



A Parish Guide for Home Visitation Outreach



The State of Affairs – Our Culture Today

Everyone knows someone who is not practicing their faith. With the increase in materialism, individualism, family disintegration, scandals and so on, most people in our culture today are opting out of a committed relationship with God and the Church preferring either some form of agnosticism or a consumerist approach to faith, that is, a self-serving one that wants God and the things of the Church on their terms and conditions.

“It is clear that our society is in the midst of a culture war. More than ever, people need God, but sadly, many have lost sight of the treasures of the Catholic faith. We can see the reality of our fallen-away brothers and sisters not only in our nation as a whole, but even our own families and neighborhoods. The evidence is shocking:

- **Only 33 percent of U.S. Catholics attend Mass on a weekly basis.** That means approximately 42.7 million U.S. Catholics are not practicing Catholics (CARA Catholic Poll).
- The number of **Americans** identifying themselves as **non-religious/secular increased 110 percent** from 1990 to 2000! It is now 13.2 percent of the total population (World Christian Encyclopedia’s Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World).
- **As 36% of the U.S. population**

The following material is a sample of how to organize a Home Visitation Outreach for your parish. It includes how to organize a team, a leadership training guide and participant guide. Each parish is free to use any of this material or alter as needed for your parish.



Parish Home Visitation is a welcoming ministry, a way of “opening the doors to Christ”. This is accomplished one home visit at a time by parish participants who are solid in their faith, who are good listeners, and who are passionate to share the love of Jesus Christ and His Church. Home Visitation may be implemented as a parish outreach to every registered household or specifically to in-active parishioners for the purpose of:

- ◇ reconnecting with in-active Catholics
- ◇ conducting pastoral visits
- ◇ updating parish records
- The visits could take place over a period of 2 - 4 weeks or a set time period that is appropriate to the size of the parish.
- Visitors preferably should visit in teams of 2.
- Parishioners should be notified that you are visiting them.



- The Evangelization Team should assist in forming a team of 6 -10 people for this outreach effort. If a parish has a Stewardship or Welcome Committee, invite them to be part of the team. You might also consider a parish staff person, parish secretary, representatives from parish organizations, DRE.

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- The task of the Team is to prepare the materials, advertise, seek and train home visitors and review cards when complete.
- They do not need to do the actual visits. Other volunteers will be asked to visit.



Each time the team meets there are three things to do:

- **Pray**

Begin the meeting with prayer this could be based on the Sunday Gospel and reflect on a word or phrase that struck you. What is the reading saying to me? To us as a parish? Pray the *Our Father*.

- **Work**

Address the tasks listed on the time line.

- **Schedule**

Set the date for next meeting.



TIMELINE

The Team must first decide when the visits will be made in the parish.

It is best to make the visits within a certain time limit, e.g. within two - four weeks.



- Determine what households will be contacted by phone
- Begin to ask people to consider volunteering
- Set up meeting date to inform and train home visitors
- Begin to develop and gather materials for home visitor's packet
- Personalize letter to be sent to parishioners who will receive a visit



- Finalize home visitors
- Send letter to all parishioners who will receive a visit from the parish
- Continue to work on materials for packets and print prayer cards
- Put a notice in bulletin



- Information and training session for home visitors
- Continue to work on materials for packets and prayer cards
- Put a second notice in bulletin
- Finalize teams (after training session)



- At weekend liturgies:
 - ◇ Distribute *Parishioner's Prayer* Card at all Masses
 - ◇ Put third notice in bulletin
 - ◇ Blessing of home visitors
 - ◇ Distribute packets to each home visit team



- Home visits take place
- Continue with notices in bulletin (one each weekend)



- All packets are returned
- Plan *Action Steps After Visitation is Complete*
- Give forms to the person who will key information into computer
- Place a notice in the bulletin thanking volunteers and sharing results of visit



- Gather and celebrate with all of the home visitors



Invite Parishioners to be Home Visitors



- Based on the number of homes being visited and the duration of the outreach will determine how many volunteers are needed. Remember it is preferable to have teams of 2 doing the visits.



- Believe in the benefits of this outreach
- Be enthusiastic
- Be knowledgeable of the process



- Are alive in their faith
- Are sensitive to the needs of others
- Have good listening skills
- Will respect confidentiality



- This is a limited time commitment
- They will have ___ homes to visit over a period of ___ weeks
- They conduct the visits when it is convenient to their schedule
- If the person visited is not home, visitors are asked to return for a second visit. If still not home, leave materials
- Training will be provided



- Choose parishioners who will be great “ambassadors of Christ.” A personal invitation is the most effective approach. Here are some possible ways to invite people for the home visits:
 - ◊ Ask each team member to get 10-15 volunteers
 - ◊ Go to the heads of each organization and request that they each obtain 10 volunteers from their organization
 - ◊ When you invite someone to do the home visits ask that person to come to the training with someone they would like to team up with (remind them of the confidentiality factor)
 - ◊ If you have a Stewardship Committee, Outreach Team or Welcoming Committee ask them to be part of this outreach

Prepare Materials



(One for each household)



(One packet for each team. The “packet” needs to be large enough to contain all of the following materials. Put the names of the visitors on each packet)

- Name Tag with Parish Logo or name of Parish (one per visitor)
- Red pen to make additions and/or corrections to Parish Record Forms
- Parish Record Forms (if team is doing 15 homes, the packet needs to have 15 Parish Record Forms)
- Blank Parish Record Forms (to be used if a Catholic family has moved into the house and wishes to register.
- Visitor’s Prayer (one per visitor)

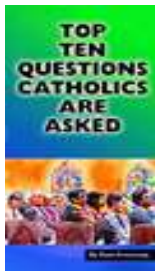
- Doorknob bags with materials to be given at each house, therefore, 15 bags. Each parish needs to decide what they would like to hand out at each home. Suggestions would be: information on Lenten and Easter Services, Mass schedule, Catholic prayers, parish booklet, bulletin, brochures or pamphlets on various topics, ministries in the parish, upcoming events, etc.
- *Sorry You Weren't Home* letter and envelopes (this is left at the homes of those who could not be contacted.
- Evaluation form to evaluate process (one per visitor)
- A variety of additional handouts, e.g. *Annulments*, *Top 10 Reasons to Come Back to Church*, *How to Get More Out of the Mass*.



- Parishioner's Prayer card
- Letter sent to every parishioner (See Sample letter)

Doorknob Bags—ULINE Shipping Supply Specialists 1-800-958-5463—
www.uline.com—click on “Bags, Poly/Plastic” —click on “Poly Bags” —click on
 “Doorknob Bags” (code number S-2176)

Pamphlets



Our Sunday Visitor (800-348-2440);
www.osv.com/pamphlets. Sample of topics: Top 10
 Reasons to Come Back to Church, How to Get More Out of
 the Mass, Top Ten Questions Catholics Are Asked; and more
 . . . (Type in pamphlets)

Leaflets

Liguori Publications (800-325-9521); www.liguori.org/searchproducts.cfm. Some leaflets are in Spanish. Sample of topics: *Annulments, Family Prayers for Lent, Confession*, and more . . . (Type in **leaflets**)

Action Steps After Visit is Complete

Prayer requests

List the first names with the prayer request next to it:

- Include them in the *Prayers of the Faithful* for a month. Ex.: “We pray for all of the intentions that were requested during our Parish Home Visitation.”
- Give to your prayer group and request that they pray for these intentions
- Give a few to each shut-in who would be open to praying for the needs of these parishioners

Follow up on comments

For example:

- List people interested in learning more about RCIA and give names to RCIA coordinator
- List those interested in receiving First Communion or Confirmation and give names to DRE
- List the names of the infirmed who would like to receive communion and give to Pastor

Follow up on parishioners’ suggestions

- List all of the suggestions offered by the parishioners and share with Pastor, Pastoral staff, Pastoral Council and others who can address them.

Update parish records

- Give Parish Record Forms to the person who will be keying the information into the computer.

Gather and celebrate

- Invite all of the home visitors to come together for prayer, refreshments and an opportunity to share their experience. (Do not share anything of a confidential nature).

Plan ongoing visitation

Prayer Cards

Lord,

we ask your blessing and guidance on

our parish home visitors.

As they go in your Name,

may they carry with them

the prayers and support

of our faith community.

Let the power of the Holy Spirit

work through them to reflect your love.

May the homes that they approach

be touched with your gift of peace.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Lord Jesus,

You sent your disciples out two-by-two
to continue your mission.

We thank you for this opportunity
to share your love
with all those we meet today.

These are your people,
and you love them unconditionally.

Let us not be a hindrance
of the Holy Spirit at work in them,
and fill us with joy and peaceful assurance.

We place this endeavor in your hands.

Amen.

Parish Name

Address

Phone

Date

Dear Parishioner,

Greetings and blessings upon you and your loved ones. It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter informing you that a parish home visitation outreach will take place at (name of Parish) during the month of ... The purpose of the visit is to hear how the parish can better serve its members, listen to ideas on ways to make our parish more vibrant, and update our records.

A team of two will be visiting your home on one of the weekends in (dates). The visitors will be wearing identification badges so that you will know they are from the parish.

When the visitors come to your door, please welcome them. Visiting homes is not an easy task and your kindness can brighten their day. They go out in the name of Christ and the parish.

We can never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit, and we pray that these visits bear much spiritual fruit.

(If enclosing the prayer card add this sentence)

Enclosed is a prayer card that we are inviting all parishioners to pray during the month of ... while the visitations take place.

If you have any concerns, feel free to call me at the rectory.

Sincerely in Christ,

mp el rsre

Sorry You Weren't Home Letter

Letter left at homes where contact could not be made.

Parish Name
Address
Phone

Date

Dear Parishioner,

Greetings and blessings upon you and your loved ones. As you probably know, during the month of ..., (name of Parish) conducted parish home visitations in which we tried to contact parishioners to receive input on ways to improve the parish, see if there are any needs that the parish should be addressing and update the parish records.

Even though we missed you in person, it would be a great pleasure to talk with you. Please call me or the rectory. My number may be found at the bottom of this letter. Our conversation would give us a chance to update your record and hear your thoughts on how to make our parish a more vibrant community.

Enclosed in this bag are some materials that the parish would like to leave with you.

Sincerely in Christ,

Parish name and contact information

T mp el rspc l b n ml c l sk cp mnr ml

Blessing of Home Visitors

Suggested date: weekend Masses before visits start.

This blessing takes place after the Prayer after Communion

As people enter Church, everyone should receive a *Parishioner's Prayer Card*.

Celebrant—Introduction

(Parish) is beginning a Parish Visitation outreach. It will be held the 4 weekends of We do this as a way to hear your concerns, reach out to inactive Catholics, update our records and pray for your needs.

Celebrant—Calling Forth Home Visitors

(Number of volunteers) have responded to the invitation to go out in the name of the Parish. I ask those who have volunteered to be part of this visitation ministry to come forward. (face the congregation)

Celebrant—Commitment from Home Visitors

As (Parish Name) home visitors, you are called to share your faith in a unique and special way. You are called to take Christ and His love into the homes that you visit. I ask, "are you willing to do this ministry with a spirit of commitment and joy"?

Home Visitors—Response

We are.

Celebrant—Commitment from Parishioners

Our parish Home Visitors need our support and prayers as they go forth. When you entered Church, you each received a *Parishioner's Prayer Card*. I encourage you to pray

that prayer each day during the month of . . . I now invite all parishioners to stand, take the *Parishioner's Prayer Card*, and let us pray together:

All Parishioners—Pray

Lord, we ask your blessing and guidance on (Parish Name) home visitors.

As they go in your Name, may they carry with them

the prayers and support of our faith community.

Let the power of the Holy Spirit work through them to reflect your love,

and may the homes that they approach be touched with your gift of peace. Amen.

Celebrant—Solemn Blessing

May almighty God keep you from all harm and bless you with every good gift. (**All:** Amen)

May he set his Word in your heart and fill you with lasting joy. (**All:** Amen)

May you walk in his ways, always knowing what is right and good,
until you enter your heavenly inheritance. (**All:** Amen)

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (**All:** Amen)

Training of Home Visitors Leader's Guide

Two weeks before actual visits

All Home Visitors

2 hours.

Sign-in sheet

Name tags

Booklet for each person: *Training of Home Visitors—Participant's Booklet*

Sample packet used by each team

Sample materials in plastic door knob bags

Index card for each person

Refreshments

Podium, microphone

Introductions and welcome:

Ask people to introduce themselves. Introduce staff. Thank them for coming to learn about this outreach.

Opening prayer:

Scripture

The Lord sent them in pairs before him to every town and place he intended to visit. Luke 10:1.

Reflection

This mandate, given to the original followers of Christ, is still an invitation to us in our world today. While we live in changing times, it is a changeless mission. We are still sent to the places that Christ intends to visit. Let us take a minute of silence and allow these words to speak to our hearts. (read Luke 10:1 a second time)

Prayer

Christ our light, may we take your scripture to heart and bring your light to the homes of all our parishioners. Fill us with your Word so that others will be nourished by that Word. Amen.



Explain the Participant's Booklet (go over all the pieces in the booklet)

Basic Information

Show contents of packet as you explain it

Have them write in dates under: **Five steps for Home Visitors**

Process of Home Visits

When speaking of **Updating parish records** have them look at the sample card in the participant's booklet.

Sample Parish Record Form

Allow time for clarity and questions in filling out form

Script for Home Visits

Allow time to practice an actual visit. Have the group break into 2's. Have them "visit" one another following the script.

Possible Comments and Responses

Continue to "role play" as teams. One person giving the comment, the other person giving the response.

Questions and answers or clarification:

Allow time for them to share in small groups about what they heard. After a few minutes open it up to questions or clarifications.

Assign teams:

Some individuals may have already asked someone to be their partner. Others may find that there is someone at the meeting that they would like to partner with, some may not care who their partner will be.

Pass out index cards and ask each person to put their name and phone number on the card. Next to their name put:

I would like to partner with (put name)

I have no preference to a partner

Inform the group that those who need partners will be notified within the week

Closing prayer:

Scripture



The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.

Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up."

When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see,

God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

He said, "here I am." Then he said, "come no closer!"

Remove the sandals from your feet,

For the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' (Exodus 3:1-5)

Prayer

Moses removed his sandals,
to acknowledge that he was standing on holy ground.

Each home in our parish is also holy ground.

As we stand on the doorstep, may we bring with us
a deep respect for God's people who live there.

We ask all this through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Prayer taken from *Prayer Reflections for Group Meetings*, Donald Harrington, pg. 148)

Serve Refreshments

Training of Home Visitors

Basic Information

Explanation of *Home Visitations*:

A parish outreach to every registered household for the purpose of:

- reconnecting with inactive Catholics
- conducting pastoral visits
- updating parish records

The visits will take place on _____ during the month of... Visitors can go in teams, and the parishioners will be notified that you are visiting them.

Parish packet contents: (based on 2 people as team visiting homes)

- Each team will have a packet with the following materials:
- Name tags with parish logo or name of Parish—2
- Red pen to make changes and/or additions to card—2
- Parish Record Forms
- Blank Parish Record Forms for new registrants
- *Visitor's Prayer Card*
- Door-knob bags with materials to be given at each house
- *Sorry You Weren't Home* letters and envelopes
- Evaluation Forms
- A variety of additional handouts, e.g. *Annulments*, *Top 10 Reasons to Come Back to Church*, *How to Get More Out of the Mass*

Five steps for Home Visitors:

1. *Blessing of Home Visitors*: All home visitors will be recognized and blessed by the celebrant and the community at a particular liturgy before the visitation begins.
Date and place: _____
2. *Receiving Materials*: team materials will be picked up Date and place: _____
3. *Actual visits* take place any of these days:
_____ of the month of . . .
4. *Return envelope* with all information, along with evaluation forms
Date and place: _____
5. *Gather* for social and reflection: Date and place: _____

Process for Home Visits

Meet with partner

- Go over contents of packets
- Set dates and times for visits
- Pray for the homes you will be visiting

Basic procedure:

- Each person (team) will have ____ homes to visit.
- Best time to visit is 11:00 AM to dusk.
- Update parish record form and ask pastoral questions.
- Give parish handouts. (They should be in a plastic door hanger bag.)
- Leave time to go back for a second visit if family is not home.
- If no contact is made after the second visit,
 - leave plastic bag, including *Sorry You Weren't Home* letter on the door knob. (Do not put in mailbox and do not leave Parish Record Form).
 - phone them and conduct the visitation over the phone.

Updating parish record: (in filling out forms use red pen)

- You will be given ___ forms that have some information on the households you are visiting.
- At each home check to see if the information is correct and ask for information that is missing on the form.
- If you do not find the family at home after 2 tries and you have the phone number, contact them and get the information over the phone.
- If the person has moved, mark that on the form.
- If the person no longer wishes to be part of the parish mark that on the form.

Ask pastoral questions:

A key piece of the home visits is to give the parishioners a chance to share ways to improve the parish, express their needs and offer support through prayer. At each visit, ask the following questions:

1. Do you feel there are any areas that the parish should be addressing? (e.g. strengthening of youth ministry, social events, outreach to singles, babysitting service, justice outreach)
2. Do you have any suggestions on ways to help people deepen their faith? (e.g. bible study, bereavement committee, programs to strengthen families)
3. Our parish strives to be a community of prayer, are there any needs that you would like us to pray for?
Put the answers to these questions and the prayer requests on the bottom of their parish record form.

Other possible scenarios when visiting a home:

- A new family lives at that address:
 - *They are Catholic*

“Would you like to register at our parish?”

If “yes”: Use a blank form and fill it out with their information. (If your parish has a gathering for new parishioners inform them).

If “no”: leave them a packet on the parish and invite them to consider your parish.

- *They are not Catholic and do not practice their faith*

“We would like to invite you to visit our parish.” Leave them a packet on the parish.

- *They are not Catholic and practice their faith*

“It is a pleasure meeting you, let us continue to pray for one another.”

When visits are complete:

- Review each sheet:
 - make sure that information is clearly recorded
 - put in date and sign
- Put all materials back in folder
- Return packets

Sample Parish Record Form

Parish Record Form (Please PRINT)

Please Make Corrections in RED

Date: 10/11/2012

Household Name: Young

Address: 123 Any Street City: Anytown Zip: 18101

Home Phone: 444-444-4444 Contact Person: Always Young

E-Mail: ayoung@anyserver.com Cell Phone: 555-555-5555

People in Household	Date of Birth	Religion	Baptism (yes or no)	First Communion (Yes or No)	Confirmation (Yes or No)	Comments/ Relationship
Head of Household: Michael Maiden:	1/1/1948	J	N	N	N	
Spouse: Mary Maiden: Smith	3/3/1950	C	Y	Y	Y	
Child 1 Aaron Jones	8/18/1978	C	Y	Y		Step-Son
Child 2 Susan	9/25/1983	C	Y			Daughter
Child 3						
Child 4						
Child 5						
Other:						
Other:						

Comments:

Prayer Requests:

Person(s) conducting the visit: Bill & Ann Visitor

Parish Record Form (Please PRINT)

Please make corrections/additions in RED

Date: _____

Household Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Contact Person: _____

E-Mail: _____ Cell Phone: _____

People in Household	Date of Birth	Religion	Baptism (yes or no)	First Communion (Yes or No)	Confirmation (Yes or No)	Comments/ Relationship
Head of Household:						
Maiden:						
Spouse:						
Maiden:						
Child 1						
Child 2						
Child 3						
Child 4						
Child 5						
Other:						
Other:						

Comments:

Prayer Requests:

Person(s) conducting the visit: _____

Script for Home Visits

Visitation

Pray with partner before beginning visitation. Ask the Holy Spirit to be with you and the person you are about to visit. Now RELAX! The rest is in the hands of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord has anointed you to go and be His witness.

Introductions:

Show nametag as you introduce yourself and smile!

If the person does not have time to talk, ask them when you could come back or ask for their phone number (if you do not have it) and call them on the phone to conduct the visit. Do not leave the Parish Record Form with them.

Update Parish Record Form:

(if your parish is not updating its records, simply move on to the next section)

Give person a red pen to fill out form. When they give it back to you, look it

over to see if everything is filled in. Clarify any questions you may have and then continue with the rest of the visit.

If the person visited wants to check some of the information with another person who is not home, ask if you can call them on the phone for the rest of the information. Do not leave the Parish Record Form with them then continue with the rest of the visit.

Pastoral Suggestions: (record comments on Parish Record Form)

(record comments on Parish Record

Form)

Invitation to Parish Event: (optional)

Give them an attractive flyer advertising some upcoming parish events. E.g. special events, Adult Faith Formation speakers, *Landings* Program, *Awakening Faith* Program. Try to remove obstacles that would prevent them from coming. (need transportation, children, fear of not knowing anyone—assure them that you will be there and will look for them.)

Ending Visit:

Leave parish handouts and any other materials appropriate to that house, e.g. *Annulments, Top 10 Reasons to Come Back to Church, How to Get More Out of the Mass*

Other Possible Scenarios:

A new family lives at that address:

They are Catholic

Explain the registration process in your parish. Be sure to point out specific things in the bulletin such as Mass times, contact information, etc.

They are not Catholic and are not part of any faith tradition

Leave them a packet on the parish.



Possible Comments and Responses

Comment	Response
Why are you visiting me?	During the month of . . . , we are trying to visit every home in the parish to hear your concerns, seek suggestions on how to improve the parish and update our parish record form.
I am no longer a practicing Catholic.	I am sorry to hear that. Is there anything we can do that might make you reconsider coming back to the Church? (Name Parish and talk about strong points. Do you mind if I ask why you left the Church? Ask if you could put their name on a seasonal mailing list)
I am angry at the Church because...	While divine, the Church is a human institution as well. It is unfortunate that we cause pain to one another. In the name of the Church I apologize and hope that you will join us again.
I am too busy at this time to talk.	We certainly understand, could we stop by at another time when it will be more convenient? (If they indicate they do not want another visit, as if you can contact them by phone. Leave Materials.)
I am a Catholic but new to the area.	We invite you to our parish, which is a great community because. . . Here is our Church bulletin. If you would like to register you could fill out this form. (If your parish has a gathering for new parishioners, encourage

	them to attend.)
I no longer see a great need for organized religion in my life.	Respect the person's feelings. Humbly share the difference that God and Church has made in your life.
I am divorced now, I don't feel welcomed in the Church.	The Church still welcomes you to Mass and the Sacraments, and to be involved in activities. We suggest you talk to someone about it.

Additional Points for Good Dialogue

- Engage in small talk. "Beautiful day, appreciate you taking the time to do this..., nice street you live on, etc.
- Listen for facts and feelings that might need a pastoral response.
- Have good eye contact.
- Work as a team. If going in 2's, have one designated spokesperson. That person should also write down the information. The other person clarifies or sees information you may have forgotten.
- Use the name of the person as you talk (not necessarily the first name).
- Smile!
- Paraphrase and reflect back what the person says.
- Don't: argue, take sides, try to top a story, preach
- Do: listen to their stories, show compassion, show acceptance, apologize when necessary, share the Good News when appropriate, issue an invitation

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For more information and questions, contact the Office of Adult Formation
610-289-8900 x221 or aff@allentowndiocese.org