



**God's work.**  
**Our hands.**



**Lutheran  
Social Service**  
of Minnesota

## *God's work. Our hands.* **2018 Worship Guide**

On “God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday, September 9, 2018, we celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. This resource is a guide for reflection, discussion, and engagement for groups and individuals participating in this annual day of service.

As Lutherans, we rejoice in the reality of God’s abundant grace in Jesus Christ, who enables us to turn away from ourselves and toward one another in loving, liberated service. But this is more than a once-a-year opportunity or even a lifelong habit—it is the fruit of our baptism into the life of Christ.

In Christ, we are set free from death, sin, and shame and a new reality of open-hearted engagement emerges in their place. We serve one another in friendship and mutuality, recognizing that in loving, liberated service we both give and receive; in reaching out to our neighbors, we are both host and guest.

As you prepare to participate in the day of service, you are invited to study, reflect, and pray.

Below are some suggestions.

- **A Quick Dip** suggests a few prompts for discussion and exploration. You can do one while you travel to a work location or at the beginning of your activity.
- **Wading In** suggests some possibilities for 15-30 minutes of conversation before or after the service activity on the same day.
- If **Wading In** is used before the activity, use **Closing Reflections** to conclude. If a **Quick Dip** is used before the activity, use either **Wading In** or **Closing Reflections** to conclude.



### **A Quick Dip (5-10 minutes)**

Designed to be used in a group setting immediately before the service activity begins.

### **Conversation Starters**

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." -Galatians 5:13-14 (NIV)*

- What does it mean to use our freedom to serve one another humbly in love? How is our activity today an example of this?
- Can you think of a time when someone used their freedom to serve you humbly in love? What did it mean to you? What can you take forward from that example to today's activity?
- What does it mean to love our neighbors as ourselves? How might it change the way you approach our time of service today?
- Offer a chance for questions or comments.

### **Sending Prayer**

To be used before sending participants to serve humbly in love. This can be modified according to each service project, location, or congregation.

Gracious God, you have called us to be free. Direct us to use that freedom to serve one another humbly in love. Teach us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Open our hearts to all those whom we encounter, that we might see the face of Christ in our neighbors. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



### **Wading In (15-30 minutes)**

Below are Bible verses and discussion questions specific to each service activity. This is designed to be used as a time of reflection in a group setting immediately before or after completing the activity.

### **Youth Services**

*Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. – 1 Tim 4:12*

- How do we create spaces where youthful energy and experience is welcome?
- Are there times we turn away from the energy, passion, and development of youth experience? Why do we do this?
- How can we advocate for encouraging and channeling the gifts of young people into community?

### **A Prayer for Youth**

Generous God, thank you for the energy and passion of youth. We pray that some of that might rub off on those of us who are older. Help us create spaces where youth can grow and develop in safety and joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.



## **Foster Care**

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. -James 1:27*

- What does it mean to care for people, particularly children, in their distress? How is this applicable to the work that those serving in the foster system do?
- How does our faith call us to service for others? In what sense is this “religion that is pure and undefiled”?
- “Orphans and widows” is a phrase that is used frequently throughout the Bible, because these groups were among the most vulnerable in ancient Israelite/Jewish society. Who might qualify as most vulnerable in our society? Why is it so important to care for those who are vulnerable?
- The goal of foster care is to return children to their home or communities. In what ways is this important care for children in distress?

## **A Prayer for Families in the Foster System**

God, you are the loving parent of all people. Comfort those in distress. Heal families that are separated with your reconciling grace. Give us strength to live our faith purely by caring for the most vulnerable among us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



## **Youth Experiencing or At Risk of Homelessness**

*Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*

*-Matthew 8:20*

- In what ways does the experience of youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness parallel the experience of Jesus?
- How can we show hospitality to those who may not have a place to lay their heads? How are we shown hospitality in return?
- What does it say about our society that there are youth who experiencing or at risk for homelessness? Besides today's service activity, what can we do to reduce the incidence of this problem?

### **A Prayer for Youth Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness**

God of the displaced, you know what it is to have nowhere to lay your head. You know what it is to rely on the kindness of strangers—and to return that kindness with blessing. Help us see you in each person we encounter. Make us vulnerable, so that we not only act as hosts, but recognize that we are guests in the spaces of those we meet. Grant us the courage to be changed. In Jesus' name, Amen.



## **Services for People with Disabilities**

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ... Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable ... that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. -1 Cor 12:12-17*

- What does Paul's comparison of the community of faith to a body say about the importance of our bodies?
- We have different abilities from one another, physically and otherwise. What does it mean to "have the same care for one another" in the midst of these differences?
- How can we ensure that those who "seem to be weaker" are indispensable in our communities?
- How does our society tell persons with disabilities that they don't "belong to the body"? What can we do to change that?

## **A Prayer for People of All Abilities**

God of love, you have made us to be in relationship with one another. Open our hearts to regard one another as integral parts of ourselves. Teach us that we are a living organism—that we cannot be who we were created to be without all of us together. In Jesus' name, Amen.



## **Older Adult Services**

*Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent.*

*-Psalm 71:9*

- Are there times our society seems to “cast off” older adults? If so, why might that be?
- What can we do to ensure that older adults don’t just “receive services” but are included in all aspects of community life?
- What gifts do relationships with older adults bring to those of younger generations? How can we cultivate intergenerational relationships in our communities?

## **A Prayer for Older Adults**

God of grace, you have given us community to come alongside one another at all stages of life. Thank you for this precious gift. Open our ears to the wisdom of those who have lived full lives. Grant us life-giving relationships across generations. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



## Closing Reflections

Below are questions to be used after concluding the day of service. Questions may be asked and answered in discussion format or used as a time of self-reflection. This section may be used in place of **Wading In** after the project is complete.

## Conversation Starters

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." -Galatians 5:13-14 (NIV)*

- Reflect on the verse above. How does this apply to the work you have completed?
- What thoughts or feelings do you have after today's service activity?
- Think of other needs that may be present in our community. What are some ways these needs can be addressed? How can we continue to serve those in need?
- Give participants the chance to ask questions or offer closing remarks.

## Closing Prayer

God of abundance, thank you for the opportunity to spend today in service. Help us to be aware of the needs around us. Draw us more deeply into our vocations as liberated servants. Turn our hearts to our neighbor in your freedom, mercy, and love. In Jesus' name, Amen.