

# Follow-Up

*Follow-Up is a column of current developments and discussion as well as additional resource information on key topics reported in previous issues. Here, we present a follow-up to two important topics: religious volunteering and volunteer recognition. See resource list for obtaining further information, including the back issues of VAL that highlighted these topics.*

## Recognizing Volunteers in Churches

By Janet Richards

**F**OR ALMOST FOUR YEARS, IT has been a challenge to adapt the precepts of volunteer administration in community-based agencies to the work within a church. One of the many unique features in the church is that all its members are potential volunteers for service in the church. And there are so many of them!

In my own church with a membership of over three thousand, there are around one thousand volunteer opportunities. I would suggest that this ratio is fairly standard regardless of size of church membership.

A problem that arises is that it is often very difficult to count or tabulate the actual number church volunteers. Take a church supper, for example. There may be a telephone committee that makes calls to encourage people to attend. That committee can be tabulated, but what about others who, in idle conversation, convince someone to come? Are they volunteers for the church, too?

Then there are those who set up tables and clean up afterwards. Usually committees are designated for these details, but who observes the random helpers who pitch in and give a hand?

*Janet Richards is the coordinator of volunteers for Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania.*

If volunteers in the church are not readily identifiable, how does one go about recognizing their contribution? Or does one even try? It isn't easy, but I believe an effort should be made. At Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, I have designated the first Sunday of National Volunteer Week as Volunteer Recognition Sunday. A brief article usually appears in the church's monthly

newsletter about volunteering, and on that particular Sunday I have briefly talked about the great dependency of our church on volunteers and expressed the staff's gratitude to all who have volunteered in any way.

This year other staff members caught the spirit and helped with ideas for Volunteer Recognition Sunday on April 20. It was a real wing-ding.

A member of the congregation, who had recently taken up photography as a hobby, agreed to be the official church photographer, charging only for supplies. I asked her to come in one day to talk about a dream of mine: to set up a huge display of pictures for Volunteer Recognition Sunday showing all the ways volunteers contribute to the life of our church. With a list of all the groups or situations involving volunteers, she began taking pictures. The display contained almost one hundred photos showing many of our volunteers at work. To include those persons not present when their group or situation was photographed, we hung a mirror with the heading, "Gloria Dei's Most Valuable Volunteer," in the center of the display.

My assistant came up with another idea: a picture of our church (drawn by an artist in the congregation) mounted in the center of a poster and signed by all our volunteers. After it is framed, it will hang in the lounge for all to see.

Another feature of this year's Volun-



*Preparing for communion . . .*



*Sharing activities at Gloria Dei's Intergenerational Program's 'Art-In'...*



*Lighting candles on the Advent wreath... and typing final copy of Dr. Schmidt's weekly sermon.*

Photo by Mona Ballard, Meadowbrook, Pa.

# RESOURCES

**Volunteer Recognition.** *Voluntary Action Leadership*, winter 1979. \$2.00. Order from Voluntary Action Leadership, PO Box 4179, Boulder, CO 80306.

Cover feature describing two city-wide volunteer recognition events.

**Voluntary Action Through Religion.** *Voluntary Action Leadership*, winter 1978. \$2.00. Order from Voluntary Action Leadership, PO Box 4179, Boulder, CO 80306.

Cover feature containing two articles: "Volunteering by Religious Groups: The Half-Awake Giant" by Alice Leppert and "The Clergy As Enablers of Human Resources" by Nancy D. Root.

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*The following books may be ordered from Volunteer Readership, a service of VOLUNTEER: The National Center for Citizen Involvement, at PO Box 1807, Boulder, CO 80306. Please add shipping/handling charge of \$1.50 for orders up to \$10; \$2.75 for orders from \$10 to \$25; \$3.75 for orders over \$25.*

**B'nai B'rith Community Volunteer Service.** B'nai B'rith Leadership Council. 1978. 63 pp. \$3.50.

A manual containing project descriptions, background information and resources for community advocacy projects undertaken by B'nai B'rith, but which are applicable for any group interested in involving volunteers in solving community problems.

**The Care and Feeding of Volunteers.** Douglas W. Johnson. 1978. 125 pp. \$5.50.

How to develop a cadre of volunteer workers and leaders in the church as well as help people find personal and spiritual growth from their volunteer experiences. Explores motivations, ambitions and needs of volunteers, recruitment and training, assigning tasks, and more.

**The Ministry of Volunteers: A Guidebook for Churches.** Office for Church Life and Leadership, United Church of Christ. 1979. Set of 7 manuals. \$25.95.

A comprehensive set of seven manuals describing how local churches can relate to all members who engage in volunteer work within the church and in the community. The three-ring binder contains: *The Church and Its Volunteers* (28 pp.), *Guiding the Church's Volunteer Ministry* (63 pp.), *Developing a Mission Statement* (31 pp.), *Volunteers and Volunteer Ministries* (72 pp.), *Training Volunteers* (28 pp.), *Supporting Volunteers* (24 pp.), *Completing Volunteer Ministries* (25 pp.).

**Recruiting and Developing Volunteer Leaders.** George E. Scheitlin and Eleanore L. Gillstrom. 1979. 48 pp. \$4.00.

A handbook that takes a church leader through each of the essential elements of building an effective program for recruiting, equipping and satisfying volunteers. Includes information and worksheets for the volunteer coordinator's job description, a congregational volunteer program model, a checklist for recruitment, and much more.

teer Recognition Sunday took place during the service when our pastor read all the volunteer opportunities in our church. The list included seventy categories ranging from choirs, ushers, greeters to committees of all sorts to clerical helpers and envelope stuffers. People showed their involvement by standing when their category was read. A large percentage of the congregation was standing when Dr. Schmidt completed the list.

In his sermon Dr. Schmidt once again acknowledged our volunteers' contributions. "Volunteers are the church," he said. "They are its heart, soul and hands. They are the people who make the great ministry of Jesus Christ reach out. They open doors that would otherwise remain closed."

One final thing scheduled for that day was a special cake decorated with our volunteer logo. This was served at the fellowship hour following services. The logo, designed by a student at the Philadelphia Art Institute, will be used to highlight volunteers in our newsletter, *The Vision*, throughout the year. The specially designed logo made its first appearance in the April issue of *The Vision* with a salute to Gloria Dei's volunteers.

An unexpected highlight of the day was the presentation of an engraved ("In grateful appreciation...") silver pitcher to "our Director of Volunteers Janet Richards from Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, April 20, 1980."

It was a gala celebration! Now my only concern is, What do we do next year? Right now I think we'll attempt to recognize the contribution of our church members in community agencies.

**Volunteers: Hope for the Future.** Maxine Marshall. 1980. 25 pp. \$4.50.

This booklet is divided into chapters for church leaders, church school teachers and librarians. Covers such topics as who volunteers and why, some reasons for volunteering, equipping leaders who work with volunteers, developing the volunteer potential, maintaining a continuing support system, ways to demonstrate care and concern, and many more.