

Volunteer Care that Supports Faith Formation and Discipleship

The Building Blocks project, based on work done by Bob and Laura Keeley, is one of the recent and exciting initiatives being promoted by Faith Formation Ministries in the CRC. In a nutshell, the Building Blocks of Faith answer the simple question “what do people need in order to grow in their faith?” They serve as a tool for strategizing and implementing a comprehensive ministry overview for shepherding a stronger discipleship and faith formation culture. The Building Blocks are based on four themes of faith development for all ages:

- **I belong** to Jesus, and thus to his body, the church
- **I know/understand.** Because I belong, I know the story of God’s faithfulness, of which I am a part.
- That story has a climactic conclusion! Therefore, **I have hope.**
- Inside that story, **I am called** to work in the kingdom **and equipped** to do that work.

Volunteer care can and will help support each of these themes when it is done intentionally and effectively. **Volunteer Care is Faith Formative when:**

- **Volunteers themselves are valued as much as the task they perform...if not more.**
- **Volunteers are appreciated and thanked in a variety of ways.**
 - *I belong to this team of Christ followers and I am supported in my calling.*
- **Task is always saturated with ministry vision.**
 - *I understand how this work fits into God’s story.*
- **Volunteers are able to speak into vision and task.**
 - *I know that I belong because I contribute in a meaningful way.*
- **The culture is grace-filled.**
 - *My hope is not threatened by fear of making a mistake.*

Healthy Volunteer Care Includes:

- **A job description and a volunteer covenant**
 - Well Communicated expectations that are mutually agreed upon
 - Include time commitment, resource commitment, training and team building commitments
- **Consistent Support**
 - Regular check in by ministry team lead
 - Opportunity to get know the whole team to encourage mutual support
 - The ability to share when one is feeling stretched or unsure of what they are being asked to do
- **Opportunity to do a Trial Run**
 - Chance to observe ministry and similar volunteers in action
 - Chance to tag team with another volunteer before committing to position
 - Time to try it solo before committing to position
- **Possible Exit Points**
 - After the trial run
 - After a year end debrief

- After a term has been filled
 - Each one of these should include an exit interview and a time to thank and bless the volunteer

Lack of effective volunteer care can negatively impact Faith Formation. If volunteers are not cared for or they do not feel that their work is supported and appreciated; if they feel as if they are only filling an empty slot; or if they feel that the expectations of the position do not match with what they were originally asked to do, volunteers can question whether they really belong to and are valued by the body. If they feel that they are inadequate in their task, they may question their calling and/or the church's ability to support them in their calling. If, in leaving the position, they feel that they have let the body down and by extension, they have let God down, they may enter the shame and blame mode: *Someone is not being faithful--God, or this church or me...* This kind of thinking can produce hopelessness and call into question the volunteer's knowledge and understanding of God's love, Church, or where he or she fits into God's story.

We started with a simple question: "what do people need in order to grow in their faith?" Using the 4 Building Blocks as an assessment tool, how does your church's volunteer care support faith formation and discipleship? Where might renewed intentionality in volunteer care give lift to your church's faith formation efforts.? [ServiceLink](#) is a great resource for volunteer ministry development. Need a helpful Volunteer and Recruitment Life Cycle Chart? Email me at Ivanmilligen@crcna.org and I will send you one.