

## Group Prep Meetings

We recommend that groups be formed at least 4-5 months before your week at the Farm and that groups meet 3-4 times during that time period. These meetings can help build community within the group, introduce the group to the mission of Nazareth Farm, and prepare the group for what they will experience at the farm. They also can help the group plan fundraising to offset the cost of the trip and support Nazareth Farm. These meetings and fundraisers greatly help in forming the group and in giving participants a sense that they have invested something in the experience they will have at the Farm. (This also makes it less likely that they will back out at the last minute.)

Below are four sample meetings, compiled from Youth Ministers that have been bringing groups to the farm for many years. We hope these are of help to you in planning your meetings.

### Meeting #1

**Purpose:** To Build Community

1. Start the meeting with an opportunity to socialize informally, i.e. having pizza, snacks, etc.
2. Gather group and have icebreakers that help the group get to know each other. Have the participants share why he/she wanted to be a part of this experience.
3. Yarn Game:
  - a. Take ball of yarn and throw it to one member of the group. As you do so hold on to one strand of the yarn.
  - b. Have that person do the same, and have each successive person do so also.
  - c. In the end each person will be holding a strand of yarn making a web across the center of the room.
  - d. Ask how would we reverse the process?
  - e. Make the point that it would take real teamwork, everyone cooperating and working together to do that.
  - f. Make the point that this is what their trip at Nazareth Farm will be about, working together as a community. Point out that the process for that begins now in forming community within your own group.
  - g. This activity can also be done just by tossing a ball around and having to reverse the order from memory. Add more balls in as the original ball is tossed around.
4. Fundraising:
  - a. Outline the costs related to the trip: Farm Fee, transportation, donation to Nazareth Farm (not mandatory but always greatly appreciated)
  - b. Decide how much you would like each participant to contribute individually and how much you expect to make through fundraising.
  - c. Have the group brainstorm ideas for fundraisers. (Use the farm “fundraising suggestions” to add to their ideas – found on our resources page).
  - d. Decide which fundraising project(s) the group would like to do and pick a date.
5. Conclude the meeting with a prayer and set a date for your next meeting.

### Meeting #2

**Purpose:** To introduce the group to Doddridge County and Nazareth Farm.

1. Begin with a prayer. The following quote from Mother Teresa may serve as a good way to begin the meeting: “Whoever the poorest of the poor are, they are Christ for us – Christ under the guise of human suffering.”
2. Discuss the Needs of Doddridge County:
  - a. Point out that the material needs of the people of Doddridge County are very real.

- b. Compare the census information from Doddridge County (provided on the website) to that of your local community.
  - c. Discuss the need for affordable home repair for those working on a fixed income, particularly the elderly.
- 3. Discuss the meaning of “poverty” or “poor people”
  - a. Have participants brainstorm a list of words they think of when they hear the phrase “poor people.”
  - b. The list usually includes many common stereotypes. Discuss those words that reflect those stereotypes.
  - c. Offer some other words that may not be on the list – hospitable, generous, loving, family-centered
  - d. Discuss how the people that they will encounter at the farm are materially poor but many may be rich in many other ways, that to be poor does not only mean financially or materially. Encourage them to be open to what those people may be able to offer to them throughout their week at the farm.
  - e. Point out that we should view people as equals, no better or less than us because they lack some of the material possessions we have.
- 4. The work of Nazareth Farm
  - a. Discuss the structure for the week, what they can expect as far as work, to be open to the experience and where God may guide them no matter what their faith tradition or background, etc. Resources for this can be found on our website under the “Resources” section.
- 5. Interweave the previous meeting’s theme of “teamwork” with the necessity of volunteers at the farm – use the fact that we all have to work together, staff, volunteers and homeowners, in order to serve God and each other.
- 6. Review fundraising plans.
- 7. Close with a prayer and set date for next meeting.

### **Meeting #3**

**Purpose:** To introduce the group to the Social Justice Teachings of the Catholic Church.

- 1. Open the meeting with a prayer.
- 2. Recall the previous meeting’s discussion on the mission of Nazareth Farm and the characteristics of Doddridge County.
- 3. Use the Catholic Social Teaching resource on our website to go through each principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Relate these principles to the students’ lives and how we are called to put these into action at the Farm.
- 4. Close with a prayer and set date for next meeting.

### **Meeting #4**

**Purpose:** To discuss the packing list and answer questions of parents.

- 1. Begin with a prayer. Possibly focusing on service, simplicity and humility. Check out John 13 (Jesus washing the disciples’ feet). Incorporate the element of faith-sharing and ritual.
- 2. Discuss the cornerstones of the Farm and how participants will experience the volunteer week.
  - a. Service: home repair, visiting, home crew (cooking and cleaning around the farm)
  - b. Prayer: Integral part of the week, morning and evening prayer with a chance to plan it
  - c. Community: experience a week of living with others for the good of the community, involves self-sacrifice, emphasize following the rules, dress code.
  - d. Simplicity: give up things we are attached to: tv, radio, makeup, ipods, etc. so that we can reveal our true selves and be present to God, each other and ourselves.
- 3. Review logistics of trip
  - a. Review packing list, phone chain, plans to meet and leave, when you will return, etc.

- b. Have all volunteers fill our all forms – medical release, hold-harmless agreements, etc.
4. Allow time for questions
5. Close with a prayer.

It is wise to provide participants enough information so that they can pack well and feel comfortable about the trip. Be careful about giving too much information in the way of stories regarding past trips, staff members, and so forth. It is best for participants to arrive with open minds about the trip and the meaning it will have for them. When working with high school students, it is advisable to have a period of time alone with the parents to share what they can possibly expect from their children when they return and how they can support the changes they see. Discuss the importance of listening to the stories, looking at the pictures, and being open to what their children will share when they return. We want this experience to be more than just a week-long experience, but something that impacts their lives and is carried beyond Nazareth Farm itself.