

WHYZMEN • REWIRE RETIREMENT • FACILITATOR • SESSION 10 FOLDER • CONFIDENTIAL

Triad Stewardship

Facilitator guidelines for forming, checking, re-forming and sending the triads

Companion to the participant reading *Your Triad: A Formative Community (r1)*. Read both before Session 8, when the Sunday draft for Session 10 begins.

THE ONE AIM

Every man stays in a formative community, even when a particular triad does not. We do not promise that every triad survives. We promise that no man is left alone when one comes apart.

1 • Your stance: shepherd, not manager

Priya Parker calls it **generous authority**: someone takes responsibility for a gathering in order to protect it, not to control it. After Session 10 the triads belong to the men. Your job is to watch the edges.

You do	You do not
Mix the tables so men choose from evidence, not hunches. Place every unplaced man, at Session 10 and after. Run the private check-in at Session 11. Make one short call a month to each of your triads. Lead the recommitment at Commissioning.	Attend a triad meeting unless all its men invite you. Adjudicate a conflict or take sides. Repeat what one man tells you about another. Give reasons for a change, to anyone. Promise that a struggling triad can be saved.

Each facilitator shepherds one or two triads for the year. With nine men and three facilitators, that is one each. Write your assignments on the Triad Roster at the end of this guide.

2 • Where this lives in the program

Triads are introduced in stages. Each stage carries one piece, so no session is overloaded and the men meet each piece when they need it.

When	What happens	Your job
Session 1	Covenant; intake.	Ask each man's winter calendar on the intake. Note snowbirds now.

When	What happens	Your job
Sessions 2–9	Tables of threes, plus one of you.	Run the seating rotation (section 3). Keep a seating log.
Session 8	Sunday draft begins.	Start your private draft of likely triads (section 4).
Session 10	Triads formed. Charter drafted. Reading handed out.	Say the doubts out loud, name the formative community, announce the check-in (section 4).
Wilderness Between, Week 2	First triad meeting.	One text to each initiator the day after: “Did you meet? One word for how it went.”
Session 11	The check-in card.	Read the cards that morning; settle changes by phone that week (section 5).
Clearness Monday	Triads run the Clearness Room.	Be in the building, not in the rooms. From here triads are locked in through Commissioning.
Sessions 12–14	Triads meet monthly; project at Session 13.	Monthly shepherd call (section 6).
Commissioning	Recommitment, out loud and blessed.	Lead the rite (section 8).
First Fruits and the year after	Triads continue.	Quarterly call. Keep the Open List (section 9).

3 · Before Session 10: mix the tables

The cheapest insurance against a bad fit is evidence. If every man has sat with every other man before Session 10, he chooses from about sixteen hours of experience, not a hunch from the coffee line.

With nine men in three tables of three, there is a tidy answer. Number the men 1 to 9 (alphabetically is fine). Four seatings put **every pair of men at the same table exactly once**. Run the four seatings twice across Sessions 2–9, and every pair sits together exactly twice.

Seating	Table A	Table B	Table C	Use at
1	1 · 2 · 3	4 · 5 · 6	7 · 8 · 9	Sessions 2 and 6
2	1 · 4 · 7	2 · 5 · 8	3 · 6 · 9	Sessions 3 and 7
3	1 · 5 · 9	2 · 6 · 7	3 · 4 · 8	Sessions 4 and 8
4	1 · 6 · 8	2 · 4 · 9	3 · 5 · 7	Sessions 5 and 9

- **Facilitators rotate too.** Move one table to the left each session, so each of you sits with every man.
- **Put the seating card on the table** before the men arrive. Say once, at Session 2: “We mix the tables on purpose. By Session 10 you will have sat with everyone.”
- **Keep a seating log**, one line per session: who sat where, and who drew whom out. It becomes your Sunday draft.
- **Other cohort sizes.** The rule is the same: no pair repeats until everyone has sat with everyone. Ten men: three tables, one of four. Twelve: four tables of three.

4 • Session 10: forming the triads

The S10 deck and guide carry the forming process (Circle Selection, the tables, “stand up and go”, the unplaced get placed). Add three things.

Your Sunday draft

Before Session 10, draft likely triads from your seating log. Weigh four things, in this order:

1. **Availability.** A man away all winter sits best with two men who will be home and are good on the phone. Never put two snowbirds with one man who stays.
2. **Willingness.** Who has gone one level deeper at the tables, and who has deflected every question? Mix them; do not cluster the deflectors.
3. **Chemistry, not similarity.** Durable triads are often different in temperament. Look for warmth and curiosity.
4. **The generous men.** Place a man nobody named with two who have been generous at the tables.

The men’s own choices come first on the morning. Your draft is for the unplaced and for the swaps at Session 11.

Say the doubts out loud (2 minutes, before the tables)

WHAT YOU SAY

Some of you are thinking: I’m fine, I have my wife. Or: I don’t do sharing circles. Or: what if I don’t click with the two I pick? Or: I’m gone all winter. Those are honest, and the reading in your envelope answers each one. Here is the short version. This is not therapy and it is not a rescue. It is how men have become wise for three hundred years, from Wesley’s class meetings to Franklin’s Junto to Lewis and Tolkien. And the research says you will find deep conversation less awkward and more welcome than you expect.

Name it, and announce the check-in (1 minute, after the triads stand)

WHAT YOU SAY

What you just formed has a name. Burnett and Evans call it a formative community: not a group for fun, not a group to get something done, but men who help each other become. Every meeting asks one question underneath the others: who am I becoming? Now, nobody is locked in this morning. You are committing to one honest meeting. At Session 11 each of you tells one of us, privately, whether it's working. After that you are locked in through Commissioning. At Commissioning you choose again, for a year.

The charter additions

Cell 5 gets the focus question ("Each meeting we ask: who are we becoming?"). Cell 6 gets the empty-seat lines: what we do if a man winters away, moves or is ill, and who calls the facilitator if a seat empties for good. Both are printed in the participant reading, section 7.

5 • Session 11: the check-in

Each triad has met once, during the Wilderness Between. One meeting shows fit better than any amount of guessing, and Clearness Monday, a week away, needs triads that trust each other.

THE CARD • HANDED OUT AT THE OPENER, COLLECTED BEFORE THE BREAK

My name: _____ My triad: _____
☐ Keep it. We are good. ☐ Adjust it. Something needs to change (meeting time, place, how we run it). ☐ Let's talk. Please call me this week.
Anything you want us to know (only facilitators read this): _____

- 1. Read the cards at the break.** Facilitators only. The cards are shredded after Clearness Monday.
- 2. "Keep"** from all three men: nothing to do. Tell the triad at the end of the session, "You're set."
- 3. "Adjust":** one facilitator talks to the triad together, after the session, about the practical change. No names are attached to the card.
- 4. "Let's talk":** the shepherd calls that man within 48 hours. Listen first. Most calls end with "I'll give it till Clearness Monday." Some end with a swap.
- 5. Swaps** happen only between willing men, are settled by phone that week, and are announced as configuration, never as a reason: "We've reshuffled two triads. Here are your groups."
- 6. Protect Clearness Monday.** Every man must be in a triad of three or four that morning. If a swap cannot be settled, the man joins another triad as its fourth for the day.

WATCH-POINT

The man who checks “Keep” to be polite. You will hear it at the monthly call later (“we’re fine”, said flat). The Session 11 card is the first safe door, not the last one.

6 · The monthly shepherd call

Two minutes a month, by phone, to each initiator. Ask three questions and listen.

1. **Did you meet?** Date and place.
2. **Who was missing?**
3. **Is anything stuck?** Then stop talking.

Log only the answers to the first two on the Triad Roster: met or not, who was absent. Never log content.

Warning signs, and what to do

You hear	What it usually means	What you do
A missed month	Logistics, or the first sign of drift.	Ask for the next date before you hang up.
Two missed months, or the same man absent twice	A man is going quiet.	Ask whether the triad’s caller has called him. If not, you call him, as a friend, not as the program.
The initiator does everything	The triad depends on one man.	Suggest rotating the initiator (card T1).
“It’s great, we just talk about sports”	The pleasant plateau.	Point them to the month’s question and the soul question. “Something has to climb.”
One man dominates, or one man fixes	The one rule has slipped.	Suggest they read the one rule aloud at the start, and name a timekeeper.
Faith never comes up	Normal before Month 7; a gap after.	Remind them of the soul question. Do not push.
Real conflict	Two men who have hurt each other.	Do not adjudicate. Offer the S4 repair tools; suggest they talk one to one before the next meeting. If it does not mend, see section 7.

7 · When life happens, and when a triad comes apart

Situation	Facilitator response
Snowbird	He stays a member. Confirm the triad has a phone or video plan before he leaves. At Session 10, avoid triads with more than one snowbird.

Adding a man (a mentee, a church friend, a Cohort 2 man) is the triad's decision, by unanimous invitation, and never past four. Your only job is to make sure he has read the charter and the participant reading.

8 • Commissioning: the recommitment

The first yes was a starting commitment for the season. The second yes, said out loud, blessed, and freely chosen, is what lets men go the distance. Allow six to eight minutes.

1. **Each triad stands together.** The initiator reads the triad's purpose sentence ("Our triad exists not just for ourselves, but for...").
2. **Each man says one of two sentences.** "I'm in for twelve months." Or: "I'm stepping out, with thanks." Tell the men beforehand that the second is honorable. A man who says it is placed again or released with a blessing, never shamed.
3. **The initiator names the date** of the twelve-month charter review.
4. **The facilitator blesses the triad** with Ecclesiastes 4:12, or Numbers 6:24–26 over the whole room once every triad has stood.

WHAT YOU SAY

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Not because the strands are strong, but because they are wound together. You have wound yourselves together for twenty weeks. Go and keep winding.

9 • After the program

- **Quarterly shepherd call** for the first year after Commissioning, the same three questions.
- **First Fruits.** Each triad brings one story, ninety seconds, about something it did or something it became.
- **The Open List.** One facilitator keeps a private list of men open to joining or forming a group: men whose triad dissolved, men met through mentoring, Cohort 2 men who want an older partner. Introductions are made by a person, by phone.
- **Why not a bulletin board, yet.** Franco's research, taught at Session 10, is that men wait to be chosen. A board asks them to make the first move in public, which is the hardest move there is. A person making the introduction works better for men in their 60s to 80s. Revisit a board once there are several cohorts and alumni gatherings where men can meet face to face.

10 • Your own formative community

Facilitators who have been in a formative group lead the triads differently: they know what Month 3 feels like, they have felt the fixing reflex fire, and they have a true story to tell at Session 10. **Form your own triad now**, the three facilitators or three men from outside the program. Meet monthly,

from card T1, with Engage → Reflect → Storytell and the soul question. Stay a few months ahead of the cohort, the way the program lead is doing the Charter himself.

Walk with the wise and become wise.

— Proverbs 13:20

Sources

- Bill Burnett & Dave Evans, *How to Live a Meaningful Life* (2026), ch. 7.
- Priya Parker, *The Art of Gathering* (2018): generous authority.
- Marisa Franco, *Platonic* (2022): waiting to be chosen.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (1939). Full research sources are in the participant reading.

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Triad Roster

Facilitators only. Log whether a triad met and who was absent. Never log what was said.

Triad	Men (initiator first)	Day / place	Shepherd	S11 card	Notes (met / absent only)

Monthly log

Month	Triad 1	Triad 2	Triad 3	Triad 4
M1				
M2				
M3				
M4				
M5				
M6				
M7				
M8				
M9				
M10				
M11				
M12				