

Guiding Principles for Conducting One-One Visits

An essential tool for organizing a constituency on social action

Definition of a Visit: A face-to-face conversation, arranged in advance by a phone call. The visit takes about 30 minutes and is a two-way conversation where the visitor shares some things about themselves.

What a Visit is Not: It's not a survey, an interview, a chit-chat, a needs assessment, nor a counseling session. No note-taking or tape-recording is suggested because it is distracting.

Purposes of Visiting:

- **Build Relationships.** Relationships cultivate possibilities. It is through relationships that significant things happen. When people are in relationships they can share, plan, dream, create and get things done. People are more likely to respond to an invitation to work together from someone with whom they have a relationship. Visits build networks of relationships and help to strengthen community.
- **Uncover interests.** Interests are those things that a person feels most strongly about. They are the things that motivate people to get involved and take action. People usually have multiple interests that change over time. A visit can help them clarify their interests and set priorities.
- **Gather Information.** Visits are an opportunity to gain information about the parish and the surrounding community. You will find out what is going on in the community, who other church members are, and most importantly, what parishioners are thinking and feeling about a variety of social issues.

Visits are set-up in advance through a phone call:

Consider this as a sample phone call to set up a visit (adapt it to fit your style):

"Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a parishioner at _____. As a member of the social justice committee, I am visiting with people in our community to strengthen the relationships among the people of the parish. I would like to visit with you sometime. I'll only need thirty minutes of your time, and we can meet at your house, or at the restaurant on 3rd and Main Street. Which works better for you?"

Guidelines for Visiting:

There is no formula for a good visit. Enjoy yourself and try to establish some rapport. Here are some general points that may help you do this:

- Introduce yourself and explain again why you are there, just like you did during the telephone explanation that set-up this visit. Remember not to sell them anything, preach to them, judge or psychoanalyze them.
- Warm up by having a few simple questions or comments ready to develop a relaxed conversation at the beginning. This will get them talking and help you start to get a feel for this person. Ask questions, listen closely, and keep it relaxed. Talk about the things this person seems interested in.
- Listen intently, especially for stories. Speak in order to draw them out. In a successful visit, the person visited speaks 60% of the time. Most people are flattered when you genuinely show interest in them and their opinions. Stories tell the most about people's experiences. Try to get specifics about their experiences and their true feelings about things. Some areas that can be explored are:

family	special talents/gifts	fears/frustrations
background	hopes/dreams	concerns/worries
church	organizations/clubs	community
education	job	politics
reading	values	hobbies
anger/pain	successes	motivations

- Seek to identify self-interests. Listen for that which excites and motivates this person. Use follow-up questions to clarify, hear more details, or stimulate the conversation further. Follow your own curiosity about them and their interests. Ask 'why' questions to really understand them better.
- Establish some common ground. In order to establish a relationship, you need to share some things about yourself and your experiences -- especially if you have something in common.
- Close the visit. Arrive on time and watch the time so you do not go over the time you set. End the visit by thanking them for the visit and for their time.
- Jot down notes when you get home from the visit, while things are fresh in your mind. Use common sense in regard to confidentiality. Be sure to also evaluate your role as a visitor.