



Steps to Join Sister Parish, Inc.

Learn More and Share with Others in Your Church

- 1. Learn about the Sister Parish, Inc. model** – Visit our website www.sisterparish.org and reach out to our staff for more information.
- 2. Gather a core group of people at your church** that would be interested in coordinating a Sister Parish relationship.
- 3. Communicate regularly with Sister Parish, Inc.** – During the initial organizing process it is important to have regular communication with the [US Regional Coordinator](mailto:usoffice@sisterparish.org) (usoffice@sisterparish.org, 612.326.4361). Please call with questions and/or send emails with your updates. Sister Parish staff or board can also make a personal visit to your church to meet with interested members at some point in your discernment process.
- 4. Plan an informational meeting and personally invite people to attend.**
Think about likely supporters and/or key decision-makers in your community:
 - Members of an Outreach Committee, Service Committee, Mission Committee, Social Responsibility Committee, or similar structure
 - The priest or pastor, or members of the pastoral staff
 - Representatives from other groups (e.g. youth, worship, music, etc.)
 - Anyone else that you think might be interested, particularly anyone with a connection to Central America or anyone interested in traveling on the first delegation
 - The best invitation is a personal invitation, but it can also be helpful to place an announcement in a bulletin or newsletter, and/or ask the priest or pastor to announce the meeting during services.

Tips for your meeting – In introducing Sister Parish and in running a meeting effectively, we have found it helpful to include:

- Group introductions (you can provide structure to keep them brief)
- A sign-in sheet for names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses
- A general introduction as to the purpose of the meeting
- A general outline of what will follow: audio-visual, introductory material, questions and answers, discussion, plans for follow-up.

Suggested Agenda Sister Parish Introductory Meeting

- a. **Introductions and agenda review** (5 min)
- b. **Audio-visual presentation** (20 min) – Staff has presentations, pictures and video that we can share with you. Staff will talk with you to figure out the best option for your community.
- c. **Additional information** (10 min) – Present or hand-out the Information Packet (see materials below) and discuss the process to join Sister Parish, Inc. If the program is being presented by *someone who has been on a delegation, this is a good spot for a brief personal story.*
- d. **Question and Answer/Discussion Period** (30 min) – Include discussion about how the Sister Parish model would fit your collective or individual call to engage with the global community. Discuss how this model may or may not challenge your members and talk about how that might feel.
- e. **Next Steps** (15-20 min) – Discuss next steps with the group.
 - Is the group ready to set the *next meeting*? If there is a lot of enthusiasm, set a date and time right away and assign responsibilities for invites, announcements, reserving a space, etc.
 - Are there *further questions or concerns* to discuss with Sister Parish staff? Determine a point person to follow-up.
- f. **Closing prayer or song** (2 min) – If you are uncomfortable praying out-loud with others, you can ask someone else to help.

Materials Needed for the First Meeting

- ❑ Sign-in sheet
- ❑ Audio-visual material (documentary, pictures or presentation....)
- ❑ Equipment for the audio-visual presentation (DVD player or a laptop with a projector)
- ❑ Information Packet including:
 - 1) “How will my church benefit from Sister Parish?”
 - 2) “Sister Parish FAQs”
 - 3) Sister Parish “Mission and Vision Statements”
 - 4) Information about the process to join Sister Parish, Inc.
- ❑ Sister Parish brochures

Discernment and Deciding to Join Sister Parish

1. **Continue to discuss the Sister Parish model** and plan follow-up sessions to facilitate the discernment process. It is crucial for your community members (especially those who travel on the first delegation) to understand our core values:
 - solidarity rather than charity or paternalism,
 - receiving as well as giving,
 - learning as well as teaching,
 - long-term relationship rather than a short-term mission project.

2. **When your church decides to join Sister Parish**, staff will welcome you and ask for the following:
 - a. *A minimum three-year commitment to the relationship* made on behalf of the local organizing committee and your church/faith community. In a three-year period, there would ideally be at least one north-to-south delegation visit and one south-to-north delegation.
 - b. *A completed application form*, sent to the US office. We will also ask your potential sister community to complete a similar questionnaire to share with you, so that both communities have some knowledge of the other before the first visit.
 - c. *Payment of the annual \$1,000 linkage fee*, sent to the financial office. Talk with staff about partial fee options depending on the month you join.

When you are ready to commit and we have received the application and linkage fee, we can start the process of officially linking your community with a faith community in Central America. We will ask your group to say more about your hopes and expectations as we establish the relationship.

Please be in touch with Sister Parish staff throughout the process: [US Regional Coordinator](mailto:usoffice@sisterparish.org) (usoffice@sisterparish.org, 612.326.4361).

Gathering Support and Organizing the First Delegation Visit

The easiest way to organize in a church or faith community is to:

- Find out who would be interested in making the first delegation visit. If you have five or more people, you have a small delegation. Our experience is that this group is usually able to attract other supporters, encourage wider church commitment, and raise the money needed (not unlike the "loaves and fishes" multiplication that Jesus exemplified).
- Meet with the pastor, priest, or a member of the pastoral team early on and encourage them to support the program.

A word about delegation opportunities: Sister Parish, Inc. does not want only affluent delegates to have the opportunity to travel to Central America, nor do we think that a church should subsidize 100% of the expenses involved in a delegation visit. Our churches have extensive knowledge and experience on how to fundraise for a delegation. We are happy to share resources with you.

Tips for planning your first delegation visit:

- **Plan in advance** – Plan 6-8 months for staff to establish the linkage and start to plan the first delegation. Delegation dates should be selected 8-10 months in the future. This allows for adequate orientation and preparation on both sides. Choosing the dates this early also gives the group a time-line with goals for their work, including organizing general support in the congregation.
- **Send in \$500 delegation deposit to reserve dates** – Because we do expend a lot of staff time in preparation, we ask for a \$500 delegation deposit to reserve the delegation dates you have chosen. This is non-refundable, but it is applied to the overall cost of the delegation as long as the group travels within 30 days of the original, scheduled dates. (All northern churches also pay an annual \$1,000 linkage fee which supports staff salaries and regular communication between partnered communities. After the first year, many northern churches build this \$1,000 annual fee into their budgets).
- **Review our Orientation Manual and set a schedule** – The manual, available as a PDF online, contains materials for 1) three 2-hour orientation sessions; 2) one day-long retreat prior to travel; and 3) one post-travel evaluation session. The material can be expanded to more sessions, but *the framework we offer is the minimum required*. We ask that the church photocopy each orientation session for the delegation members as they use it and/or provide the appropriate equipment for viewing the material. Included are several appendices with useful resources. We encourage the sister parish organizer or

delegation leader to read through the entire Orientation Manual prior to leading the sessions.

- **Coordinate all-day orientation session with Sister Parish, Inc.** – We encourage you to coordinate with staff so that we can participate in the all-day orientation session (usually through Skype).

Additional Resources

- ❑ A book written by Sister Parish, Inc. co-founder, Richard Fenske, *En La Buena Lucha, In the Good Struggle: The Sister Parish Movement*.
- ❑ A short video/ DVD presentation (15 minutes) about the Sister Parish delegation experience. Contact staff for DVDs and/or links to videos available online.
- ❑ Conversations with our experienced staff in Guatemala and El Salvador. We can also connect you with other Sister Parish congregations. In our experience, people have found it helpful to connect with Sister Parish members in person and over the phone.
- ❑ Visit our website: www.sisterparish.org

Contact for resources listed above and further questions:

[US Regional Coordinator](#)

Email: usoffice@sisterparish.org

Telephone: 612.326.4361