
3 Things Your Volunteers Think but Don't Say

I'm not on staff and I don't get a paycheck.

I'm a volunteer at your church.

But I've been thinking about some things for a while now.

I don't think I'm the only one.

In fact, many of us feel this way.

We probably won't say this stuff out loud because we don't want to complain about our church or cause any problems.

But you should know what we are thinking.

#1 – I wish people said “thanks” more often.

My family and I are pretty busy. We've got full-time jobs, the kids are playing sports and just managing the day-to-day stuff takes a lot of time. But we do love our church and we want to give our time.

I want to do things that matter for eternity, but eternity feels like a long way off. “Your treasure is in heaven” sounds a little bit like a cop-out for not noticing what I am doing here on earth.

Thank you notes and even little gifts energize me more than you realize. It's silly, but I kept a thank you note you sent a couple of years ago. That little gesture meant a lot.

Even some of my friends who say "Don't spend church money buying me a coffee mug" feel a little bit special when they drink out of that coffee mug.

I didn't sign up because I wanted recognition, but if I'm being honest, there are plenty of times when I don't know if what I do is noticed by anyone. I work, give, and sacrifice, at least by my definition, and I'd just like to hear a few words of affirmation. Hearing nothing makes me assume my contributions don't matter.

Deep down, many of us are wondering if people in leadership really care about US or if we're just being used to get a job done.

You may feel like you're saying "thanks" a lot, but I don't hear it enough. And the people I serve with would probably agree. We probably won't complain about this out loud to you, but it's what we are thinking.

#2 - We really don't want to come to those training meetings.

I understand I need to know a few things and I know there's some important information you need to make sure I hear.

But the training meetings we have during the week or after one of the services are tough to attend. I've already been at work for a whole day and trying to fit another thing into a busy week is just tough.

I know this info might be important, but the meetings are really not convenient.

I understand your predicament...no meeting will ever come at the perfect time for everyone. You have to make leadership choices and do what's best for the group.

But the meetings are inefficient, too. Half of the people I serve with didn't make the last training and all we did was go through a handout.

I've even got a few ideas that might work better.

1. **Shoot a video and just send it to me.** It doesn't need to be fancy or have graphics or all that stuff. You can just shoot it from your phone and upload it to YouTube. You can tell me all the same stuff you were going to tell me in the meeting and I'll watch it after the kids go to sleep.
2. **Just email me.** This happens at work all the time. Believe me, it's not just a church thing. I routinely go to meetings, leave, and think to myself "That whole meeting could have just been an email." I know not everyone loves email, but it's still more convenient than all of us driving up to the church.
3. **Try a webinar or a conference call.** I went to this online seminar from my computer the other day and it was great. I was able to learn several new things and even chat with the organizers. I didn't have to leave my desk and when it was over, I got the recording. That could work well for us at church, too.

For what it's worth, when we do have meetings (and I agree one or two throughout the year would be good...mostly just to see everyone and connect), it would really help if you had childcare.

#3 – We don't want to commit to serving forever.

I have no plans to leave the church. We love it here.

But I'm a little scared to sign up for ANYTHING that doesn't have an end date. Maybe it's just a fear of commitment...I'll own that.

Most of us feel this way.

If you're asking us to serve in the middle school ministry, it would be really helpful if our tour of duty lasted one year. Or two. Or even three

years...spanning a middle schooler's entire career. The thing that matters is clarity.

You might think that asking us to serve specifically would weed out too many people, but I think the opposite is true. The clearer you make something, the more people will embrace it. We just want to know what we're getting into. When you give us clear job descriptions and show us that everything is planned out, it really increases our confidence in your leadership. It puts us at ease when we know that you've thought through things before asking us to join in.

Honestly, I think if you gave everyone an end date to their volunteer term, it would help more people embrace a start date. And I think most of us would agree to another term of service after this one is over, anyway.

These are three things I've been thinking about for a while. I hope you receive it in the spirit of helpfulness. I love our church.