

CHRISTIAN SUPPORT NETWORK

A MINISTRY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE



We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES

ChristianLifeResources.com



Dear Christian Servant,

You want to be a friend, a helper, a caregiver, a listener, or to serve in whatever ways God has gifted you.

Perhaps your life was once touched by the kindness of another. Maybe, in a time of need, someone was there for you. Or perhaps you carry a regret over a missed opportunity to step up in love.

Yet the deeper reason you are here is that we share a common bond in Christ. As the motto for this program so beautifully puts it, “We love because he first loved us.”

By God’s grace, we have faced the horror of our own sins and have been brought to see the great sacrifice God made for us in his Son. That love now moves us to serve.

This guide offers a framework for a caring network in your congregation that reaches into the community. It gathers thoughts, ideas, suggested procedures, and practical tools so that, as you wage the battle of Christian love, you may be better equipped to face the obstacles that Satan, the world, and your own sinful flesh will place in your path.

This handbook is not the final word on what you can do. It is simply a series of suggestions and guidelines to help you make the most of your efforts. Read it with an open mind. Use what is helpful and adapt the rest to your congregation’s unique personality and needs.

We encourage you to keep your eyes fixed on why you are participating in this effort and on what you hope to accomplish. Do not be distracted, but remain committed to love as you have been loved in Christ.

It is our prayer that you find your service gratifying, not only in the visible “successes” you may experience in this work, but above all in knowing that you are serving the Lord by loving others, even when they may not or cannot love you in return.



“Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” — Ephesians 5:2

Pastor Robert Fleischmann

National Director, Christian Life Resources, Inc.

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PART 1: VISION, MISSION & SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

Mission Statement

The Christian Support Network provides the structure for a congregation to reflect Christian love and support within the fellowship of believers, to put the faith of its members into action, and to use these opportunities for service as a means of Gospel outreach to those who don't know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Our Spiritual Foundation

While our service is practical, our motivation is deeply spiritual. We are guided by God's call to love our neighbors and to care for one another. These passages are the bedrock of everything we do:

"We love because he first loved us." — 1 John 4:19 — **Our Motivation**

"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." — 1 John 3:18 — **Sincere Service**

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." — Galatians 6:2 — **Mutual Care**

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." — Matthew 5:16 — **Gospel Outreach**

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" — Matthew 25:40 — **Serving Christ**

What Is the CSN Program?

We see an increasing need for help and support, even within our own congregations. This care can take many forms: a friend who stops by to talk, a hot meal dropped off in a difficult week, a prayer partner who walks alongside someone through hardship, a ride to church, a bag of groceries for a family in need, or simply someone who shows up and stays.

People from past generations speak of simpler times when this kind of support was common and organic. Regardless of the reasons, those old networks of natural community care are no longer a given — even within Christian churches. We at Christian Life Resources believe it is time to take proactive steps to rebuild them.

The Christian Support Network (CSN) is designed as a component of the local congregation. Its purpose is to organize members to provide meaningful care and support to people in the congregation and, where possible, to others in the surrounding community. The ultimate goals are threefold:

- To reflect Christian love and support within the fellowship of believers
- To put our faith into action
- To use these opportunities for service as a means of Gospel outreach to those who don't yet know Jesus Christ as their Savior

The CSN is not a men's, women's, or any other specialized group. It is designed to be inclusive of all members of the congregation who wish to serve their Lord by caring for others. The network does not require formal membership; instead, it matches the personal talents of willing individuals with the unique needs that arise. In effect, every member of your congregation can serve through the CSN.

Why Did CLR Create the CSN Program?

As a pro-life, pro-family ministry, we see people deal with many difficulties in life. Too often, we see people confront those difficulties with little support from others. CLR has created a number of resources and ministries to help people work through tough decisions, but we also acknowledge that closer friends and family — and church family — are better equipped to provide the needed personal support.

People might have the desire to help, but they often lack the organizational structure to make much of a difference. The CSN program provides that structure.

We also created this program as a way to provide a living Christian witness to your community. The intent is to put faith into action (1 John 3:18) and let others see your light shine and be led to praise our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).



PART 2: GETTING STARTED — THE STRATEGIC PLAN

A Three-Phase Approach to Lasting Success

A thriving ministry is built intentionally. We recommend a three-phase approach to ensure both immediate impact and long-term sustainability.

Phase 1: Laying the Groundwork

Begin by identifying the specific needs within your congregation and presenting a clear, manageable plan to church leadership. The goal is to start smart, not necessarily big. A well-organized, small effort is far more sustainable — and far more impactful — than an ambitious program that fades after six months.

Your groundwork includes:

- Involving your pastor and 2–4 committed members in an initial planning team
- Reviewing this guidebook and identifying the needs most relevant to your congregation
- Clarifying insurance, financial, and approval questions early
- Developing a mission statement and basic job descriptions
- Seeking formal approval from your Church Council or governing board

Phase 2: Building a “Menu of Opportunities”

Instead of issuing a general call for “volunteers,” offer specific roles with clearly defined time commitments and expectations. This is one of the most important practices for building a broad, sustainable volunteer base.

When people can see exactly what they’re signing up for, they’re far more likely to say yes — and far less likely to burn out. Someone with a busy schedule might not be able to commit to weekly visits but would gladly write one encouraging card per month. Someone who works from home might be the perfect person for a brief daily phone call. The goal is to make it easy for many people to contribute in small, meaningful ways.

See Part 3 of this guide for a full description of each volunteer role and how to present them to your congregation.

Phase 3: Sustaining the Spark

Provide ongoing support for your volunteers through a dedicated coordinator, regular communication, and periodic training. The most common reason caring ministries fade is not a lack of good intentions — it’s burnout and a feeling of being unsupported.

Crucially, you do not have to sustain this ministry on your own. CLR's Bridge Ministries exists specifically to support hands-and-feet ministries like the CSN. They can provide ongoing guidance, resources, encouragement, and problem-solving support as your ministry grows. Don't hesitate to reach out to them.

Evaluating Whether CSN Is Right for Your Church

Use this checklist to identify unmet needs in your congregation. If you answer "No" to several of these questions, the CSN program may be exactly what your church needs.

CSN Readiness Checklist

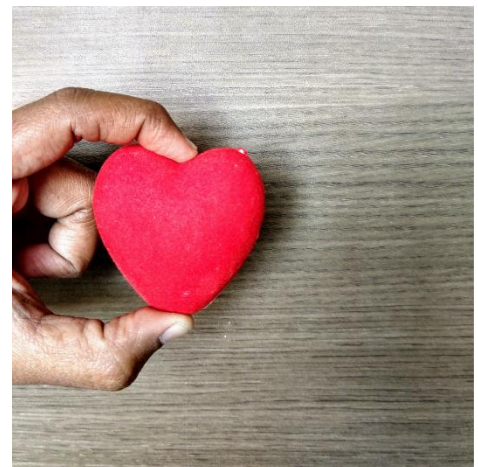
- ☐ Do primary caregivers in our congregation receive meaningful support from fellow members?
- ☐ Does the pastor currently carry most of the responsibility for visiting shut-ins and hospitalized members?
- ☐ Are there members who want to come to church but lack transportation?
- ☐ Are there members who need help with basic home or yard maintenance?
- ☐ Do we have terminally ill members who could use practical and spiritual support?
- ☐ Do members who are homebound or isolated feel genuinely connected to our church family?
- ☐ Do we have members who want to serve meaningfully without the commitment of elected offices or regular meetings?
- ☐ Do community members outside our congregation see us as an actively caring church?
- ☐ Are members given regular opportunities to provide spiritual encouragement to each other?

Your Initial Meeting with Church Leadership

Bringing this vision to your pastor or church leadership is the crucial first step. A prepared and prayerful approach can make all the difference.

Before the Meeting: Preparation is Key

- Schedule 20–30 minutes specifically to "discuss a potential new ministry idea."
- Bring this guide. It's your tangible evidence that this is a well-thought-out plan.
- Be prepared to answer the question, "Who will lead this?" The best answer is: "I am willing to serve as the initial coordinator."
- Pray for wisdom, for an open heart in your leadership, and for God's guidance.



A Sample Script for Your Conversation

“Good morning, Pastor [Name]. Thank you so much for meeting with me today.

(1. The Heart — The ‘Why’) For a while now, I’ve been thinking and praying about members of our church family who, because of a health challenge or difficult season of life, can’t always be with us. I feel a calling that we, as a church, can do more to make sure they feel loved, connected, and not forgotten.

(2. The Solution — The ‘How’) I have a practical plan. It offers a ‘menu of opportunities’ — from writing one card a month, to making a quick phone call, to helping with a practical task. The goal is to get many people involved in small ways so we make a big collective impact without burning anyone out.

(3. Addressing Concerns — Safety & Sustainability) I’ve thought about sustainability. This entire framework is provided in partnership with Christian Life Resources’ Bridge Ministries. We wouldn’t be starting from scratch. CLR provides this guide and a support team we can call for guidance. The plan also has built-in safety protocols, including volunteer screening and training on healthy boundaries.

(4. The Leadership) I feel so strongly about this that I’m willing to step up as the initial coordinator — organizing volunteers, connecting them with needs, and being the point person with CLR.

(5. The Ask) I’ve brought this guide that outlines everything. My hope today is simply to share this vision and ask for your blessing to take the next step. I’m happy to follow your lead on what that looks like. Thank you for your time and for shepherding our church so well.”

Organizing Your CSN Program

Initial Work

To begin, you need the involvement of the pastor and some committed members. Regardless of the person initiating the effort, a meeting should be held to discuss the program and determine its fit for your congregation.

Your first meeting’s agenda should cover:

- An overview of the CSN concept and this guidebook
- Identification of the greatest unmet needs in your congregation
- Insurance and financial questions
- Potential additional members for the planning team
- A commitment to the next step

Suggested Agendas for Early Meetings

Meeting 1: Open with prayer. Review the CSN concept. Identify key needs. Discuss who else should be part of the planning team. Commit to next steps.

Meeting 2: Open with prayer. Review notes and questions from Meeting 1. Draft a mission statement and job descriptions. Identify potential committee members.

Meeting 3: Open with prayer. Finalize mission statement and job descriptions. Develop a plan for presenting the CSN to your church leadership for approval.

Approval Process

Good communication with congregational leaders is critical. Give information and regular reports to the Church Council, the voters, and the entire membership. Good communication in the early stages raises awareness and encourages members to support the program once it launches.

Once your team has a rough plan, share it with the appropriate board or committee for their input and critique. Their early involvement increases the likelihood of formal acceptance.

Each congregation has its own process for introducing and approving new ideas. Your pastor can help you understand and navigate that process. Once the CSN is officially accepted, communicate it clearly to your committee and the full congregation.

Mission Statement

A good program has a clear, easy-to-understand mission statement. It keeps you focused and helps others quickly grasp what you're about. See the appendix for sample mission statements to help you craft your own.

Job Descriptions

People involved in the CSN should have specific job descriptions. This supports organizational clarity, keeps team members focused on the ministry, and provides important documentation. Sample job descriptions are included in the appendix.

Forming Your CSN Committee

The ideal CSN committee consists of 4–6 people, including the pastor. The committee is not expected to handle every project themselves. Their role is to select projects, recruit additional volunteers, and communicate the ministry's work and successes.

As the program grows, consider four coordinator roles:

- CSN Coordinator — oversees all activities; primary contact for the ministry
- Volunteer Coordinator — recruits volunteers and matches their gifts to needs
- Communications Coordinator — liaison between the committee, council, and congregation
- Networking Coordinator — identifies and connects community and congregational resources

It is wise to appoint committee members rather than elect them. There are no term limits.

The Ministry Coordinator Role

The single most important factor in this ministry's success is a dedicated coordinator. This person is the hub, not the hero. Their job is to organize, empower, and communicate — not to do all the work

themselves. They receive all requests for support, match needs to volunteers, and serve as the first point of contact for those being served.

The ideal coordinator:

- Has a heart for people and a genuine passion for the ministry's vision
- Is organized and reliable, comfortable managing lists, schedules, and requests
- Is absolutely discreet and trustworthy with confidential information
- Communicates warmly and clearly — on the phone, by email, and in person
- Has healthy personal boundaries: able to care deeply without carrying everyone's burdens alone



PART 3: VOLUNTEER ROLES — THE MENU OF OPPORTUNITIES

Instead of asking for “volunteers” in a general sense, offer specific roles with clear time commitments. This makes it easy for congregation members to find a way to serve that genuinely fits their schedule, skills, and comfort level.

The Encouragement Team

The Encouragement Team	
What It Is The simple, powerful act of sending handwritten cards. Volunteers are assigned one or two members in need and send cards for birthdays, holidays, or simply a “thinking of you” note. Volunteers are encouraged to include a short, uplifting Bible verse. (CLR’s Bridge Ministries can provide an initial supply of blank greeting cards.)	Time Commitment 15–20 minutes a month, at any time that fits your schedule.
Ideal For Someone with a busy or unpredictable schedule who prefers to serve from home and has a gift for expressing encouragement in writing.	

The Daily Hello Crew

The Daily Hello Crew	
What It Is A rotating team that ensures a member receives a friendly phone call each day. The call is intentionally brief — a warm “Hello, just calling from the church to say we’re thinking of you today.” A key part of every call is the simple offer: “Is there anything I can pray for you about today?”	Time Commitment 5–10 minutes on your assigned day (e.g., every Tuesday). With a team of 7, you make just one call per week.
Ideal For Someone who is comfortable on the phone, has a warm and friendly voice, and maintains a fairly consistent daily routine.	

Friendly Visitors Program

Friendly Visitors Program	
What It Is Building a genuine one-on-one friendship through regular in-person visits. Spiritual support is central: this can include praying together, reading a devotional or Scripture, discussing faith, or simply offering a listening ear. It is about being present, not entertaining.	Time Commitment 1–2 hours, once or twice a month.
Ideal For A great listener with a patient, empathetic spirit who feels called to build a deeper personal and spiritual connection.	

The Practical Help Crew

The Practical Help Crew	
What It Is Providing tangible help through transportation and simple errands — a ride to an appointment, a trip to the grocery store, picking someone up for church, or running a quick errand for a member who is sick or homebound. (Note: coordinate transportation through the ministry coordinator and confirm appropriate personal auto insurance coverage.)	Time Commitment Varies. Volunteers are notified of specific needs and can claim a request if their schedule allows.
Ideal For Someone with a flexible schedule, a reliable vehicle with proper insurance, and a gift for providing practical, task-based help.	

The Fix-It Brigade

The Fix-It Brigade	
What It Is Using practical skills to solve simple home maintenance needs: changing a hard-to-reach lightbulb, tightening a cabinet hinge, replacing smoke detector batteries, or doing basic yard work. This role reflects our call to serve one another with our practical gifts. It does not include major plumbing, electrical, or construction work.	Time Commitment As needed. Volunteers are notified of a specific job and can accept it if they have the skills and time.
Ideal For Someone who is handy with tools, enjoys problem-solving, and prefers task-based, concrete service.	

Caregiver Support Circle

Caregiver Support Circle	
What It Is A ministry of presence for family members serving as primary caregivers. This role involves being part of a dedicated small group or communication chain centered on bearing one another's burdens through shared experience and prayer. It can include providing a few hours of relief, sending cards, or dropping off a meal.	Time Commitment Typically 1 hour a week or every other week, depending on the group's format.
Ideal For Someone who is deeply empathetic, discreet, a faithful prayer warrior, and has a heart for those carrying heavy burdens.	

Parish Nurse (Faith Community Nurse)

Parish Nurse	
What It Is A licensed Registered Nurse who serves as a health educator, advocate, and referral agent within the church family, focusing on whole-person wellness — body, mind, and spirit. The Parish Nurse does not perform hands-on clinical tasks. Instead, they help members understand health conditions, prepare for appointments, navigate the healthcare system, connect with community resources, and receive confidential spiritual support.	Time Commitment Varies based on need. Available for confidential consultations as requested through the Ministry Coordinator.
Ideal For A licensed Registered Nurse with a passion for integrating faith and health. Must be an excellent listener, discreet, and skilled at empowering others with knowledge and compassionate guidance.	

Additional In-Reach Ideas

Beyond the core volunteer roles, consider these activities for specific groups in your congregation:

Prepared Meals: Coordinate meals for families dealing with illness, a new baby, grief, or a difficult transition. This is one of the easiest ways to involve many people, including those not formally on the CSN committee.

Special Outings: Arrange outings for members who are able to get out with some assistance — a restaurant lunch, a museum visit, a scenic drive, or a trip to a special place. Discuss options with the member rather than assuming what they'd enjoy.

Babysitting Support: Offer childcare support to families who need a break, have a child with special needs who requires a mature caregiver, or are navigating a family crisis.

Widowed Members: Grief is a long road. Beyond the initial loss, continue to reach out with meals, cards, help with routine chores, and — perhaps most importantly — a listening ear.

Unemployed Members: The CSN should not distribute money directly, but can provide practical help: a bag of groceries, a gas card, gift certificates, or free services. Sensitivity and dignity are essential.

New Members: Welcome new members with a personal visit, a tour of the area, or a welcome package. Assign a congregation member as a friendly sponsor to answer questions and help them feel at home.

Technology Connection: Help homebound or less tech-savvy members access worship services online. A volunteer can set up a device, leave simple large-print instructions, and be a friendly phone call away if they get stuck.

Outreach Opportunities

The primary focus of the CSN is caring for those within your congregation. But that love naturally spills outward. When a neighbor sees your volunteers helping a sick family, doing yard work for someone who can't manage it alone, or picking someone up for church, it opens conversations.

Peter wrote: “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (1 Peter 3:15)

Those with whom you serve become referral sources — they will tell you about a friend or family member who doesn't know Christ. The CSN has tremendous outreach potential. Look imaginatively at what doors are already opening.

Consider also sponsoring special community events: a health fair, a flu shot clinic, or presentations on practical life topics. Invite the general public, have church information available, and ensure CSN volunteers are present to welcome and connect with guests.



PART 4: VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT & SAFETY

Confidentiality & Privacy

Trust is the cornerstone of the CSN. As volunteers build relationships, they will be welcomed into the homes and lives of members in vulnerable moments. This is a profound privilege that carries a sacred responsibility to honor their privacy.

Every piece of information shared — a prayer request, a health concern, a personal story, a family detail — is a gift entrusted to you. Upholding the strictest confidentiality is not just a policy; it is a fundamental expression of Christian love and respect.

Confidentiality means:

- Refraining from discussing a member's personal affairs with anyone outside the ministry coordinator, even with the best intentions.
- Keeping sensitive information completely separate from general church conversations.
- Understanding that a breach of this trust — even well-intentioned — can cause deep harm. Volunteers who fail to uphold confidentiality will be removed from their role.

Possible committee members should be evaluated for their ability to respect the complete privacy of others before being invited to serve. Current members should be reminded regularly that confidentiality is not optional — it is the foundation of trust upon which the entire ministry stands.

Confidentiality in Action: A Practical Q&A for Volunteers

Here are common real-life scenarios and how to handle them gracefully. The guiding principle: be kind, be firm on privacy, and when in doubt, say less.

Scenario 1: The Well-Meaning Inquiry

Situation: Another church member asks, “You visit Mrs. Smith, right? How is she really doing?”

The Right Response:

“It’s so kind of you to ask. While our privacy policy means I can’t share details, I can tell you she would be so blessed by a card from you!”

Why it works: Affirms their care, states the boundary clearly, and redirects to a positive action — all in one friendly sentence.

Scenario 2: The Prayer Request Overshare

Situation: You're in your small group and want to ask for prayer for the person you serve.

The Right Response:

"Please join me in praying for my friend, just for his overall peace and well-being."

Why it works: Allows the group to support through prayer without sharing specific, confidential struggles. God knows all the details.

Scenario 3: The Conversation at Home

Situation: Your spouse asks, "So what did you and Betty talk about today?"

The Right Response:

"It was a really nice visit! Of course, you know I can't share anything personal, but it's always a pleasure to see her."

Why it works: Warm and positive while reinforcing that confidentiality applies everywhere — including at home.

Scenario 4: A Concerning Observation

Situation: You notice something worrying during your visit — confusion, lack of food, a safety hazard.

The Right Response:

Contact the Ministry Coordinator immediately after your visit with specific, factual observations (e.g., "I noticed there was no fresh food in the refrigerator"). Let the coordinator determine the next steps.

Why it works: Ensures the right help is provided by the right people, protecting both the member and the volunteer.

Scenario 5: The "Don't Tell Anyone, but..." Dilemma

Situation: The person you are visiting says, "I want to tell you something, but you have to promise not to tell the pastor..."

The Right Response:

"I want you to feel you can share with me. But I also want to be honest: I will keep what you say private, with one exception — if you tell me something that makes me concerned for your safety, I am required to let our coordinator know so we can make sure you're cared for."

Why it works: Sets a crucial safety boundary before a dangerous secret is shared, protecting everyone involved.

Volunteer Screening & Vetting

A consistent and respectful screening process protects everyone involved. The following applies to all volunteers in roles with unsupervised, one-on-one contact (e.g., Friendly Visitors, Practical Help Crew, Fix-It Brigade).

Step 1 — Application: Complete the official Volunteer Application form (see appendix). This provides basic information and formal consent for screening.

Step 2 — Informal Conversation: The ministry coordinator schedules a brief, friendly conversation with every applicant to discuss their heart for the ministry, answer questions, and clarify role expectations.

Step 3 — Background Check: For applicable roles, the applicant receives an email from a third-party screening provider and securely enters their own information. The church never handles Social Security Numbers. Checks include a National Criminal Database search and a National Sex Offender Registry search. Results are reviewed confidentially by the coordinator and/or pastor.

Step 4 — Welcome & Orientation: Once screening is complete, the volunteer is officially welcomed and attends a brief orientation covering confidentiality, healthy boundaries, and role expectations.

For the Parish Nurse role, vetting also includes verification of an active nursing license and good standing with the state board of nursing.

Healthy Boundaries for Volunteers

Boundaries are not about being uncaring — they are about loving well and loving sustainably. They create a safe, respectful relationship for both the volunteer and the member being served.

You DO:

- Be a genuine friend: offer companionship, a listening ear, and a connection to the church family.
- Be reliable: stick to your agreed schedule, and communicate early if you need to make a change.
- Report concerns: if you notice a significant change in someone's health, mood, or environment, report it to the ministry coordinator promptly.
- Maintain your role: enjoy your time, but remember you are a trusted representative of your church.

You DO NOT:

- Handle finances: never handle a member's cash, checks, or credit cards. Do not accept significant personal gifts or engage in financial loans. Refer all financial needs to the coordinator.
- Provide medical care: do not administer medication, give medical advice, or perform clinical tasks unless you are a licensed professional serving in the designated Parish Nurse role.
- Act as a professional counselor: supportive listening is vital, but refer situations involving deep trauma, addiction, or serious family conflict to the coordinator for connection to pastoral staff or professional counselors.

- Over-commit or create dependency: do not make promises you cannot keep. Maintain healthy limits to prevent burnout and to keep the relationship centered on Christ and the church community.
- Perform tasks outside your qualifications: for the Fix-It Brigade, stick to simple tasks and avoid major plumbing, electrical, or construction work.

Legal Concerns

A few important principles can significantly reduce legal risk for your ministry:

Create clear, updated policies: Your mission statement, job descriptions, and policies are the foundation of your work. Review them annually.

Obtain congregational approval: Present these documents to your church's authoritative groups for formal approval. Clear, formally adopted policies are your best protection.

Demonstrate Christian care and respect: Gossiping, criticizing, or demeaning others is incompatible with Christian ministry and with a legally defensible posture.

Maintain appropriate documentation: Keep records and provide regular reports to the board overseeing the CSN. All documentation should maintain confidentiality standards.

Consult your insurance agent: Verify the coverages provided by the congregation's insurance policy. If necessary, add a rider to cover CSN activities.

Physical contact deserves special attention. Leave medical care to medical professionals. When making home visits, particularly with members of the opposite sex, consider bringing a second person to prevent the possibility of false accusations.

Don't let the fear of lawsuits be a deterrent in caring for others. As Scripture reminds us: "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:17) Do your work with integrity, and trust God with the rest.



PART 5: SUSTAINING YOUR MINISTRY

Education & Volunteer Support

Recruiting willing volunteers is the first step. Keeping them equipped, supported, and spiritually grounded is what sustains the ministry over time.

- Provide training on a regular basis, tailored to the situations your volunteers actually encounter.
- Always include a spiritual component to training: devotions, prayer, and reflection on why you serve.
- Pray for and with your volunteers. Encourage committee members to pray for each other and for those they serve.
- Check in regularly with volunteers to catch early signs of burnout or discouragement before they become a problem.

Promotion

Once your committee has received congregational approval, promote the CSN program widely through:

- Bulletin inserts and newsletter stories
- Bulletin board posters
- Personal announcements from the pastor or a committee member
- Reports at congregational meetings
- Word-of-mouth from existing volunteers and those you've served

Sample promotional materials are included in the appendix.

Budgeting

The CSN program requires very little to launch. Most early-stage work requires only volunteer effort to create the structure and focus.

Once established, start an operations budget — but start small. Use early successes to seek additional funds. Consider establishing a dedicated CSN fund through donations, and report the impact of those gifts regularly to encourage continued generosity. Over time, ask the congregation to include CSN support in the annual budget.

Annual Evaluation

On an annual basis, dedicate a full meeting to reviewing the ministry's work. Discuss what went well, what didn't, and what changes you'll make in the coming year. Track the impact of those changes throughout the year.

Be candid and confident in sharing your evaluation results with congregational leaders. Honest self-assessment builds trust and demonstrates that the CSN is a ministry worth investing in.



CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES

— FOR LIFE • FOR FAMILY —

Your Partnership with CLR Bridge Ministries

You are not doing this alone. Christian Life Resources' Bridge Ministries exists specifically to support hands-and-feet ministries like the CSN. They can provide:

- This guidebook and associated resources
- Ongoing support, encouragement, and problem-solving guidance
- A knowledgeable team you can call when questions arise
- Additional materials to support your volunteers and those you serve

Don't hesitate to reach out. The goal of this partnership is to prevent burnout and keep your ministry healthy for the long term.

CLR Bridge Ministries

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APPENDIX: TEMPLATES & TOOLS

Sample Mission Statements

Adapt one of these to reflect your congregation's voice and context:

The Christian Support Network of _____ Church exists to use life's challenges as opportunities to show Christian compassion and support, and to share the Gospel through those opportunities.

_____ Church established a Christian Support Network for the purpose of helping those in need through acts of Christian love.

The Christian Support Network, a ministry of _____ Church, assists people in need with practical help and the comfort of God's Word.

Sample Job Descriptions

CSN Coordinator: Oversees all CSN activities. Serves as the primary contact for the ministry, receives all requests for support, matches volunteers with needs, and provides regular reports to church leadership.

Volunteer Coordinator: Recruits and cares for volunteers. Works closely with the CSN Coordinator and pastor to match each volunteer's gifts and availability to the right tasks.

Communications Coordinator: Serves as the liaison between the CSN committee, the pastor, the church council, and the congregation. Ensures that everyone knows the CSN exists and how to access it.

Networking Coordinator: Identifies community and congregational resources that can support the CSN's work. Shares this information with volunteers and connects members with outside services when appropriate.

Volunteer Interest Flyer

(Copy and adapt for your church bulletin, welcome table, or digital communications.)

Share Your Heart. Lend a Hand.

Introducing Our New [Ministry Name]

Our church is launching a new ministry to provide connection and practical support to members who are homebound, isolated, or facing a difficult season. We know life is busy. That's why we've designed a "menu of opportunities" with flexible roles. Find a way to serve that fits YOUR life!

☐ The Encouragement Team (Write cards from home)

- ☐ The Daily Hello Crew (Brief, friendly phone calls)
- ☐ Friendly Visitors Program (In-person visits)
- ☐ The Practical Help Crew (Transportation & errands)
- ☐ The Fix-It Brigade (Simple home tasks)
- ☐ Caregiver Support Circle (Encourage family caregivers)

---- Cut here ----

Yes, I'm interested! Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

"We're Here for You" Member Flyer

(Use this text for a flyer to inform members and their families about available support.)

To our cherished members:

Life's journey can sometimes make it difficult to get out and stay connected. As your church family, we want to ensure you always feel a part of our community. Our [Ministry Name] offers friendly support from trusted, church-approved volunteers.

We can offer:

- A friendly phone call or in-person visit
- A ride to an appointment or church service
- Help with a simple task at home
- A birthday card or note of encouragement
- Consultation with our Parish Nurse
- Help connecting to church services online
- Prayer, spiritual support, and genuine companionship

This ministry is built on care, respect, and confidentiality. Your privacy is our priority.

To request support, contact our confidential coordinator:

Coordinator: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Volunteer Application Form

(Printable. All information is kept strictly confidential and secure.)

[Church Name]: [Ministry Name] Volunteer Application

Thank you for your willingness to serve. Please complete this form fully to begin the application process.

Full Legal Name: _____

Best Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY, required for background check): _____

Areas of Interest (check all that apply):

- ☐ The Encouragement Team ☐ The Daily Hello Crew ☐ Friendly Visitors Program
☐ The Practical Help Crew ☐ The Fix-It Brigade ☐ Caregiver Support Circle

Background Check Authorization:

I authorize [Church Name] and/or its designated third-party screening agent to conduct a background check, including a National Criminal Database search and a National Sex Offender Registry search. I understand this information will be kept strictly confidential and used solely to determine my suitability for this volunteer ministry.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Printed Name: _____

Sample Committee Report

(Submit to your church council, voters' assembly, or other congregational group. Replace the example details with your own.)

The Christian Support Network (CSN) has been operating for six months in our congregation. Although it took some time for members to become comfortable with the program, we are beginning to see strong acceptance and participation.

In the past three months, we have helped eight members with a variety of resources. Some have received nutritious meals during a health crisis. Some are part of our regular visitation schedule. Two are being picked up each week for Sunday services. One has been connected with short-term professional support.

We maintain a confidential approach in all of our work, and we continue to support and encourage one another with the Word of God.

If you would like to volunteer or make a donation, please donate online, place your gift in an envelope marked "CSN Support" in the Sunday offering, or contact: _____.

Bulletin & Newsletter Announcements

(Copy and adapt these for your church communications.)

Short version: Our Christian Support Network (CSN) was established to help members in need through acts of Christian love. Our assistance is provided confidentially. We do not give money, but we can provide services, practical help, and encouragement. To request support or to volunteer, contact:

_____.

Volunteer appeal: The CSN exists to reflect Christian love by providing support to members who need it. Some need a ride to church. Some need a friendly visit. Some just need to know someone is thinking of them. If you're interested in serving, contact _____ for more information.



ADDENDUM: PRACTICAL SYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABLE MINISTRY

About This Addendum

This addendum provides practical implementation tools to help sustain caring ministries for the long term. These ideas are not requirements — they are flexible tools designed to reduce volunteer burnout, improve communication, strengthen organization, support healthy boundaries, and make ministry sustainable for years to come. Use what is helpful. Adapt what fits your church culture. Most importantly, continue serving others in Christian love and faithfulness.

Section 1: Volunteer Communication Rhythm

Every church functions differently, and volunteers have varying comfort levels with technology. Some prefer text messaging, others email, phone calls, printed schedules, or in-person communication.

The goal is not creating complicated systems or excessive meetings. The goal is ensuring volunteers feel informed, encouraged, supported, and connected to the ministry's mission.

Many churches successfully operate with one annual volunteer gathering, occasional optional trainings, and simple ongoing communication through a combination of text messages, phone calls, email, printed schedules, or personal conversations.

Flexible Communication Methods

Text Messaging: Helpful for quick updates, urgent needs, prayer requests, and volunteer openings. Best for volunteers comfortable with mobile technology.

"Need one volunteer for a grocery pickup Thursday afternoon. Also please pray for a caregiver family having a difficult week. Thank you all for serving so faithfully."

Email Updates: Helpful for monthly updates, schedules, ministry highlights, and volunteer reminders. A short monthly email can include ministry updates, anonymous impact stories, prayer requests, and appreciation for volunteers.

Phone Calls: Some volunteers strongly prefer phone communication, especially older volunteers, less tech-oriented members, or for sensitive ministry situations.

Printed Schedules & Bulletins: Distribute printed schedules, include volunteer updates in church mailboxes, or use bulletin inserts. Simple printed systems are often highly effective.



Annual Volunteer Gathering

Many ministries find that one intentional yearly gathering is enough to reconnect volunteers, celebrate ministry impact, provide encouragement, review boundaries and confidentiality, and cast vision for the upcoming year.

This gathering can remain simple: a dessert night, luncheon, devotional and prayer, volunteer recognition, and ministry updates. Recommended length: 60–90 minutes maximum.

Optional Training Opportunities

Rather than requiring frequent meetings, churches may occasionally offer optional training on caregiver support, boundary refreshers, active listening, technology assistance, or volunteer encouragement. These can remain brief, informal, and highly practical.

Scheduling Philosophy

The best communication system is the one your volunteers will actually use consistently. Avoid unnecessary complexity. Use tools that fit your congregation, reduce stress, and support long-term sustainability.

Section 2: Scheduling System Examples

The goal of scheduling systems is organization without unnecessary complexity. Simple systems are usually the most sustainable.

Option 1 — SignupGenius Scheduling

Recommended for meal delivery, rides, visits, practical help requests, and event volunteers.

- Create a free account at SignupGenius.com
- Set up recurring or one-time volunteer slots
- Volunteers self-sign-up at their convenience
- Automated reminders are sent before their scheduled time
- The coordinator receives notifications when slots are filled



This system works well for congregations comfortable with online tools and significantly reduces back-and-forth communication.

Option 2 — Rotating Phone/Text Schedule

For congregations preferring personal communication, a simple rotating schedule can work well: each week, the coordinator contacts the next volunteer in the rotation by phone or text. This is straightforward, relationship-based, and requires no technology beyond a phone.

Option 3 — Printed Monthly Schedule

A simple printed schedule distributed at church or mailed to volunteers lists who is responsible for what during each week. Updates are communicated by phone or text as needed. This works well for smaller congregations or less tech-oriented volunteer teams.

Scheduling Best Practices

- Build in backup volunteers for high-priority roles
- Avoid depending entirely on one volunteer for any major responsibility
- Cross-train volunteers to share responsibilities and protect ministry continuity
- The ministry coordinator should organize ministry — not personally fulfill every request. Delegation is essential for sustainability.

Section 3: Volunteer Appreciation & Retention

Healthy ministries intentionally care for their volunteers. The goal is not elaborate gifts — the goal is ensuring volunteers feel appreciated, spiritually encouraged, supported, and never taken for granted.

Practical Appreciation Ideas

Handwritten Notes: A short handwritten note from the pastor, ministry coordinator, or church leadership can be deeply meaningful.

Volunteer Spotlights: Feature one volunteer periodically in newsletters, bulletins, or announcements. Possible content: why they serve, a favorite Bible verse, or encouragement to others.

Volunteer Anniversary Recognition: Track volunteer milestones (1 year, 3 years, 5 years). Recognition ideas: a devotional book, prayer journal, bookmark, plant, or simple public thank-you.

Appreciation Gatherings: Host occasional coffee gatherings, dessert nights, appreciation lunches, or fellowship events. Simple, sincere appreciation is often most meaningful.

Building a Healthy Volunteer Culture

Create a “No Guilt” Culture: Volunteers should feel freedom to pause temporarily, decline requests, or step back when needed. Healthy ministry allows room for rest. Helpful language: “Serve as you are able.” “Faithfulness matters more than availability.” “It is okay to rest when needed.”

Normalize Prayer Support for Volunteers: Volunteers themselves sometimes experience grief, exhaustion, caregiver stress, emotional fatigue, or burnout. Regular prayer and encouragement for volunteers should be part of the ministry culture.

Section 4: Burnout Prevention Principles

Burnout rarely happens suddenly. It often develops slowly through overcommitment, lack of boundaries, emotional exhaustion, and feeling unsupported. Healthy systems protect volunteers and sustain ministry long-term.

Signs of Volunteer Burnout

Possible warning signs include: withdrawal, irritability, fatigue, missed commitments, emotional overwhelm, and loss of enthusiasm. Leaders should respond with compassion, encouragement, and flexibility.

Practical Burnout Prevention Strategies

Rotate Responsibilities: Avoid placing ongoing high-demand responsibilities on the same individuals indefinitely.

Encourage Team Ministry: Whenever possible, pair volunteers, share visits, and build team-based support systems.

Respect Personal Limits: Volunteers should never feel pressured to solve every problem, always say yes, or sacrifice personal health and family responsibilities.

Debrief Difficult Situations: Provide opportunities for volunteers to process difficult experiences, ask questions, receive encouragement, and pray together.



Section 5: Technology & Organization Tools

Technology can help caring ministries remain organized and connected. Churches should select tools appropriate for their size and comfort level.

Helpful Tools by Category

Signup & Scheduling: SignupGenius, Google Forms, Planning Center, shared church calendars.

Volunteer Communication: Group email lists, text message groups, printed schedules, phone trees, church communication apps.

Recordkeeping: Maintain simple confidential records for volunteer assignments, service requests, contact information, and follow-up needs. Access should remain limited to approved ministry leadership.

Technology Support Ministry Ideas

Consider including volunteers who help homebound members access livestream worship, troubleshoot devices, set up tablets or smart TVs, print large-font instructions, or assist less tech-savvy members. This can significantly reduce isolation for homebound individuals.

Section 6: Sample Monthly Ministry Checklist

The following checklist helps the ministry coordinator stay organized and ensure nothing falls through the cracks.

Monthly Coordinator Checklist

Volunteer Care

- ☐ Send volunteer update
- ☐ Pray for volunteers
- ☐ Check for burnout concerns
- ☐ Thank volunteers regularly

Ministry Operations

- ☐ Review current needs
- ☐ Update schedules
- ☐ Follow up on unresolved requests
- ☐ Confirm volunteer coverage

Communication

- ☐ Share ministry highlights with church leadership
- ☐ Promote volunteer opportunities
- ☐ Update church announcements if needed

Spiritual Focus

- ☐ Include Scripture and prayer in meetings
- ☐ Encourage Gospel-centered care
- ☐ Remind volunteers of the ministry's spiritual purpose



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"We love because he first loved us." — 1 John 4:19