to that Church anymore.*

Q. *Oh, which Church do you attend?*

If they are at another Church, ask: Q. *Wonderful, have you been there long?*

If they express that they don't seem fulfilled or satisfied with the Church, *invite them back.*

R. *I am not attending*

Q. *Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Is there any particular reason?*

### SOME REASONS

*-priest offended me*

*-they wouldn't let me... get married; get an annulment/divorced; have my child baptized; play a certain song at the funeral or my wedding; change something I had suggested; get the date I wanted for my wedding, funeral, baptism of child... etc.*

*-I didn't like... shaking hands; the greeters, the priest, the music, the Mass times, the changes in the Mass, etc.*

(at this point people will either indicate that they want you to listen or they don't want to talk about it. However, you might need to probe a bit to find out which way the conversation will go).

### LET THEM KNOW

*I am sorry to hear that!*

Follow up with, asking questions like:

Q. *What happened?*

*What happened when you told him/her/them?*

\*\*\*If the person doesn't want to pursue – then don't pursue with probing questions.

\*Oftentimes the particular concern the person has/had was never addressed or answered by someone in the parish. At this point you can offer to have someone phone them (if there is someone at Church capable of addressing the question).

*'I can look into it and get back to you.'*

\*Otherwise, APOLOGIZE *Oh, I'm sorry to hear that..* and TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO INVITE THEM BACK TO CHURCH/MASS NOW!... especially, if people or situations have changed in the parish/church.

**After they have responded, you can repeat the previous steps or start asking specific questions.**

*What was the reason they didn't let you...?*

*What did they say when you told them...?*

Repeat as many times as necessary.

**OBSTACLES** – are questions/comments the person might ask or make:

*Why did the Church do....?*

*Why did they change...?*

*Why don't we...?*

*I didn't like it ...*

*It really hurt me when...*

Ask them if they addressed their question to the appropriate person or office.

If they did address their question you may simply express that you are glad they did reach out to clarify their question/concern OR if appropriate, pursue the conversation further: *What did he/she/they say when you asked/told them...?*

If they didn't address their question or are unsatisfied with the answer someone gave them but you don't know the answer, tell them. *'I can look into it and get back to you.'*

In other situations, people don't understand the reasons behind why the parish/church does what it does; they may not express any concern or frustration. Just be understanding at this point.

## **YOUR ANSWERS TO OBSTACLES**

*That must have been frustrating*

*I can see how that would be confusing...*

*I can see that would be difficult...*

*I'm not sure, I will look into it and get back to you. (unless you know the answer and feel comfortable answering).*

*I'm sorry to hear that...*

*I want you to know that you matter...*

*Thank you for sharing...*

Again, INVITE them back to Church again. If the person is open to this, offer to have a priest call them.

Offer to put them on a contact list so they may be informed of future events/changes in the parish etc.

PEOPLE WANT TO FEEL WANTED!

**THANK THEM** for having taken the time to speak with you and provide their updated information.