

How healthy is volunteerism at your church?

The two surveys supplied here are not scientific instruments, but are tools to help give leaders an idea of the health of volunteerism in their congregation. They focus on volunteer participation in church ministries, looking at if/how people are prepared for, and supported in, serving. Preparation and support greatly influence a volunteer's experience, and that experience is probably the single most important factor as to whether or not they volunteer in the future.

Church leaders are called to care for all the "parts" of the Body of Christ, the church, not only when they are ill or grieving, but also when they are actively living out their Christian life. Intentionally helping people serve aids their spiritual growth and grows a healthy church, one better prepared to carry out the mission to which Christ has called it.

Two surveys are provided: one for those currently volunteering and another for people who are not volunteering now, but have done so in the relatively recent past. The 'current volunteer' survey includes volunteers at one-time events or short period tasks in the past year.

Results from ex-volunteers might be most helpful in diagnosing areas in need of improvement. You decide how far in the past people can have volunteered and still be surveyed, keeping in mind how slow or fast things change in your church. Survey questions address these areas:

Questions	Area
1-8	Preparation: education; gift discovery; job descriptions; training
9-12	Matching people and tasks
13-21	Purpose/affirmation/spiritual growth
22-27	Relationships/conflict mgmt

Note also the reasons people volunteer. Negative reasons (pressure/guilt/'should') usually result in people leaving as soon as possible. Other reasons are more neutral or could be positive or negative (need/fair share/important task). Purely positive reasons (fun/want/love) are very motivating and usually result in more satisfying service. Studies show that a personal invitation (someone asked/told me) is the most common reason most people volunteer. Specifically spiritual reasons were intentionally omitted from the survey as they are difficult to measure. In addition, Christians generally have many choices of places to serve, and the reasons given here often help us decide among those choices.

Important note: You are asking for people's opinions. Be ready to hear them. Designate a spiritually mature person to follow up personal concerns. It might be easier for a survey respondent to talk honestly to a fellow lay person than to professional staff. In addition, the distribution of such a survey indicates to participants a desire by their leaders to make improvements. People will look for positive follow-up to the survey.

The website www.theequipper.org has tools for improving the health of volunteerism at your church. It also has a searchable listing of other church volunteerism resources.

Feel free to copy the surveys as desired, including the credits to acknowledge the source. Feedback on the usefulness of this survey, and ways to improve it, is appreciated. Email karen@theequipper.org.

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