

Role of Parish Coordinators

Primary Qualities

Parish co-ordinators need to be enthusiastic and committed to building community in the parish. They need to be able to work closely with each other and communicate frequently which is why married couples are often most suited for the role.

The need to be sensitive to people's needs, approachable and have a reasonably well organised because there is a management side to the role

The Role

Parish co-ordinators are not usually asked to exercise leadership within their own PFG as well as the parish role, recognising the value of the 'one person one ministry principle'.

They need to keep the PFGM 'open' to parishioners, by letting them know about the Movement and that they are welcome to join. They also place families into appropriate PFG's.

An important aspect of the role is to support and encourage the group co-ordinators, through reasonably regular phone contact with them, perhaps a shared meal once or twice a year, by gathering every 5-6 weeks for a meeting of those in leadership and by encouraging their attendance (and other PFG members) at the annual formation weekend. They may even consider a weekend away with the group coordinators and their families

Recommend

Parish co-ordinators need to 'visit' at least one function of each Family Group, once a year. This helps to get an idea of how each group is functioning and its needs. It also helps to assess whether the PFG is it going as well as the group coordinators say it is, and it helps discern which is the best group to place new families

Term

When a parish begins the Movement the initial appointment for parish co-ordinators is for 12 months. Sometimes the best people to get it started are not the best people to continue in the role. For those taking over the role from other parish co-ordinators, we recommend a 2 year term. These terms are renewable.

There needs to be a meeting with the Parish Priest and/or the Regional Coordinators 3-6 months before a term is due to be completed, to review the role and discern about continuing or seeking new parish co-ordinators.

Meetings with Group Coordinators

Separate information from what is below regarding conducting meetings can be obtained from the National Office by request.

These should occur every 5-6 weeks and they are a time to share difficulties and ideas for promoting the PFG spirit

They should be simple but efficient (so people do not feel their time is wasted). They should allow people an opportunity to share stories and experiences more than 'facts' and details about monthly outings. A meeting could be scheduled for 7.30pm-9.00pm with supper to follow.

Information regarding upcoming events and dates is best provided on paper for each group co-ordinator because it saves time and is more guaranteed to be remembered.

There should be time for general conversation after the meeting (e.g. over supper).

Regional coordinators should be invited to attend at least one meeting each year. If they are not invited then they will not feel welcome

They are acting in the place of the Directors (with whom they have reasonably regular contact) to provide support, encouragement and direction. Regional co-ordinators receive particular formation and this is part of why the parish pays a stipend.

Relationship with Parish Priest

It is hoped that parish co-ordinators develop a good relationship with the parish priest. They should develop clear expectations from him and of him. Their expectations of him should include awareness of his other pastoral concerns, his age and his apparent interest in PFG's.

There should be regularly feedback given to the pastor PFGM regarding the PFG's in the parish. Leadership (group coordinator's) meetings is one time to do this and they should be planned so that he can attend wherever possible.

Parish co-ordinators should ask for the pastor's full support in publicly inviting parishioners to join from time to time and assess the best time and method for recruiting new families (e.g. Mass talks once a year), advising Baptismal families that they can join a PFG and advising new parish families that they will be contacted by the parish co-ordinators and invited to join a PFG.

The vision of PFG's is that they can be the base for nearly everything in the parish (care and concern, bereavement, support for elderly, divorced and widowed etc . Some pastors do not appreciate or promote this.

One determined aim is 'to promote community building in the parish'. In many parishes the first step to doing this is to have people 'get to know one another'. This will not happen without the encouragement and example from the priest.

Parish and group co-ordinators exercise vast pastoral work if they are exercising the role properly (i.e. not just organising monthly functions, but helping people to become a Christian community). It can be frustrating when the pastor fails to recognise or affirm this.

Unfortunately, some pastors do not provide the support that Coordinators expect or need and this makes the role more difficult.

When there is a changeover of parish priest, the Regional Co-ordinators are asked to help from the new priest understand the respective roles (their own, the parish co-ordinators etc.

Often the pastor delegates duties such as placing new families in groups or nominating new group coordinators. This is good practice, but he should still be consulted. Appointments are his responsibility and it is desirable that there be a commissioning of those in leadership.

Things to be done

Parish Co-ordinators should remind old and new parishioners that they are welcome to join. This can be done on a noticeboard and through the parish newsletter as well as invitations at Mass from themselves or the parish priest.

PFG's can take responsibility once a month (one PFG per month) for providing a cuppa after Mass and having 'greeters' to welcome people to Mass and to the cuppa afterwards. This can assist new people to 'get to know others'. If they are doing this, it should be announced in the notices for that Sunday.

It is important to remember that we live in the 'Age of Information'. People are bombarded with notices about things, so such notes have to be catchy or attractive.

Many people choose to communicate in an impersonal way (e.g. e-mail) but nothing is as effective as a personal visit. If parish co-ordinators et an example by visiting their group co-ordinators at home at least once a year, they can encourage group co-ordinators to do this too. This will help to make clear that the role is not about planning monthly functions, but building a Christian family (community).

The style of leadership we seek to exercise at each level is Christian, therefore it should be supportive, not hierarchical. It is characterised by good open communication with an emphasis on teamwork, and relationships. There needs to be a clear vision and suitable management skills to effect the vision. Compassion should be the hallmark rather than rules and regulations.

Regional support

There are regions throughout New Zealand to assist in the proper direction of the PFGM. One of the primary roles of the Regional Coordinators is to offer support to Parish Co-ordinators.

It is encouraged that Parish Co-ordinators get together 2-3 times a year with the other parish coordinators in the region, to share ideas & support one another in the role.