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MARKETING PLAN

HOW TO HELP RETURNEES FIND YOU!

Finding inactive Catholics in your life is not very difficult. Look at your own family, neighbors, and work

colleagues, and you will find candidates for LANDINGS. But finding Catholics who are ready to journey

back into the faith is a little more difficult. Some may be in your pews on Christmas and Easter, but

many are beyond the reach of your parish bulletin. How do you reach those who are searching?

Years ago, one might have put an ad in the local newspaper. Today we communicate in so many

ways, including the Web. Young adults use the Internet to seek out information about parishes and

other faith communities. Many potential returnees who have not been back to church worship may also

use a Web search. You want them to find your program easily and seek you out.

To develop a marketing strategy for LANDINGS, consider the following ideas:

SIGNAGE

Think about a sign outside your church. One possible slogan is “Inactive Catholics: Take Another Look”.

You can create a message specific to your needs and even the season. Include the e-mail address of

your LANDINGS contact. Keep the sign displayed for only four to six weeks before your session; it has

a better chance of getting the attention of non-parishioners if it is not always there.

Inside your church, develop a permanent, well-stocked display of flyers in the gathering space of

your church where people linger after Mass. Hang one on the bulletin board with a stack of the same

flyers for people to take with them. This is especially important if you are an urban church, where people,

often non-parishioners, might come in at different times of the day.

PEW CARDS

For the holidays of Christmas and Easter—as well as Ash Wednesday, which is usually well attended

by inactive Catholics—develop a pew card for people to complete and return in the offering plate. Some

parishes try to keep the cards (and pencils) available year-round in the pews. Plan to include an

announcement from the pastor urging parishioners to share the cards with friends or neighbors who

might be interested in LANDINGS.

MAILINGS

Some parishes have considered sending letters to inactive Catholics nominated by parishioners or to

people on the registry who haven’t attended church in a while. While this group may seem a natural

audience, it is important that the returnee make the first step in coming back. The better approach is

to send a flyer to the whole parish asking parishioners to share the information with people they know

who might be interested.

BULLETINS AND FLYERS

One parish inserts attractive invitations to LANDINGS in their Christmas and Easter bulletins. A flyer

insert can be very effective. Word your announcement as an invitation. Keep it simple, and don’t include

too much information about LANDINGS, for example, where you meet, because preregistration is

required. You also want the returnee to contact the coordinator first so he or she can warmly and personally welcome the returnee to the parish. Many returnees prefer e-mail contact to a phone call for

this initial contact, so request both phone and email contact information on your flyer’s RSVP.

SERMONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND TESTIMONIES

Consider asking your pastor to mention LANDINGS in the homily at weekend liturgies or as a pulpit

announcement before the closing of the liturgy. Include a short testimony from the coordinator or a

recent LANDINGS participant. Challenge the parishioners to give a flyer to someone they know.

SACRAMENTAL MINISTERS, SCHOOL STAFF, AND PARISH REGISTRAR

Often, returning Catholics come back through either pre-Cana marriage preparation or baptismal preparation as new parents or godparents. Make your religious-formation ministers aware of LANDINGS, and give them flyers to insert in information packets for their ministries. Don’t forget newcomers! Parents

of Catholic school children are likely to be as inactive as the general Catholic population. In this booklet

we have included an example of a letter to parents from a director of religious education. Also, the church

receptionist should always be ready to suggest LANDINGS to newcomers.

LANDINGS WEBPAGE

It’s critical to reach out to people where they are, and many are on the Web. Therefore, to contact young

adults, a Web page is essential. Work with your Webmaster to put in such keywords and terms as

“returning Catholics” and “inactive Catholics” to attract those using search engines to investigate churches. Make sure you create an easy-to-remember e-mail address such as: churchname.LANDINGS@yahoo.com. Ask your Webmaster to include a notice about LANDINGS on the home page of your faith community’s Website and to establish a permanent link to your LANDINGS page. Consider adding the three-minute LANDINGS marketing video from the LANDINGS DVD to your Webpage to introduce LANDINGS to any potential returnees.

ROSTER DEVELOPMENT

If you are not conducting a session currently, take any potential returnee’s name and contact information

and indicate that you will get in touch with him or her before the next session. It is important that

your LANDINGS ministry of welcoming be an ongoing process.