

*aspire*  
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# WHERE FAITH MEETS

How Spirituality Shapes  
the RCMA Community



## CULTIVATING A HEALTHY VOLUNTEER TEAM WITH TRACY BAER

I'm Tracy Baer, and I'm an independent meeting planner. I've been doing this for almost 20 years. Meeting planning is something that gets under your skin—in the best way! I love putting all the pieces together and watching it come to life. There's nothing like seeing people arrive excited and walk away happy.

If you're planning to build a volunteer team, the first step is clarity: What does your organization need? What roles should volunteers fill? And what will it cost? Just because volunteers aren't paid doesn't mean it's free to work with them. Caring for your team takes time and resources—whether it's snacks, t-shirts, training materials, or appreciation gifts. You also need a solid plan for how volunteers will be onboarded and supported. What will training look like? Who will lead them? How will you raise up future leaders and involve new volunteers year after year?

The biggest mistake planners make is waiting too long to get organized. Before your calendar fills up (and it will!), block out time. Mark it off now to write training materials, send emails, make calls, and create your org chart. It's like building a bridge: you have to sink the support beams in first. If you try to lay the boards without a foundation, the whole thing falls apart.

There are a few other common pitfalls when working with volunteers. First: the language we use. I don't like the word recruit—it sounds too formal or militant. I prefer invite. When you invite someone to serve, it's more personal. Just like inviting them for coffee: "I've got this opportunity—want to join me?" That relational approach makes a big difference.

Second: planners often assume people will say no. "She just had a baby." "They just moved." "He's got three kids." But you can't say no on someone else's behalf. That mom might be craving a couple of hours away. The person who just moved might be eager to meet new people. Ask anyway—what's the worst that happens? They might surprise you and say yes.

And finally, don't treat volunteers like disposable labor. If you want them to come back, you need to show you care. Learn their names. Know their birthdays. Send a handwritten card. Those small personal touches go a long way toward building trust, loyalty, and a team that wants to serve with you again.