

SERVING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS



"CHRIST HAS NO BODY NOW BUT YOURS. NO HANDS, NO FEET ON EARTH BUT YOURS. YOURS ARE THE EYES THROUGH WHICH HE LOOKS COMPASSION ON THIS WORLD. YOURS ARE THE FEET WHICH HE WALKS TO DO GOOD. YOURS ARE THE HANDS, YOURS ARE THE FEET, YOURS ARE THE EYES, YOU ARE HIS BODY. CHRIST HAS NO BODY NOW ON EARTH BUT YOURS."

- St. Teresa of Avila

If Christ has no body now but ours, we as his Church must go out and be his body to the world. But **what would Jesus do if he were us?** Where would he go? What needs would he address? How would he use our unique gifts and interests? What would he do?

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The following booklet provides a starting point for each Community to undertake a significant act of service in their neighborhoods. From the beginning, please keep in mind that these community-based service projects are always meant to be an extension of how we intentionally practice the way of Jesus in our cities. Our primary goal is to create additional space in our lives for a deep, abiding relationship with God and the people around us.

Remain centered around these values:

Love God

Learn the way of Jesus

Live with purpose

"TRUE SERVICE IS A LIFESTYLE. IT ACTS FROM THE INGRAINED PATTERNS OF LIVING. IT SPRINGS SPONTANEOUSLY TO MEET THE HUMAN NEED."

Richard Foster
Celebration of Discipline

A spiritual discipline of the Christian faith, service is when we actively extend our gifts and strengths to others and the causes of God in our world. It's where we are generous with that which God has given us.

THE PRACTICE OF SERVICE

Generosity goes far beyond money. It's important for us to think of new ways we can be generous by extending our talents to meet the needs of the people we cross paths with.

In practicing service, we experience the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves for the sake of others.

Actively pursuing the discipline of service can help train us to be less arrogant, possessive, and envious. In fact, to live a lifestyle of *consistent* service to others like Jesus would is one of the most difficult and challenging things to do. As Dallas Willard once said though: "it is also the pattern of life for which this bruised and aching world waits and without which it will never manage a decent existence."

Ask yourself:

Where can I extend my skills and talents for the good of my community and those who cannot afford it?

Prayer is the most important thing we can do. Almost the entire catalogue of God's major actions and movements in the world have been preceded by prayer and a willingness to align one's heart with the will of God for the world. As you imagine and dream about where your group can serve, invite the Holy Spirit to be the one leading and guiding your Community in an act of service this semester.

INVITE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ask God to provide you clarity on the following:

(1) What are some of the deeper needs in our neighborhood?

(2) Who is primarily being impacted by this need? *As you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to help you imagine their world and sympathize with their lived experiences.*

(3) What would happen if God's purpose for these people or this situation started to come true?

Anything God reveals to you through prayer, write down.

Take, at minimum, a week to pray with your group about the next step. Don't rush into anything. Give God the opportunity to speak to your group and give yourself the time to listen.

When you're ready, begin to compile a list of ideas.

We invite each Community to consider their specific gifts and interests, producing a list of 10-15 ideas to choose from. Each group should include at least one idea from each member of the Community. Value each other by taking time to speak and listen to one another.

GENERATING IDEAS TOGETHER

Here is a short, very generic list of ideas to get you thinking and dreaming about what your Community could do:

- Volunteer at a homeless shelter
- Get involved with a pregnancy resource center
- Clean your community by picking up trash
- Throw a backyard BBQ for your neighborhood or block
- Volunteer your time at a nursing home
- Donate blood
- Provide practical help to someone completing a project
- Host an Alpha
- Run a large garage sale and donate all the proceeds
- Start a neighborhood garden
- Run an art show for your neighborhood
- Serve a hospital by creating chemo kits
- Begin and run a neighborhood library
- Put together first aid kits for local shelters
- Volunteer at a food pantry
- Etc.

Continue to pray about the needs of your neighborhood or community. Once you've narrowed down or combined your ideas into a single project, work towards executing the plan.

Some things to keep in mind:

(1) Start simple: Set goals that are realistic, yet also allow the members of your Community to extend their individual talents and skills for the good of your neighborhood and those who can't afford it.

(2) Be specific: Set goals that are specific, yet flexible. Avoid being vague by being as specific as you can around the details of what your group hopes to accomplish.

(3) Be inclusive: Set goals that involve each member of your Community. Have clear expectations of what each member of your group will do. Again, be specific and write things down. If your project doesn't include everyone contributing in unique or specific ways, consider another idea.

(4) Be committed: Commit to following through on this project *together*. Find ways to make it work and continue to pray about it daily until this act of service becomes a reality. Ask God to use this for the good of His kingdom and to provide opportunities for you to share the Gospel.

Once you complete this project, we challenge you to **not stop there**. Make serving your neighborhoods an integral part of your Community's weekly, monthly or yearly rhythm.

**"MORE THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE WAY, THE
GRACE OF HUMILITY IS WORKED INTO OUR
LIVES THROUGH THE DISCIPLINE OF SERVICE.**

Richard Foster
Celebration of Discipline

