

Some help with building a group

This file represents one of the most important parts of the 'Fan the Flame' project. We recognise that a lot of groups going to Flame might well be fairly ad-hoc groups who don't normally meet together or have much to do with each other. If this is the case, then you might want to use Flame as a catalyst for building something up. You might want to use this as a chance to start a youth group, a chaplaincy group, or some other sort of permanent initiative.

It may be that this isn't possible in your particular context. Even so, have a read of this anyway, because there might be at least a few ideas that you can use.

This file should be used in conjunction with some of the other files in this pack. The 'Your First Meeting...' file gives you some concrete steps to get things started, and the 'A Wealth of Events, Resources and Programmes' file will give you some practical ideas regarding many of the things we're about to suggest...

First Step - talk to people:

This isn't something you're going to be able to do alone. A lot of other people will need to be involved. These people will be able to provide a great deal of help.

The Young People - Have a chat to them and ask them what sort of group they want to have. Have a look at the list of different sorts of initiatives further down this document, and have a look at the 'Your First Meeting...' document elsewhere in this pack. Both of these will help you in suggesting ideas to the young people and in hearing what they've got to say.

Your Youth Officer / Youth Advisor - Pretty much every diocese in the western world has some form of Youth Service or a Youth Officer/ Youth Advisor and, if you're in England & Wales, your diocese will be represented at CYMFed. Similarly, if your parish, school or organisation is affiliated with a religious order or other Catholic organisation you may well also have a Youth Officer (or similar post). Either way, your Diocesan Youth Officer/ Youth advisor will be happy to help you. If you're in England & Wales, have a look at the CYMFed site - <http://www.cymfed.org> - for a list of youth officers. There is also a list of UK contacts on CatholicYouthWork.com at <http://www.catholicyouthwork.com/contacts>. Either of these will let you know who to contact in your diocese. Give them a call and let them know that you want to start a youth group, and they'll be able to point you towards lots of ideas and resources, as well as providing a lot of practical help.

Your Parish Priest (if you're in a parish) - All ministry in a parish is ultimately the responsibility of the Parish Priest and so you will need to get him involved early on. He will be able to help you with arrangements and lend support to the project. He will also let you know about other initiatives already running in the parish which might be useful to know about.

Parents - Whenever you're dealing with young people it is always vital to have good communication with their parents. You must be careful to ensure that you have the appropriate consents and permissions and also that you let them know exactly what's going on. Not only is this a legal must, but it's also very productive to include parents, and it can be a lot of help to them in their own relationship with their children too.

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Before we go any further:

..we should perhaps point out that this document can not possibly give you a step-by-step guide to setting up a youth group. The purpose of this document, really, is to give you a few pointers. Have a look at the 'A Wealth of Events, Resources and Programmes' file in this pack though for some links to more comprehensive guides.

Different sorts of youth initiatives:

Catholic youth initiatives are many and varied. There are a lot of different approaches you can take to youth ministry, according to what your group feels might be right for them. Here are some examples:

A 'Regular' Youth Group – Many Catholic Young People are part of youth groups attached to a parish, or perhaps a cluster of parishes. They come together every so often – perhaps for a few hours one evening every few weeks – and spend some time together. This time might include some catechesis, some shared food, a social activity or some work to help the wider parish. Usually, it's a combination of these things. Some of the resources listed in the 'A Wealth of Events, Resources and Programmes' file in this pack will give you a detailed guide as to what youth groups can do.

Though these groups often have a strong social aspect to them (which is very important) it's vital that prayer, and perhaps catechesis too, are important parts of their regular programme.

A group formed around a particular system or approach – There are a lot of organisations out there who will help you to build a group around a specific model or tradition. For instance, you could establish a YCW/Impact group, or a LifeTeen group. More info in the 'A Wealth of Events, Resources and Programmes' file.

A 'service' group – Some youth groups exist largely to take part in acts of service for others. These may be regular youth groups which just happened to evolve that way or they may be groups which take part in specific programmes such as Youth SVP.

Youth Masses – Some parishes run youth Masses. Usually these are regular parish Masses with a particular element of youth involvement to them. Sometimes they are followed by a social for young people, or perhaps preceded by a time of catechesis and/ or prayer. This can be a popular way to start groups off, especially if there are a lot of young people you want to engage who would usually come to Mass anyway, or perhaps who would come along if they knew that other people their own age would be there.

A group working towards an event – Generally speaking, events which happen annually (or even less often) don't sustain young people by themselves, but some groups have found that they can sustain themselves and give their members regular access to prayer and spiritual nourishment by constantly working toward events. For instance, you might decide to plan a trip to Taize next summer and you might come together every two weeks to make plans. These plans might include learning music, raising money and so on. Then, next year, you might plan another trip. The disadvantage of this is that it can be very exclusive. It's unusual, but it can work.

What we've given you here is just a very small snapshot of the different approaches that are out there.