

Dedicated volunteers are the heart and soul of sustainable ministries and community partnerships funded by ECF. Grants go to projects not only serving people in need but also encouraging spiritual growth for Episcopal volunteers.

How then do you engage someone in long-term service, and protect veteran volunteers from burnout?

Why Spiritual Reflection is Essential to Mitigating Volunteer Burnout

One powerful tool is spiritual reflection. This practice fosters stronger bonds between people who serve and those being served. Volunteers find their calling and continue following it. When their service is aligned with beliefs and purpose, people are more likely to find great meaning and give more of themselves over a longer time.

“Reflection is just as important as the action of serving,” said The Rev. Dr. Richard Hill, a retired Presbyterian (PCUSA) missions pastor who attends All Saints’ Episcopal Church in Atlanta. Over four decades of service with Atlanta-area churches, Hill has woven spiritual reflection into mission work in Atlanta, the Southeast, and globally. Recently he helped guide volunteers at [All Saints’ refugee ministry](#).

Civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. used spiritual reflection to engage and sustain activists. Through the lens of racial justice, they critically examined their Christian faith, connecting their actions with Biblical examples of advocacy for the oppressed. Many found spiritual power in collective action, rising despite great persecution.

Developing Spiritual Reflection Tools for Volunteers

“Without spiritually reflecting, we fail to listen to what our heart is trying to say to us,” Hill said. “Serving others becomes like a dream, and once we wake up, we only remember a fleeting essence of it. There’s no lasting impact on us without reflection.”

To create an effective spiritual reflection tool, Hill considers many aspects of the group including the religious beliefs represented, type and frequency of the work, and trauma. The reflection is part of a gathering where volunteers also discuss their service experiences and issues.

Case Study: Using *Lectio Divina* in Refugee Outreach Ministries

For instance, a three-part reflection series for volunteers with All Saints’ refugee outreach included these steps paired with [lectio divina](#), a familiar method of reflection for Episcopalians:

- Session 1: Rooting service in moral principles and Christian beliefs through relevant Biblical references. Making volunteer service personal by discussing experiences of receiving help from outside your family or friends.
- Session 2: Centering service and faith through Old Testament stories of vulnerable groups. Sharing personal experiences of being rescued. Building empathy through imagining the experience of being a refugee.
- Session 3: Bonding service with faith through New Testament passages, including story of Jesus as a refugee. Are you being called to serve through greater opportunities and responsibilities?

Moving Beyond Transactional Service to Transformational Relationships

Spiritual reflection “comes out of the theology that we’re not just about doing good; we’re opening ourselves to be transformed,” Hill said. Individual transformation aligns with [ECF’s broader mission](#) of significant, long-lasting community transformation. That includes sustainably engaging volunteers and working to mitigate volunteer burnout.

“If we cannot answer, ‘What did that do for me when I sought God in this place?’ our service becomes transactional,” he added. “It’s a two-way street. Love is a relationship. When we can open up to an experience that can change minds and hearts, we’re getting at the sense of why Christ must have called us there, and we get a sense of meaning. And when our people find meaning, then they will return.”

[Email Rev. Dr. Richard Hill](#) to learn more about his work using spiritual reflection in ministry.



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