

Chaplaincy/Worship Leader for Winter Residents

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Winter residents, like all people have spiritual needs. As they spend three to six months in Florida, there need to be opportunities for worship, Bible study, and sharing of prayer requests and, yes, “congregationalizing.”

Alongside of the spiritual need is the opportunity to minister during a crisis. Since winter residents are senior adults, there are health problems during their winter visit. Numerous residents are hospitalized with illness or discovered to have cancer, suffer heart attacks, and so forth. Without a chaplain to minister to these individuals, a crucial opportunity to share the gospel is missed.

Scriptures which mandate such ministry are:

Matthew 25:31-46
Matthew 28:16-20
Romans 10:14-15
1 Corinthians 4:2
1 John 3:18

Beginning a Ministry

Survey the area. Visit the campground parks in the area. Ask questions such as:

1. Is there a worship service held for residents?*
2. Is there a chaplain or minister responding to needs of the residents?
3. What is the size of the park?
4. What is a typical season?
5. Is there an activity listing?

*If there is a worship service offered, even though it may be sponsored by another denomination, do not begin a competing service. Move to another winter resident park. If the park does not have a service, put it on a priority needs list.

Prioritize Needs

The needs discovered in the survey will be much greater than the volunteers trained to respond. You will need to prioritize needs using the following standards.

1. How great is the need?
2. Did preliminary discussions discover a core of people willing to be involved in a service?
3. How large is the park?
4. Are there other activities offered on Sunday morning?

Determine Priorities

You may want to minister to the highest priority park for one season, then evaluate the responses.

Develop a Proposal

A proposal is a typewritten presentation to be personally discussed with a park manager.

This provides professionalism and a place to begin discussing service opportunities.

The proposal should include:

1. Introduction to the service offered.
2. Time and place proposed for the ministry.
3. Person responsible for service; name and telephone number.
4. Listing of other places of similar services.
5. Name of sponsoring agency, either church or association.
6. Discussion of the proposal with the manager. Make any changes needed and decide on a starting date.

Tips for the Ministry

1. Do not begin a ministry unless you are able to make a season commitment to it.
2. Make services interdenominational.
3. Set a starting date, time, and place.
4. Provide prior publicity: flyers, posters, one-on-one invitations, et cetera.
5. Develop an order of service.
6. Greet early arrivals.
7. Conduct a meaningful and informal worship service.
8. Give people an opportunity to give money. (Usually there is a basket for gifts by the door.)
9. Do not give a formal invitation at the close of the service. Close with prayer and/or a song, then make yourself available for discussion with those in the congregation.
10. Provide an opportunity for others to be involved in worship: song leaders, soloists, musicians.
11. Realize the diversity in the congregation.
12. Determine the social climate of the congregation.
13. Share with the congregation, do not "talk down" to them.
14. Know the style of the campground: weekly, monthly, full-time residents, senior adults, families.
15. Respond to the needs of the "congregation."

Chaplain Responsibilities

1. Have a definite commitment to Christ.
2. Be active in a local church.
3. Provide campground publicity.
4. Provide an order of worship.
5. Continue contact with the manager.
6. Provide the association with information on ministry progress.
7. Provide worshipful and meaningful experiences for campers.
8. Work with all denominations. Do not make jokes concerning denominations or derogatory comments concerning denominations.
9. Provide "on-call" services for crisis situations.
10. Have a positive attitude toward campers: treat them as equals, as friends, as intelligent people with biblical knowledge.
11. Be on time to services. In fact, arrive early.
12. Stay in the time frame agreed upon for the worship service.
13. Encourage the congregation to participate in services.
14. Make the experience enjoyable.

15. Have a commitment to that campground ministry.
16. Set goals for the ministry.

Chaplain Sources

1. Retired Ministers.
2. Young men needing ministry experience.
3. Ministers in the area.

Worship Services

Worship services in a resort and leisure setting can be more creative than usually found in a church building. Creative worship should bring new things into being: new thoughts, insights and attitudes.

The outdoor setting provides unlimited possibilities for creative worship. However, the elements for worship should include: praise, confession, thanksgiving, petitions and intercession, exhortation, and commitment.

Resort and leisure worship services should be completed within a 30 to 40 minute time frame. Since different denominations are worshipping together, it is important to focus on the common worship elements: traditional hymns, prayer, responsive reading or responsive Scripture reading, the Lord's Prayer, short testimonials, and, perhaps, a special song or dramatic presentation.

In preparing to worship, remember your audience is composed of unchurched people, those with religious backgrounds but no personal faith in God, and those who are active in local congregations. Their backgrounds, culture, and worship styles will be different. It is important to meet their style of worship in some element. Remember, these are leisure residents, chances are they will not "dress up" for the worship service. Try to keep the worship service casual and open. The most important aspect of the service is to point the congregation to God not the beautiful surroundings or warm fellowship; although they do enhance the worship experience, the primary focus should be on God.

Evaluation

Continual evaluation is important to keep the service targeted and appealing to the congregation.

1. Look at the loyalty of the congregation.
2. Look at total attendance.

Weekly

Season

3. Ask for feedback from the congregation and the paid management.
4. Prepare a personal evaluation.
5. List the number of ministries to crisis situations.
6. Gain local church support.

Goal Setting

The objective for ministry to this park, this season, is:

My attendance and ministry goals are:

Month 1: Attendance goal:

Ministry goal:

Month 2: Attendance goal:

Ministry goal:

Month 3: Attendance goal:

Ministry goal:

Month 4: Attendance goal:

Ministry goal:

Month 5: Attendance goal

Ministry goal

Month 6: Attendance goal

Ministry goal

Self-Evaluation

1. I accomplished:

2. My frustration has been:

3. Next year I would like to:

4. I will involve local churches in:

5. I have grown through this experience in:

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