



JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS

Domestic Local Formation Team Handbook

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PREFACE: *THE OUTSIDE EYE*

“I realize more and more that no community, whether large or small, can cope on its own. Very often its members are not able to resolve their tensions; they are frequently taken up too much by immediate questions and do not have the distance necessary in order to see what is really happening to the community. They need a sympathetic outsider, who is competent and carries a real authority, to help them grasp the way the community is evolving and find new structures for the different stages of growth. Every community seems to need regular visits from someone who listens and asks the right questions about their vision and their life in community, and to whom all members feel they can talk.”

~ Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth*

This Handbook provides insight, definitions and resources to lay the foundation for good relationships between members of the Local Formation Team, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, and the Jesuit Volunteers.

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JVC History

In 1956 the first Jesuit Volunteers began their service to the native people of Alaska. The small nucleus of volunteers grew under the sponsorship of the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), eventually reaching out to remote areas of Alaska, to Native American communities in the Northwest, and to inner-city placements in Washington and Oregon.

JVC is now a national and international program with its central office in Baltimore, Maryland. In 2009, five existing Jesuit Volunteer organizations formally merged to create a new organizational structure that would more closely align their shared mission and work. The mission remains the same but the vision for what can be done structurally and programmatically to enhance the fulfillment of this mission is greater than the capacity of any one previously existing organization.

The Mission of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps

Aspiring to create a more just and hopeful world,
the Jesuit Volunteer Corps engages passionate
young people in vital service within poor
communities, fostering the growth of leaders
committed to faith in action.

The Four Values of JVC



Spirituality

Core to the JVC experience is an open, honest engagement with spirituality and faith. The JVC program facilitates prayer, retreats, and other activities grounded in the Catholic, Ignatian tradition. JVC creates opportunities for Jesuit Volunteers to reflect on their commitment to God and social justice, find God in all things, and put their faith into action through service for the rest of their lives.

Simple Living

JVC creates valuable opportunities for Jesuit Volunteers to live a simple, practical life. Their basic needs met and living in solidarity with people who are poor and marginalized, they separate needs from wants and gain freedom from the material. As part of a supportive community, they learn to prioritize, put people before things, and make deliberate, intentional decisions about how to use their time, money, and talents. The JVC experience is a chance for JVs to reflect on simple living, define it in their own terms, and explore how to carry it into their lives.



Community

JVC creates intentional communities that help people broaden their perspectives and confront boundaries. During their service, Jesuit Volunteers are placed in peer communities that foster spiritual growth and engagement. JVs share meals, reflect and pray together, and live among the people they serve. They challenge and support one another, gain new insight into the realities of poverty and injustice, and commit to a lifetime of advocacy and service. By fostering communities built on accountability, respect, and mutual support, JVC helps Jesuit Volunteers understand their place in the world, and how they'll engage with it.



Social Justice

JVC makes a real impact in the world by increasing the capacity of local organizations to provide direct service to people who are poor or marginalized. JVC places Jesuit Volunteers alongside those who are disenfranchised so that they come to understand the realities of poverty and injustice faced by much of the world. They are transformed through reflection on these experiences, and by the close interpersonal relationships they form with those they serve. The JVC experience brings a global perspective on living and seeing the world that becomes a part of those who serve, and they spend their lives advocating for compassion, fair treatment, and structural change that addresses the root causes of injustice.



The Commitment of the Local Formation Team

We want to thank you for sharing your time and talent to serve as a member of the Local Formation Team. Local Formation Teams are a very important part of the JVC program in offering consistent, local support to the volunteers.

This handbook will provide you with an overview of your role. If, over the course of the year, you find that something is lacking from this handbook, or you feel especially proud of a successful community night, please let the JVC staff know. Your success can also be a success for one of your peers in a community somewhere else in the country. In addition, you can visit jesuitvolunteers.org/localformation for more resources, including examples of successful community and spirituality nights.

Jesuit Volunteers live in apostolic community to provide them with the basic material, spiritual, and human supports for the purpose of strengthening and facilitating their own physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Community members have the responsibility to use the community as their primary means of support in carrying out their ministry. Community living requires community members to share their own feelings, needs, and apprehensions. Community members commit to being open and honest with each other as a means of holding each other accountable. To help volunteers build supportive relationships within community, JVC expects all communities to meet twice a week, once for community night and a second time for spirituality night. These twice weekly gatherings are the foundation of volunteer support within community.

It is not always easy to live in apostolic community. When there is tension over cleaning schedules or other such matters, members are still called to pray together and support each other in their ministry. When one member is not participating in community nights, the other members must call that person back to their commitment, for the sake of the whole. Community members must constantly reevaluate community goals and confront issues in community as soon as they arise.

Realizing these difficulties and struggles, JVC has established a network of people who help the volunteers move through the joys and pains of community living. The Local Formation Team assists JVC staff in educating, supporting, and challenging Jesuit Volunteers and JV communities to live the core values and to develop an Ignatian-based response to the world. Members of the Local Formation Team support volunteers by observing, listening, asking questions, offering insights, and sharing their own experiences. An ideal Local Formation Team has two or three support people (preferably one man and one woman). The team often includes one Jesuit/spiritual liaison. Additionally some local formation teams include some dedicated primarily to Former Jesuit Volunteer (FJV) relations.

Local Formation Team Members

Jesuit/spiritual liaison

The Jesuit/spiritual liaison (a local Jesuit or lay person with understanding of Ignatian spirituality) ministers to the JV communities in two distinct and important ways: s/he serves as an active witness to the Ignatian tradition and as pastoral support in times of crisis.

Jesuit liaisons serve to connect the volunteers with the local Jesuit/Catholic community and to share with them the rich history of the Jesuits and the long tradition and practice of Ignatian spirituality. They help to guide the volunteers in becoming “contemplatives in action,” and to develop lifelong spiritual disciplines.

In times of crisis—community-related, spiritual, or personal—Jesuit/spiritual liaisons also provide a pastoral presence for the volunteers, serving as an outside ear for both volunteers and staff and ministering to the individual and/or community in appropriate ways (e.g., memorial masses marking death of parents or loved ones, immediate pastoral counseling in aftermath of “bad news,” etc.)

Two primary responsibilities of Jesuit/spiritual liaisons are to initiate and attend meetings at the volunteer community six times a year and extend an invitation to the JV community for dinner at the Jesuit community. Jesuit/spiritual liaisons are also asked to be in regular communication with the program coordinator for their city.

Support People

JVC supports, challenges, and educates volunteers during their year(s) of service to live as contemplatives in action, finding God in all things, events, and people—especially those who are economically poor and marginalized. JVC also provides opportunities for volunteers to develop personal and communal prayer practices, social analysis skills, and a life-long commitment to working for justice.

JVC relies on friends and colleagues to assist in this formation of the volunteers. Specifically, JVC recruits women and men to serve as local support people. This team walks with the volunteers throughout the course of the year. The support people assist JVC staff in educating, supporting, and challenging Jesuit Volunteers and JV communities to live the four values and to develop an Ignatian-based response to the world.

Wherever possible, JVC staff will invite one woman and one man to act as support people for each volunteer community. This “team” effort works well both for volunteers and the individual support person – providing two individuals to whom the volunteers can look for support and guidance, and giving the support person a peer with whom to share responsibilities, come up with ideas, and discuss community dynamics.

A support person serves three distinct and important roles: **facilitator, resource person, and companion.**

- ❖ As **facilitators**, support people assist the community in their early stages of formation, helping them to organize schedules, to set meeting times, and to coordinate community nights. Support people may need to step in at times and hold the community accountable to living the values of JVC, or to moderate conflict and/or difficult conversations among community members.
- ❖ As **resource people**, support people know their local reality best. As such they

introduce the community to their new city, specifically to the amenities the city has to offer people on a limited income. Additionally, it is hoped that support people can introduce the volunteers to the social justice networks and places of worship in the city and in the neighborhood in which the volunteers live. Finally, support people may have information to share in regards to opportunities to further develop one's own spirituality and/or commitment to simple living.

- ❖ As **companions**, the support people walk in solidarity with the JVs during the year, listening to their experiences and helping the volunteers translate them into meaningful moments of growth.

The following page includes a more formal role description for support people.



JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS

Role: Support people as members of the JVC Local Formation Team

Department: Program

Date Revised: Spring 2016 (minor revisions)

General Summary: The Local Formation Team is a representative of JVC and is primarily responsible for the local support of Jesuit Volunteers for the program year. This role includes meeting with the volunteer community, providing local resources and contacts to the volunteers, accompanying the volunteers' exploration of the four values of the program and collaborating with the JVC staff to foster growth for individual volunteers and the whole community. There are generally two people as support people for each community and one additional Jesuit or spiritual liaison.

Goal for Local Formation Team: To build trusting relationships among the JVs and with the JVC staff to facilitate the local formation of Jesuit Volunteers.

Principal duties and responsibilities of the team

- Assist in creating a welcoming environment for the new Jesuit Volunteers through activities such as Local Orientation and/or meeting them in the first days of their arrival to the city.
- Meet with JV community on a regular basis, specifically once a week during the first four months of the program year. After the first four months, creates a plan with volunteers for frequency of future meetings, with a minimum of once per month for the remainder of the year.
- Accompany Jesuit Volunteers by providing resources for ongoing formation in and reflection on the JVC experience (deepening the integration of JVC values, understanding the cross-cultural adjustment process, examining challenges of privilege and solidarity, and exploring resources for weekly spiritual and community activities).
- Provide guidance to local resources for JV communities.
- Meet with JVC staff during area visits and communicate with JVC staff on a regular basis to update staff on volunteer and community developments and any issues that are of concern.
- Assist JVC staff in articulating JVC policy.
- Communicate and collaborate with JVC staff for problem solving.
- Empower volunteers to explore options and problem solve.
- Model the JVC values and offer education about the values as a way to reinforce their embodiment by the JVs.
- Provide support as needed in the event of local crises/emergencies to support the individual JVs and community, while maintaining consistent communication with JVC staff.
- Meet with each JV for a one-on-one meeting at least two times during the year.

Desired Skills and Experiences

- Desire to grow in knowledge and commitment to the four values of JVC.
- Skills in group development and conflict resolution.
- Comfort in facilitating conversations about Ignatian spirituality.
- Knowledge of (or desire to learn about) the non-profits and neighborhoods where the JVs live and serve.
- Ability to make significant time commitment.
- Direct experience as a JV or in another faith-based volunteer program.
- Minimum of two years after completion of program.

Benefits to Local Formation Team

- Strengthen your relationship with JVC.
- Investment in life-long learning and personal growth in the four values.
- Networking opportunities within your community/city.
- Connecting with fellow FJVs.
- Privilege of witnessing JVs as they experience the joys and challenges (consolation and desolation) of their JVC experience.
- Deep gratitude from JVC staff and the volunteers.

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Responsibilities of Support People

- Meet regularly with volunteers (days should be chosen in conversation with the JV community). Events listed below should be a priority for the support people:
 - Attend Local Orientation dinner and potluck/welcome party
 - Consider facilitating the initial community night and work with the community to transition responsibilities to the volunteers.
 - Meet 1:1 with each volunteer within the first three months of the program and again in January or February.
 - Meet with the program coordinator during the first area visit (October or November)
 - Meet in person or over the phone with the Program Coordinator in the Spring (Feb-April).
- Maintain regular communication with the program coordinator throughout the year (suggested once a month).
- Be available for casual interaction with the community (at the community's initiation and according to your schedule).
- Uphold JVC policies and procedures.

COMMUNITY

- Assist volunteers in setting realistic goals and building an agenda for community growth.
- Assist volunteers in evaluating their interactions and community dynamics.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Help volunteers reflect on their work experiences: how they feel, how they react to work, what they have learned, where they were challenged, what was life-giving, etc.
- Help the community do social analysis by looking at what may be done to change the oppressive structures that cause injustice.
- Help the volunteers become connected to local peace and justice groups within the community.

SIMPLE LIFESTYLE

- Encourage the volunteers and the community to reflect on the choices they make as to how time and money are spent.
- Explore how simplicity choices impact their relationships with each other, God, their neighborhood, and the people they serve.
- Share a personal approach to simple lifestyle.

SPIRITUALITY

- Help volunteers pray together and help them evaluate their prayer.
- Serve as a resource directing volunteers to local places of worship, spiritual directors, and retreat opportunities.
- Provide resources or help them locate materials for personal reflection and/or Spirituality nights.
 - Be present at some Spirituality Nights early in the year. Offer to lead a spirituality night that is 20-30 minute prayer experience
- Encourage church participation and involvement in the local parish.

Local Formation Team Ethics

By the nature of the mentoring relationships that Local Formation Team members and JVs have, there may be an unrecognized influence, and with this power comes the responsibility to recognize it and use it appropriately. Local Formation Team members should **avoid dual relationships** – professional or personal –that could impair their judgment or their availability to the entire community, or could increase the risk of exploitation of the JV.

- JVC discourages Local Formation Team members from serving as spiritual directors for JVs in their community, though they may serve as spiritual directors for other JVs in the area.
- Business relationships or close personal friendships are discouraged.
- Although Local Formation Teams are encouraged to facilitate healthy community relationships generally, Local Formation Team members are prohibited from providing psychotherapeutic services (diagnosis, treatment, or professional advice) to JVs.
- Sexual harassment of, and sexual intimacy with, JVs is prohibited.

Confidentiality

- **Refrain from promising to hold “secrets” for JVs, especially if asked to promise before knowing the nature of the information.**
- JVC would like to be of assistance when JVs experience any kind of difficulty, and will, in all cases, treat such information with careful consideration and respect.
- JVC operates with the understanding that information is shared as needed among staff, Local Formation Team members, and/or board members in order to provide appropriate assistance to a troubled JV or to support the functioning of JV communities.
- When necessary, outside professionals may also be consulted (such as therapists, physicians, attorneys, etc.) for guidance in sensitive situations. The guiding principle when making decisions about whether to share information is how all parties may best serve the interests of the JV, the community, JV placement agencies, and JVC.

Community Nights

Community nights work best when planned in advance. This is not to discourage spontaneous activity and prayer; however, especially in the early weeks of community life, it is good to establish a routine, not simply with time and space but also with the structure of the evenings. Following are described several elements that can be used in the planning of community nights.

Action

- A night of service at one of their agencies or at a local church or organization
- Other options: attending prayer vigils, political rallies, legislative action days, neighborhood association meetings, etc.

Check-In/Check-Out

- Check-ins are used at the beginning of a meeting to get the pulse of the group and should be brief but descriptive (i.e., tired, frustrated, at peace, joy-filled, fine, not well, OK, bad).
- Check-ins are not intended to allow each person to share all that is on their mind; rather, they provide a window into someone's state of being at the moment, so as to reduce misinterpretation of expressions or silence during a meeting. For example, if someone checks in as tired, their community member should not interpret his/her low energy level as disinterest.
- Check-outs serve a similar purpose to check-ins: to get the pulse of the group. They can be especially useful if tensions ran high in the meeting or if people struggled in prayer.

Creative Activities

Not all prayer is spoken aloud; not all questions can be answered immediately; not all opinions are expressed through dialogue. People process information in different ways. Community and spirituality nights should reflect these differences and the facilitators should vary the ways in which people are asked to participate in the meetings and prayer.

- For those who process **internally**, build in some quiet time before discussion.
- For those who process **visually**, plan an activity with markers, crayons, or paint; ask people to create magazine collages or images using dried beans and pasta.
- For those who process through **dialogue**, plan progressive discussions where people move from pairs, to quads, to whole group.
- For those who process through **written word**, plan a journaling session or a letter-writing night.
- For those who process through **physical activity**, plan a yoga session or a prayer walk.

Guest Speakers/Films/Book Discussion

- Inviting people in to the community to speak on a particular topic or viewing a movie and/or reading an article or book followed by discussion can expand the knowledge base of the community and can open up moments of dialogue on issues that are of interest to the community or of importance to the neighborhood and city in which the volunteers live.

Prayer

- JVs are at different stages in their spiritual development and have a range of comfort levels with prayer, specifically formal prayer; however, all JVs should be challenged in their spiritual practices to delve deeper into their preferred style of prayer and/or to find a prayer style that works for them.
- JVC recommends that some form of prayer be used at every meeting, be it community, business, or other.
- Local Formation Team members should model different forms of prayer for the JVs and challenge the community if prayer is not a part of the life of the community.
- Spirituality Nights should be a prayerful or reflective experience. Theological and or more 'academic' spiritual / philosophical conversations are perhaps better suited for community nights.

Ten Tips for New Support People

The following are tips for success from previous support people. Read through them now, and re-read them in a few weeks or months. You may find a whole new level of meaning!

1. **Know yourself.** Before meeting the JVs, take time to reflect on and realistically assess your own strengths, weaknesses, and motivations for becoming a support person. This allows you to be as authentic as possible with your JVs.
2. **Meet with your co-support person before your first contact with the JVs.** You may discover each other's complementary strengths – one may be well connected to social justice networks in town, while the other may have special skills with prayer or interpersonal communication.
3. **Keep your personal agenda in check.** Using your role as Local Formation Team member in order to expand your friend network is not appropriate. Also, expecting or demanding that JVs will agree with your ideals or viewpoints can damage the support person-JV relationship.
4. **LISTEN to the JVs.** It is too easy to feel pressure to know MORE than your JVs, or to believe you already do. Newer people serving in these roles often feel they have to “perform” or bring a lot of content to meetings. JVs bring a wealth of experience into the program, and have a lot to say about what they are feeling/experiencing/learning as they work and live in community. When a forum exists for JVs to express some of this, community nights can be a rich exchange.
5. **Treat the JVs like adults.** If you treat someone like a child, s/he will often behave like one. Respect JVs' choices and seek to understand them, rather than judging them.
6. **Know that your JVs own the process.** Ultimately, the way the year goes will be a reflection of what the JVs put into it. They will set their own parameters and goals, and make their own decisions.
7. **Think carefully about what you share.** Consider that the support process exists for the JVs, and is not an opportunity for support people to process their own emotional experiences. Normalizing things like conflict, uncertainty, and struggle may be valuable, as long as the privacy of others is preserved and the needs of your JVs are respected.
8. **Involve the JVs early on in facilitating meetings.** JVC asks that the support people facilitate many community nights **through October at the latest** and then involve the JVs in the process for the next couple months. Ideally Support teams describe, model and plan initial community nights and then moving into October and November alternate with a JV leading a community night. A similar approach is also encouraged with Spirituality Nights This involvement allows JVs to develop skills, and lets support people have a sense of what are presently pressing issues in the house. Some teams alternate facilitation between JVs and support people, and some begin with the team facilitating, then hand over more ownership of the process as the year progresses.

9. **Pull from your bag of tricks.** Incorporate suggestions from this guide that feel natural and appealing to you, and feel free to use other games, exercises, readings, prayers, and tools that you have accumulated along the way.
 10. **Be ready to punt!** You may arrive for the evening with an elegant outline and slate of activities around a topic, only to find that there has been a crisis in the house that pre-empts your agenda. Be ready to switch gears in order to better serve the needs of the community. This may mean a less structured processing or problem-solving session.
 11. **You cannot “fix” their problems.** Local Formation Teams primarily act as resources for the JVs, not unlike JVC staff. When possible, it is best to encourage the JVs to think creatively about solving their own problems. Many times a JV simply needs a listening ear. One-on-ones are a great way to offer space to an individual JV who may be struggling with community, professional, or personal concerns.
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Ready, Set, Go!

Getting the process rolling is often the most difficult task for a new Local Formation Team. When the community arrives, make a point of meeting them informally. **Visit on the day they arrive, or very soon thereafter.** When they reach the house, it may be at the end of a long drive, and they will not yet know where stores are relative to their home. Having dinner and breakfast groceries in the house when they get to town is greatly appreciated, as they can then wait until the next day to grocery shop.

The first meal with a JV community is an excellent opportunity to explain some basics about house operations (checking account, etc.) and to notify the JVs when the first community night will be. Support people generally schedule that first night according to their own availability. At that first community night, the community and support people together can discuss schedule for future community nights. **The first community night should take place during the JVs’ first full week in town.**

Some teams eat dinner with their JVs, and some do not. Whether or not this is done is entirely up to you and the JVs. Dinner is a valuable time to get to know the JVs more informally, hear about upcoming house visitors, challenges at work, trips, etc. The more formal part of the meeting can then focus on the evening’s topic. Some teams or members of the team contribute part of the meal, or occasionally host dinner for the group away from the JV house.

It is helpful to set a firm schedule at the initial community night meeting to be observed at least for the first few months, barring any unforeseen conflict. For example, the group may choose Tuesdays, or put all dates on a calendar.

The Commitment of Jesuit Volunteers



Jesuit Volunteer Domestic Program Covenant

Aspiring to create a more just and hopeful world, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps engages passionate young people in vital service within poor communities, fostering the growth of leaders committed to faith in action.

With respect to individual freedom and growth, the Jesuit Volunteer Corps is committed to certain common values. We are called to support and challenge one another to grow in the areas of Spirituality, Simple Living, Community, and Social Justice.

As a Jesuit Volunteer, I agree to uphold the following, to the best of my ability:

Spirituality: Spirituality is both the awareness of and our reaction to God's presence in the world. JVC is rooted in the Catholic, Jesuit tradition and invites volunteers to explore and deepen their relationship with God and their spiritual lives, both individually and communally. The Ignatian emphasis on being "contemplatives in action" guides us on the journey.

- I will regularly spend time in personal reflection or prayer in order to grow in my relationships with God and others.
- I will attend all weekly Spirituality Nights and other community times of prayer or reflection, by contributing my own gifts and cherishing the gifts of others.
- I will participate fully in JVC retreats and formation opportunities, by being on time, following all policies set in place, and being wholly present to the larger JVC community of volunteers.

Simple Living: Honoring simplicity allows us to free ourselves from that which keeps us separated from others and commit to a life focused on people, not possessions. Commitment to a simple, sustainable lifestyle contributes to the flourishing of all humanity and all of God's creation. As a sign of solidarity with those in my communities, I will live on the JVC stipend of room and board, in addition to my personal monthly stipend. I will not accept funds from family and friends, work second jobs, or seek other sources to supplement this amount.

- I will strive to live life focused on people and relationships, rather than objects and acquisitions.
- I will seek simplicity in my use of time, energy, and resources, and thereby avoid distraction, busyness, and materialism.
- I will socialize and recreate in ways that emphasize creation over consumption. I agree to continually reflect on and thoughtfully limit my use of objects and technology.
- I will consider the toll alcohol takes on the people I serve when making decisions about alcohol. Aware of the personal, social, and economic costs of illegal drug use in under-resourced neighborhoods, I will not use illegal substances during my JVC year.
- I will reflect on economic privilege and the power it affords individuals in an effort to understand the impact of my actions in this world and in an attempt to lead a simpler life.

Community: Communal life allows for mutual support and encouragement of each other in our work and in living out the four values. It challenges us to be open, compassionate, and willing to grow. We learn that our lives are interconnected and that we have responsibility toward all members as they do to us.

- I will be open and honest with my community members, willing to share my joys and struggles, and listen with care to the experiences they share.
- I will participate fully in community activities, including but not limited to Community Nights, meetings, shared meals, and reflection.
- I will strive to cultivate ever-greater awareness of myself and my own inherent biases in order to be more fully vulnerable and open in community.
- I will evaluate my behavior and decisions in light of their effects on my community, the agency and locale where I serve, and the JVC program. I will not make decisions affecting my community, the agency where I serve, or JVC without appropriate consultation.
- I will commit to the numerous communities I am part of—households, neighborhood, and city. I will work to gain a greater understanding of these communities throughout the year.
- Recognizing I am part of a larger JVC community, I will regularly communicate my needs, concerns, and joys with the JVC program staff and local formation teams.

Social Justice: In order to work for justice we must become aware of our role in society. We are called to challenge attitudes and structures, both personal and societal, which create poverty and oppression.

- I will labor in a spirit of solidarity with the poor and marginalized toward the goal of personal and structural change that promotes the dignity of all.
- I will strive to be just in my thoughts, language, and actions so that my work for justice will have credibility.
- I will embrace the commitment of JVC to engage in anti-racism work which seeks to recognize and stop perpetuating racial injustices.
- I will actively seek to know the truth of situations, rather than relying on prejudices, assumptions, rumor, and incomplete information.
- I will honor my commitment to work at my agency for a full year.

I have carefully read the above covenant and, in a spirit of solidarity with other volunteers, I enter into this year-long commitment.

A Commitment to Regular Community Meetings

JV communities are asked to make three commitments to meet together as a way to build community:

Weekly Community Nights

The primary focus of community nights is to **build intentional community by exploring areas of interest**. Community nights led by support people help to build relationships with the volunteers, and to address any issues that may be stunting growth in any of the four values. Community members are encouraged to share the joys and struggles with support people and their community members. Community nights could include some of the following:

Study/Discussion Meetings. These are an opportunity to come together around a certain topic or issue that the community is interested in exploring. Communities may choose to bring in a speaker, read and discuss a common article or book, watch and discuss a movie that explores one or more of the four values, etc.

Community-Building Meetings. These meetings specifically focus on doing things to get to know each other better or help community run more smoothly. These may include discussions of family roles, Myers-Briggs, show and tell, sharing photo albums, styles of communication, etc. It can be helpful to bring in speakers here also.

Fun Meetings. It's okay for communities to do fun things for community nights!!! It is essential for a group to have fun together, and some may have trouble doing so on their own because of schedules and lack of common interests. Fun meetings can be especially good if recent community nights have been long and/or difficult. We would recommend scheduling in fun nights every couple of months on community nights. Some ideas are: having game night, going out to a local park, going to a local cultural event on the weekend together, etc.

Community and Spirituality Night Resources. At Orientation, the JVs were given copies of a book of community and spirituality Night resources. This is a resource from staff members who have done these nights before and can offer concrete suggestions. None of the activities in the book are required, but it is an ideal place to look for additional ideas.

Find some specific ideas for community nights at: jesuitvolunteers.org/localformation.

Weekly Spirituality Night

The focus of this night is **prayer and reflection**. Each community is asked to commit to a spirituality night that is different from community night. While it may take a community awhile to feel comfortable enough with each other to fully engage in these nights, this is a critical component of the community development. Community members are asked to take turns facilitating spirituality nights. Any style of spirituality, from any tradition is welcome (lectio divina, Christianity, zazen-Buddhism, quiet reflection yoga, Hindu, etc.). Support people are asked to encourage the JVs to be vulnerable with each other and to share their personal spiritualities in an accepting community environment, but do not attend spirituality night unless specifically invited by the JVs.

JVC recognizes prayer as the past, present and future movement in God in everyone's lives. Prayer includes paying attention to God, offering petitions and giving thanks. Community members are encouraged to celebrate with many forms of prayers experiences. Spirituality nights could include some of the following:

- **Symbols/Ritual:** Use of a consistent symbol or ritual creates a sacred space or time, e.g. lighting a candle each time. The presence of a Bible, crucifix, or home altar (creating the altar could be a community activity) can also be helpful. Other meaningful symbols and rituals are the use of water (pouring, foot washing), fire (candle, burning intentions or obstacles to one's path), stones or other objects from nature, use of sage, and holding hands in a circle.
- **Discussions:** Discussions can be spirituality nights as well, e.g., asking everyone in the community to take some time to read an article, then reflect on it, and then have a discussion on what everyone experienced. Such discussions should ideally be set in a more prayerful / reflective context. Theological and or more 'academic' spiritual / philosophical conversations are perhaps better suited for community nights particularly if they are prone to debate.
- **Silence:** There is a three-day silent retreat in the spring, and having an hour of silence within the community can be an important time for the JVs to do some reflection on how they are feeling or what they are feeling. Encouraging a meal in silence, paying attention to mindful eating, and then having a discussion afterwards can be important steps for preparing the community for silent retreat.

Find some specific ideas for spirituality nights at: jesuitvolunteers.org/localformation.

Weekly Agenda Meetings

The primary purpose is to **discuss house business, announcements, running of the household, dynamics of relationships**. It is a forum for planning, voicing concerns, or coordinating schedules.

Community members can add items for discussion and/or decision to a list throughout the week. Community members then take turns leading the agenda meetings. We stress that agenda meetings should not happen during meals, but can happen at the end of a meal.

Sample Agenda

1. Guest policy
2. Chores
3. Grocery shopping
4. Budget update
5. Upcoming events

The Commitment of JVC

JVC Formation Program

At the end of the Jesuit Volunteer's term of service, the volunteer will have deepened his/her understanding and exploration of JVC's core values while becoming a more accepting and loving individual. (from JVC's Formation Goals)

Retreats

During the year, JVC staff plans and implements retreats for and with the volunteers to build and sustain a larger JVC community and lay the foundation for the lifelong formation that is an essential part of mission of JVC. The retreats offer the opportunity to reflect on the spiritual and apostolic aspects of the JVs' commitment and to provide an atmosphere of support and challenge. These events include outside speakers presenting to the volunteers, time for the volunteers to discuss issues related to their work, community and faith development, prayer/reflection time and social time. JVC creates specific goals for each retreat. All volunteers must attend the JVC retreats.

Orientation: August

This retreat is an introduction to the volunteer year, to the values of community, spirituality, simple lifestyle, and social justice as well as to the spirit of JVC. It is an opportunity for the JVs to meet each other, the staff, and the other friends of JVC.

Fall Community Day of Reflection: Fall, specific date determined when program coordinator schedules area visits.

In conjunction with the program coordinator's area visit, each community will participate in a Day of Reflection focusing on the value of community. During this day the JVs will engage in community-building conversation, reflection and activities. *Please note: JVC often requests that Local Formation Teams facilitate some community conversations in preparation for this day.*

Additional Year: December

This retreat in December gathers all volunteers nationally currently doing an additional year with JVC. The retreat focuses on the unique opportunities and challenges of Additional Year volunteers.

Re-Orientation: January/February

This five-day retreat takes place in late January/early February. It calls to mind the topics introduced at Orientation, but moves the conversations to a deeper level. Staff and presenters guide the prayer and the reflection upon the structures of oppression and injustice that the JVs have encountered in their work and their cities and move them towards discerning appropriate responses to address these issues of concern. The focus of the structure of this retreat is the pastoral cycle.

Spring Silent Retreat: April/May

The silent retreat offers the JVs the chance to get away from the hectic schedules and distractions of their lives and focus wholly on their personal and/or spiritual development. Each JV has the opportunity to meet individually with a director several times during the

weekend, and to participate in prayer experiences which make use of Ignatian discernment models found in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Dis-Orientation: July

This end-of-the-year gathering provides the JVs with the opportunity to remember the gifts of the past year, to celebrate the relationships formed among community members, co-workers, and clients, to grieve the end of each one's experience and to move with excitement into a new experience, carrying with them the heart of the four values. JVC provides resources that will be useful to JVs as their transition continues for months after Dis-Orientation.

Staff Support

Area Visits

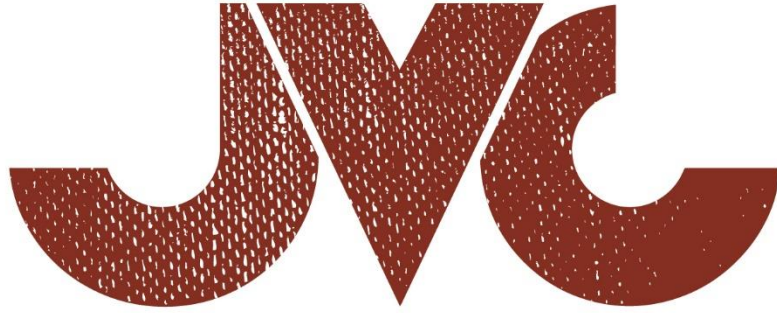
Program coordinators visit each JV community for one week during the months of October and November. In the Spring Program coordinators will commit to seeing and meeting JV's in either a brief Area Visit or through extended encounters before or after Spring Retreat. Area visits provide the program coordinator with opportunities to observe and experience the day-to-day lives of the volunteers. JVs will meet one-with-one with their program coordinator during that week, and s/he will accompany the volunteer at work for a couple of hours. Program coordinators may also do recruiting visits at local colleges during their time in city—where JVs may be asked to participate. *Please note: During the fall area visit, the program coordinator will plan to meet with the Local Formation Team in order to gain a fuller understanding of community and personal dynamics.*

Program Coordinator Check-Ins

The program coordinator periodically sets aside time to phone or e-mail the JVs and members of the Local Formation Team to find out how life is going, to follow up on anything that emerged during the area visit, retreats, or from previous check-in times, and to continue to challenge the volunteers individually and/or community to deeper growth.

JV Newsletter

Periodically, the JVC staff collects information and sends an electronic newsletter to each community entitled *In the Field*. Items included in this newsletter are ideas for community nights, written reflections by staff and current volunteers, highlights of the formation program, and other items of interest in regards to living out the four values. We would love to hear from members of the Local Formation Team if you have something you would like to share!



JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS

Appendices

Glossary of Frequently-Used JVC Terms

Administrator: The agency representative who manages the relationship between the agency and JVC. The administrator may or may not be the volunteer's direct supervisor.

Agency: The organization employing a Jesuit Volunteer (sometimes referred to as a "placement").

Apostolate: A "mission endeavor or activity," a ministry. Apostolate derives from the word apostle and refers to work that is inspired by and tied to the Gospel. While it is not specific to the Jesuits, it is commonly used in Jesuit circles in reference to one's work.

Apostolic community: Apostolic community is a "mission community," a group of people who live according to Gospel values and support each other spiritually, emotionally, and materially in their common endeavor.

The four values: Spirituality, simple living, community, social justice.

FJV: Former Jesuit Volunteer. Former volunteers from all JVC regions offer support and encouragement to current volunteers. Many FJVs are vital resources for learning how to live the four values of JVC.

The Jesuits: An order of Catholic priests and brothers, also known as the Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1534. Jesuits play an active role in supporting JVC by serving as Jesuit liaisons, presenters at retreats, and consultants to the staff. JVC incorporates Ignatian spirituality, especially the ideas of being "contemplatives in action" and "finding God in all things."

Local Orientation: A continuation of Orientation, which occurs in the home city of each volunteer community and unfolds over the days immediately following Orientation and before the first day of work. Agency administrators and FJVs arrange city tours, take volunteers to their places of work, and inform them of local resources (banks, grocery markets, libraries, churches, etc.).

One-with-one: Intentional conversation between two individuals (e.g. program coordinator and volunteer or supervisor and volunteer).

Program coordinator: A staff member responsible for implementing JVC's program and outreach, including retreat planning, recruiting, placement development, and local formation. Primary in the program coordinator's job is outreach to volunteer communities and agency partners.

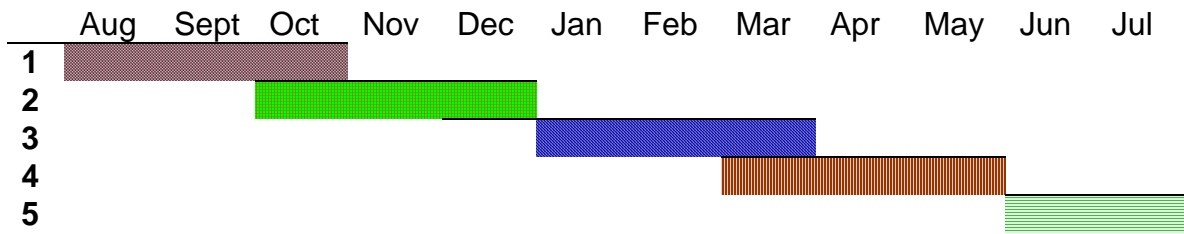
Social analysis: The critical evaluation of the social, economic, political, and religious structures that create oppressive situations.

Solidarity: The practice of standing with or accompanying others, of sharing responsibilities, interests, and concerns in order to foster greater understanding of the issues, obstacles, and hardships facing others.

Staff: Persons employed by JVC to manage the organization and implement the program. Staff have different roles, all focused on carrying out the mission of JVC to form women and men committed to promoting justice in the service of faith.

Volunteer: The woman or man committed to living the JVC values as outlined by the JVC Covenant. Volunteers make a one-year commitment to their community, agency, and JVC. Volunteers are carefully screened by JVC staff through a written application and phone interview.

Five Phases of the JVC Year



Although every community will have a unique dynamic, the following patterns are fairly common as a new community develops.

1. **The Early Days.** Excitement, novelty, idealism, high anxiety, and exploration are common during this period, as is the feeling of being overwhelmed. The volunteers are somewhat nervous upon their arrival and yet are anxious to really get on with their work. They may not be consciously aware of it, but they are trying to process “the plunge,” which consists of new people, new city, new job, new lifestyle, different cultures, etc. In general, the community runs on enthusiasm – problems will take care of themselves. “JVC is the best experience ever and all of my housemates are great!” a volunteer might say during this phase. Local Formation Team members can utilize this energy to foster the growth of relationships and to mitigate some issues before they arise (e.g. talking about chore charts, communication styles, commitment to community prayer).
2. **Reality.** Life suddenly is not all perfect; there is disappointment and some anger. Job and community are not perfect. “This is not what I expected,” is a feeling that may be spoken or unspoken. Homesickness may develop. Annoyances and frustrations with little things (e.g. chores, schedules) often arise and can mask the deeper difficulties that exist. At this time of year, volunteers might contemplate leaving JVC. Local Formation Team members can encourage volunteers to be honest with themselves and each other about their feelings, and help them understand that frustration is normal and things will get better.
3. **Recommitment.** Most volunteers operate on an academic-year schedule. Coming back after Christmas and realizing that seven more months loom ahead before August is a big shock. Some volunteers return from the holidays refreshed, some depressed. January and February tend to be the hardest time for many of the volunteers. Most of the problems are out in the open at this time; if not, they tend to come out now. This time is often a turning point in the year where volunteers decide to stay as they are or to continue growing. Openings for genuine dialogue should be sought and encouraged by support people.
4. **Wondering.** What’s next? As the end is in sight, panic sets in. Questions regarding career, further education, relocation, relationships, loans, etc., result in stressful moments for the volunteer. Talking about options is helpful as is encouraging volunteers to support each other through difficult discerning processes. Volunteers can also use some encouragement to stay in the present moment. As volunteers begin to look ahead, encourage them to prepare to say goodbyes.
5. **The Pay Off.** During the lazy days of summer, communities may sit back and relax on the hard work of their year – not looking to moving forward as much as enjoying the dynamic

they've built. There is also some anxiety and sadness about leaving. Exercises that focus on what volunteers want to take with them from this experience are helpful.

Steps to Authentic Community

by Jean Vanier

Acclaimed as "a Canadian who inspires the world" (Maclean's Magazine) and a "nation builder" (The Globe and Mail), Jean Vanier is the founder of the international movement of L'Arche communities, where people who have developmental disabilities and the friends who assist them create homes and share life together.

When Jesus calls us forth, he never calls us alone. He calls forth a family of people, a community growing together in the gradual recognition that we are brothers and sister in the Lord, and that love is binding us together. Community doesn't only mean living under the same roof. A community of love is a beautiful reality. Communes are born and die rapidly because people don't know much about the laws of community.

When you go into some communities you sense immediate warmth, peace, a deep feeling of security. There is so much love radiated. You find it in the eyes, in the smile, in the nonverbal communication. You go into other communities, and you find long faces and people not talking to each other. They are deathly polite. Jesus says, "They will know you are my disciples by the unity, the love, the joy, the peace that flows out from you" (John 13:35). This is the sign of the presence of the disciples of Jesus.

Our community is one of suffering. But it is also a community of joy. Joy will only flow from suffering. A community where there are no crises, no suffering, is probably not a good community. Forming community requires time and suffering. Community is the passage of the majority of people from their own personal interests to community interests; to life from a consciousness of my needs to a consciousness of the group. It is when the majority are beginning to enter into a world of love where they are prepared to die for one another.

A community is not people who have agreed to obey certain rules. We know that people can live in proper etiquette of community without having community. Community is something deeper. Like love, it comes into being through gradual growth.

I have watched a number of communities grow and suffer. During the first period of time everybody is happy. Men and women who have been deeply wounded come from a lonely, unhappy situation and suddenly find people sharing. They think it is great: everybody is a saint and everything is fantastic.

The next few months everybody is a devil. During the first months you could accept not having the biggest piece of meat, or not looking at the television program you like. But then you discover that they are looking at all the unintelligent programs and that they never want to watch the ones that you want to look at. Whenever you want to go to the toilet, they are in the bathroom. This is everyday life. They are always eating spaghetti and peanut butter sandwiches. They accentuate religion too much. For a while religion is great, but not when it is every day. That is fanatical.

The second stage, the period of deception, is the crucial moment. It is when my desires are such that I want to see my program and I want my spaghetti. So we say, "Let's humor everybody." We will have two television sets. Those who want channel number one can go here, channel number two can go there. And we will have self-service so that those who want spaghetti can have spaghetti, those who want fish can have fish, those who want something else can have something else. Then everybody is satisfied. But then we are no longer a community; we are a hotel.

You have to work at community day by day. During the first stage, the stage of excitement, which is an illusion, you see something which you think is fantastic. Then you get into the period of deception. Finally, through commitment, you come to a moment of reality. During the period of illusion and deception, you are outside of the community. When you come to the stage of reality, you are committed. You say, "I want to be part of this community. It is where I am called to be, to grow, to love, to help others. I commit myself to the community for good or for evil." Like in marriage, you are committed. There is nothing more beautiful than a married couple as they go through sufferings, the forgiveness, the trials, the explosions, to finally acquiring comfort in one another.

We must help each one go from the period of community for me, to the period of me for community. But we didn't do it by ourselves. Only the Spirit can bring change. It's a gradual permeation of the Almighty, a gradual growth of the Spirit inside us teaching us how to listen to people without prejudice, without judgment, without condemnation.

Through learning about one another, we begin to not just tolerate people, but we accept them and their limits. We must accept people with their speech defects, their difficulties, angers, their criticisms, the way they talk too much. In Edmonton there is a person in the group who talked and talked and talked. Because this person had greatly suffered, there was an anguish that had to come out. For three days they let this person talk. After the third day, he didn't talk anymore. On the fourth day, this person began listening. The anguish had come out. The people had accepted it. If they had rejected this the first day, he wouldn't have been able to eventually find peace.

We all have our little ways. Accept that. Someone might be different in time, but today she or he is the way she or he is. One of the errors in education is wanting people to become something we have predetermined instead of accepting them as they are today, with their wounds, with their dates, with their sufferings, with their bad character, with their good character. Accept them as they are, and then we will grow together.

If you are continually comparing the person to the ideal, you are in the stage of deception. Each person is a member of the community as he or she is. You know that they love you and you love them, and that you are growing together. Have confidence in one another. This confidence can grow until it becomes a certainty that they are sacrificing themselves for you as you have been called to sacrifice yourself for them. This sacrifice becomes more than the sacrifice of my television program for theirs, or my French fries for their spaghetti. It is giving my life to my friend, loving each other until death.

This reality of the community growing together means that the barriers between people are gradually falling down and mutual confidence is growing. As soon as the barriers between people begin dropping, then the smile, the look in the eyes, the nonverbal communication begins. You communicate more nonverbally than verbally. This tells much more than the verbal because you know each other so well that you don't have to express; there is hardly a word that

comes out.

People know they have limits but that others accept them anyway. There are no masks; nobody's pretending to be better than the others' nobody wants more recognition than the others; nobody is pretending to be other than they are. They are themselves with their poverty and their riches that God has given them. They love each other.

When a person realizes that he or she can't keep his or her barriers because he or she is in a group where there are no barriers, then his or her barriers drop quickly. If people have no barriers in their being but are open with their limits and their poverty, then others begin doing the same thing and people become themselves. They don't have to pretend to be. They can just be.

Then comes the discovery that the community is not just a group of people living, working, and learning together, but that here you are my brother or sister in Jesus. Whatever happens to you concerns me. We are precious to each other. If you fall sick, you are still mine. You won't be rejected by the community. I am committed to you because of some deeper union. As when people get married, it is not because they decide to get married but because they are realizing there is a union which is before their decision – they love each other. They have recognized that this is a union in the spirit of which they are not the master, just as in marriage two people come together because they feel that this is what God wants.

Community in the sense of people ready to die for one another is not a work of man. It is God's doing. It is a union of which Jesus said, "Love one another the way I have love you" (John 13:34).

Only communities of love can confront the hatred, the division, and the sufferings of this world. This unity will heal deeply wounded people in the community as they sense the joy, the peace, the therapeutic action of love. This is what Jesus is calling us for. He calls us forth as brothers and sisters. How beautiful it is, how good to live as brothers and sisters in unity in a world where there is hatred, in order to become doctors of love and peace.

Reprinted from *New Covenant Magazine* – January 1978.

larche.ca/en/jean_vanier/biography

Language adjusted slightly by JVC staff to be more inclusive.

“Red Flag” Behaviors in Community Which Merit Concern

JVC seeks applicants who are adequately prepared for all aspects of the program, including community life. Most JVs have a very positive experience of community during their year. This is true even though each community has its own disagreements and struggles, which can be stressful at times. JVC recognizes that individual Jesuit Volunteers will respond to these challenges with varying levels of skill and effectiveness. JVC also recognizes however, that JVs may sometimes engage in behavior(s) disruptive to community life.

Volunteers are encouraged to seek help when faced with disruptive behavior that affects their communities. JVC staff and Local Formation Teams are a first resource. A JV may want to seek help for her/himself, for another individual who may be demonstrating the behavior, or for anyone in the community who is affected by the situation. In general, the sooner that a

community member seeks help from JVC, the more likely it is that JVC can respond in such a way that every person in the situation can be involved in finding a solution, including the volunteer who is demonstrating the behavior.

“Red Flag” Behaviors:

- Any behavior that frightens you or causes you to be concerned about your health or safety, or that of another community member.
- **Extremes of mood or activity.** This may include feelings and behaviors sometimes associated with depression, such as prolonged sadness or grief, loss of interest in previously pleasurable activities, insomnia or excessive sleeping, fatigue and difficulty concentrating.
- **Emotional abuse of others.** This may include name-calling, insults, blaming, accusing, questioning another’s sanity, intense jealousy, destruction of property, interference with anyone’s communication with others (including family and staff), or interference with anyone’s movements. This includes using slurs or prejudicial characterizations to intimidate or insult any individual.
- **Sexually harassing behaviors.** Any unwelcome offensive behavior that is sexual in nature including unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets or jokes; unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature including intentional touching, brushing against another” body, impeding or blocking movement, or assault; leering or staring at another's body; gestures of a sexual nature; displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines; continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome; or any verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive community environment.
- **Physically abusive behaviors.** This obviously includes physically harming someone, as well as endangering, intimidating, or threatening someone. It may also include pushing, pinching, slapping, or spitting on someone. In addition, this would include abandoning someone in an unsafe area, locking someone outside the house, breaking down a door to get to someone, driving in an unsafe manner to intimidate someone, or throwing/breaking objects of any kind so as to threaten anyone.
- **Any form of intoxication which puts the intoxicated person or any other community member at risk.** This may include passing out, black-outs (when the intoxicated person can’t remember what they did during a certain time period), combining alcohol with other drugs which depress the nervous system, driving under the influence (whether or not there are legal consequences), assaults committed under the influence, causing property damage while under the influence, being drunk and without a sober ally in a dangerous part of town, and health problems (memory loss, vitamin deficiencies) which result from excessive drinking. A volunteer’s use of alcohol/other intoxicants may also have the effect of closing that volunteer off from community relationships. This effect is also considered problematic for community life.
- **Problematic behavior around food and/or exercise.** This may include excessive dieting/fasting; bingeing; purging; ‘stealing’ food that has been designated for a specific community purpose; lying about food; food rituals (such as cutting food into tiny pieces,

chewing and spitting, etc.); abuse of substances such as diet pills, Ipecac, diuretics, laxatives, amphetamines, etc.; relentless exercise despite excessive weight loss, fatigue or injury; and recurrent fainting/weakness/headaches. A volunteer's preoccupation with food may also have the effect of closing that person off from community relationships. For example, the volunteer might avoid eating with the community, avoid chores related to food preparation/clean-up, or decline social invitations that involve a meal. This behavior, also is considered problematic for community life.

- **Withdrawal.** Everyone needs private time. On rare occasions, however, volunteers may withdraw from community life to a degree that can be disruptive to the group. Withdrawal may become problematic if the volunteer very seldom converses/shares a meal/makes a group decision/participates in a community or spirituality night with the rest of the community. Withdrawal to this degree can be problematic for the community even though the volunteer may be spending that time engaged in an outside activity/relationship.
- **Weapons.** No volunteer shall bring a gun or other weapon to JVC, or shall obtain a gun or other weapon while in the program.

Guide to Agenda Meetings

Business meetings are an essential part of the community experience. At these meetings many objectives can be achieved: finding out how people are doing with their jobs, planning a party, airing differences about what kind of cereal should be purchased, and more.

It is a structured time that can be used to present to the community different problems or good experiences which otherwise might not get discussed. Small problems can remain small if they are discussed early enough. Here are some suggestions the community might want to incorporate.

1. **Regular meeting night.** Set aside a regularly scheduled night and **stress the importance of all community members being present.** This is a commitment that will facilitate the opportunity for open communication.
2. **Facilitator:** Have a facilitator and rotate the role. This gives everyone a chance.
3. **Agenda:** Post an agenda in advance that includes a topic, the person presenting it, and the amount of time needed to talk about the topic sufficiently.
4. **Set an ending time.** Everyone can be more attentive if they know how long the meeting will last.
5. **Minutes.** Have someone take and keep track of the minutes from each meeting. They are good for future reference and who will do which chores, how much money was allotted for fuel for the month, etc. These can be detailed or put more informally on butcher paper, etc.
6. **Turn off the phone!** Minimize interruptions. The phone can be quite a disruption.
7. **Check-ins.** At the beginning of each meeting let people air how they are feeling; perhaps they had a lousy day and really don't want to be at the meeting. This is good to know, for if a

touchy subject comes up, the group will at least be aware of the person's disposition and can be present to the problem accordingly. This is a much better way than the person getting unnecessarily upset and the group getting nothing accomplished.

- 8. Resentments.** At the beginning of the meeting ask if anyone has any resentments that they feel would hinder the process of the community meeting. Use your judgment to decide if the problem should be resolved during the meeting or at a later time.
- 9. Getting everyone's voice heard.** When the community is in a decision-making situation that needs to be talked out, such as where to go for a weekend away, there are many methods to getting everyone's voice heard. This is important for the person who does not regularly express an opinion. The unexpressed opinion can be the most problematic, for a person can build resentments even when choosing not to express an opinion. Here are two suggestions for getting everyone's stand on an issue:
 - a. 100%.** Before the problem is discussed, everyone expresses what the outcome of the decision would be if their dream came true. After all their dreams are heard, at least the group has an understanding of what the other group members want in a non-threatening atmosphere. There is no guarantee that each member will get 100% of what they want, but it allows each person to feel heard.
 - b. Fist to Five.** When it comes time to make a decision, this is a good way to get people's feedback on their feelings. When raising you hand on an issue, five fingers outstretched means you are strongly in favor of the decision, zero fingers (a fist) means you are strongly against, and the increments in between denote feeling gradations. It is then important to allow those who "fisted" the decision the opportunity to explain why, and then for the group to come to a decision with which everyone can live. Community decisions should, whenever possible, be arrived at by this means or other consensus decision-making methods. In other words, everyone will support the decision even if they would have preferred something else. "Majority rules" may save time, but may alienate and divide the community.
- 10. Positive affirmations.** This is a great way to end a meeting. Some meetings do get emotional, yet we all have to live together. The person who got chewed out for leaving the dishes would probably appreciate a compliment for taking the garbage out regularly, or perhaps one of your community members is working very hard at his/her job. We need support from one another to make the JVC experience successful!!

These are just suggestions we found that worked. By the time the year is over, volunteers will be able to add their own suggestions. Once again, we encourage the volunteers to have these regularly scheduled meetings, for they are a way to avoid crisis, keep community mates in touch with one another, and add a sense of continuity so that they don't meet only when there is a crisis.

Where to Begin?

A Method of Discernment

1. Continual Prayer

- Do I have the desire to do God's will?
- Do I have a sense of knowing God or knowing about God?
- Have I had experiences that help me believe God knows me and cares about me?
- Can I be open with God?

2. Thorough Knowledge of the Options

- Do I have an option between two or more choices?
- How much information do I have about each of the options?
- How much information do I need to make a good decision?

3. Prayerful Reflection on One's Freedom to Accept or Reject the Options

- What are the forces or influences that work against me making a free decision?
- What am I most afraid of regarding each of the options?
- To what (or whom) am I too attached to make a free decision?

4. Rational and Affective Weighing of the "Pros and Cons"

- List the advantages for each of the options.
- List the disadvantages for each of the options.
- Review each of the lists and prioritize them.
- Which option are you most attracted to? Why?
- What are your motivations behind wanting one option over the other?
- What would you advise another person if facing the similar choices?
- Imagine yourself on your deathbed. Ask yourself what choice from that perspective you wish you would have made.
- Imagine yourself facing your final judgment. What decision would you wish you had made?

5. Pay Attention to the "Great Desires"

- An artist is someone who cannot conceive of not painting. A writer also HAS to write. What is it, deep within you, that you MUST do to be true to yourself?
- If you could do your heart's desire, what would it be?
- What do you think and feel God hopes for you?

6. Experience of Confirmation or its Opposite, Doubt and Confusion

- Take a week imagining you have made the choice for one of the options considered. How does it feel? Is there peace? Restlessness?
- Take a week imagining you have chosen the other option considered. How does it feel? Peaceful? Restless?
- How do you feel when you tell God of the choice you wish to make?