



## Ideas to Serve Your Congregation

Many youth groups begin serving by setting aside a few hours each month for service. This may be a group meeting on Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, or a designated time after school. These are servant event ideas to get you started thinking about the needs of your congregation. Try them throughout the year with your youth group. Also, consider inviting other congregants and families to join in with your youth ministry.

### **Adopt A Shut-in**

Every church has shut-in or homebound members. Get a list of these people from your pastor and gather your group to design and make a collection of seasonal greeting cards for each person. Provide youth with construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, sequins, ribbons, and other items for decorating the cards. Include favorite Scripture verses. Each youth member may wish to adopt one of the home bound members and become a once-a-month pen pal with that person. sending reminders of Jesus' love throughout the year.

### **Sweetheart Dinner for Senior Citizens**

Plan a festive dinner for members of your church who have been married 40 or more years. Enlist members of your youth group to serve as waiters and waitresses. Provide simple decorations of candleholders and candles on white tablecloths. A simple menu of lettuce salad, spaghetti, and bread sticks can make up the first two courses. Contact a local bakery or ask someone in your church with cake decorating skills to create a special anniversary cake to serve as dessert. Entertainment might include appropriate music provided by someone in your group who plays piano or violin.

### **Quilt Squares**

Seek out someone in your church that sews and/or quilts for help with this project. Gather your group to create quilt squares using twelve 22" squares of fabric. The fabric may come by recycling old but good clothes or other items or from fabric samples or remnants. Assemble your squares into a 64" x 84" piece for a beautiful quilt. You can donate your quilt to a local nursing home.

### **Spring-Cleaning**

Contact the person(s) who coordinates the maintenance of your church and/or school facilities. Create a list of areas in the building(s) and/or grounds, that could use extra attention. Plan a service day to complete the items on the list. If your church already sponsors a spring workday provide refreshment stations or lunch for those workers who participate.

### **Care Packages for People in the Armed Forces**

Check with your pastor or church secretary to learn the names of any members of your church or circuit who are serving in the armed forces. Gather items such as granola bars, prepackaged dry snacks, lip balm and small devotion booklets for a care package. Include a note with encouraging words and Scripture verses. If your church does not currently have anyone serving, you can reach out to specific military unit through LCMS Armed Forces Ministry by contacting [LCMS Armed Forces Ministry](https://www.lcms.org/armedforces).

### **Play dough for Preschoolers**

Anyone who works with young children in your church can benefit from this servant activity. Gather the following supplies and your group in the church kitchen to make several batches of play dough to give to the people in your church who share Jesus' love with young children. A collection of Christian shaped cookie cutters such as crosses and hearts can be included with each batch of Dough.

#### **Traditional Play Dough**

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup warm water
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon oil
- ¼ cup salt
- food coloring

Mix all ingredients, adding food coloring last. Stir over medium heat until smooth. Remove from pan and knead until blended smooth. Place in plastic bag or airtight container when cooled. Dough will last for a long time.

### **Coffee Hour**

Select a Sunday to host a coffee hour for the members of your congregation. Schedule a baking event in the church kitchen on the Saturday before the event. A favorite muffin recipe from someone in your church would be an easy item for your group to prepare. Invite each member to bring one of the needed ingredients for baking or a can of orange juice to serve at the coffee hour.

### **Library Loaned with Love**

Develop a plan to collect good books and videos for a mission church in your district that does not have funds to support a church library. Suggest that contributors bring books and videos with a Christian perspective. The recipient church can loan these materials to their members freely. You can also consider doing a "Free Little Library" on a post outside your church.

### **Adopt-A-Missionary**

Your group can help with the mission work of someone serving in the mission field within North America or around the world. LCMS International Mission can connect you with a missionary your church can sponsor and who can use your support through correspondence, encouragement, prayer and financial contributions. For more information visit their web site, <http://lcms.org/missionarysupport>.

### **Student Care Packages**

Develop a list of college students from your church. Ask your church secretary for their college addresses. Collect items for care packages to be sent to the students which include small packages of snacks, microwave popcorn, gum, and other "treats." Include a recent copy of your local newspaper, church bulletin, and/or newsletter. Write short notes to the students. Carefully package the items and address the boxes. Invite members of the congregation to mail one of the boxes at the post office.

### **Thank you messages and treats for church/school staff**

Use candy and snack treats to create thank you messages for those who serve in your church and/or school. Example: "Our CUP runneth over with all you do." (Include a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup). "We are EXTRA glad you are serving our church/school." (Include stick of Wrigley's Extra sugar free gum).

### **Gift-Wrap Station**

Organize a gift-wrap station and provide free gift-wrapping for Christmas gifts before or after Sunday worship services. Schedule one or two dates for this event. Share your idea with local stores who may donate wrapping paper for your service project. Provide supplies and practice wrapping techniques beforehand. People can bring their gifts to the gift-wrap station, at which a sign is posted saying, "Free gift-wrapping: our free gift to you as a reminder of the greatest free gift we have in Christ Jesus!"