



# Family Promise Handbook for St. Catharine Church

October 2016

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## What is Family Promise of Bergen County?

Website – [www.bergenfamilypromise.org](http://www.bergenfamilypromise.org)

Since 1986, The Interreligious Fellowship for the Homeless of Bergen County, now **Family Promise of Bergen County**, has played a pivotal role in serving thousands of Bergen County's most vulnerable citizens - homeless, hungry, and needy families and individuals.

### Mission Statement

- provide hospitality to the homeless  
and
- keep families together in times of crisis, shepherding them through temporary periods of homelessness by helping them create an achievable vision and develop a strong foundation for self-sufficiency.

### Family Promise of Bergen County is a dynamic Network made up of:

- Compassionate Family Case Managers helping families address issues that contributed to their homelessness
- Volunteers providing overnight shelter, meals, companionship and hope to homeless families and their children
- Community members assisting families find affordable housing, jobs that pay a living wage, reliable transportation, dependable daycare and other necessities

### Family Promise Host Congregations

Family Promise of Bergen County is comprised of 24 Host Congregations who offer clean, safe overnight lodging to homeless families three non-consecutive weeks per year on a rotating basis. Each evening, 3 to 4 families (no more than 14 people) are transported to the Host Congregation where volunteers are waiting with a nutritious dinner. After clean-up, additional volunteers help with homework, play with children, interact with families and act as overnight hosts.

During the day, families return to a centrally located Day Center from which employed adults leave for work and children go to school or daycare. Families meet with their Case Manager on a regular basis to formulate and carry out a program to move them to a place of self-sufficiency. Telephones, computers and a private room are available to aid with job and housing searches. Showers and laundry facilities are also available at the Day Center.

## **Family Promise of Bergen County – Host Congregations**

Archer United Methodist, Allendale  
Calvary Lutheran, Allendale  
Guardian Angel Roman Catholic, Allendale  
Christ Episcopal Church, Hackensack  
St. Anastasia's Catholic Church, Teaneck  
First Presbyterian Church, Englewood  
First Presbyterian Church, Ramsey  
Our Lady Mother of the Church, Woodcliff Lake  
Our Lady of Mercy, Park Ridge  
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Church, Ridgewood  
Ridgewood United Methodist Church  
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Harrington Park  
St. Catharine Roman Catholic Church, Glen Rock  
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Demarest  
St. Mary's Closter at New Jersey Harvest Church, Closter  
St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, River Edge  
Temple Beth El, Closter  
Temple Beth Or, Washington Township  
Temple Emeth, Teaneck  
Temple Sinai, Tenafly  
United Methodist Church, Demarest  
United Presbyterian Church, Lyndhurst  
West Side Presbyterian Church, Ridgewood

## **Additional Family Promise Programs**

### **New Leaf Transitional Housing Program**

Family Promise of Bergen County manages and monitors seven apartments in its transitional housing program known as New Leaf. Client families who have consistently followed the guidelines while participating in the Family Promise Program are given the opportunity to live in Family Promise subsidized apartment. Participants typically remain in the program twelve to eighteen months as they make the transition from homelessness to independent living. Families work with a Family Case Manager in areas of financial planning, job training, educational options, employment, childcare, and a mandatory savings plan. Counseling and other support services are available, encouraging individuals to take the measures necessary to reach the goal of permanent housing.

### **Break the Cycle Scholarship Fund**

Financial assistance is provided to individuals who are pursuing advanced education or vocational training and exhibit a personal commitment to breaking the cycle of poverty. Adults and high school seniors who are currently in the Family Promise or the New Leaf Transitional Housing Programs are eligible, as are former residents of the programs. The scholarship can be applied toward tuition, books and supplies, computer training, licensing courses or other type of skills training that will enhance or increase career opportunities.

### **Walk-In Dinner Program**

Begun as a pilot effort in 1991, this program schedules a congregation or organization every day of the year to provide, prepare and serve dinner to approximately 150 people at the Bergen County Housing, Health and Human Service Center in Hackensack. Approximately 80 of those utilizing the program are current residents of shelter portion of the center. The others come from neighboring communities. Although many of the guests have a place to live, their limited incomes don't stretch to cover dinner every night. Some are "street people" who may decide after a few good meals in a friendly atmosphere to trust the "system" enough to look into additional services provided at the same location. Special meals are served on many holidays.

### **Camp Lots of Fun**

Camp Lots of Fun provides a fun-filled, educational 2-week, end of summer day camp experience for 30 children currently or formerly in any of the organization's sheltering programs. If space permits, children from other agencies' sheltering programs are accommodated. Members of the Youth Council and other high school students are eligible to apply for positions as Volunteer Counselors. The Camp Lots of Fun Volunteer Application is attached at the bottom of this page.

## **Weekend Program**

This volunteer program allows the participants in the Family Promise Program to stay at the Day Center on Saturday, Sunday and holiday mornings. Families have a leisurely morning catching up on laundry, paperwork and reading. Parents may attend volunteer-run training sessions as well as catch up on laundry, paperwork and reading. Volunteers engage children in arts and crafts, reading and recreational activities.

## **Financial Mentoring Program**

This program matches families with a trusted and nurturing mentor. They work together to develop money-management skills while prioritizing and achieving financial goals. Mentors commit to working with a family by having weekly contact for a minimum of six months. Mentors assist families in setting up a budget, managing their debt and identifying financial issues that could impede their progress in obtaining a job or affordable housing.

## **Infant and Child Daycare**

This program provides financial support for much-needed daycare. It enables parents to maintain full-time employment, adding stability and dignity to their lives. Families participating in our shelter programs that have young children are eligible.

## **After School Program**

The After School Program offers a safe, secure environment to children in the Family Promise Program or transitional housing from the time school lets out until the van leaves for the Host Congregation. Volunteer teachers and students provide homework help and enrichment opportunities weekdays from 3:30 until 5:30 PM. The attention and consistency they provide helps build the homeless child's confidence and self esteem while providing him with the tools and materials needed to succeed in school. Note: Many of our children attend after school programs. This program operates on an "as needed" basis.

## **Advocacy**

Advocacy bolsters every direct service that Family Promise provides. In addition to giving shelter and food, Family Promise relies on its members to encourage their government representatives to "alleviate the plight of needy people" by creating and amending laws that will improve the conditions under which they live. The Legislative Network will send "action alerts" about pending legislation affecting the homeless to its membership, promoting the idea that every volunteer is a potential connection to his/her legislator.

## Typical Schedule for Family Promise Guests

### Sunday – Guests arrive about 5:15 p.m.

- Welcome and settle into their rooms and get acquainted with staff and surroundings
- Dinner about 6:00 p.m.
- Before or after dinner, a meeting is held to let guests know what to expect for the week at St. Catharine.

The van driver will have delivered their belongings and the air mattresses prior to the guests' arrival. Volunteers will place the bins with personal belongings into the assigned room(s), inflate the air mattresses and make up the beds prior to the arrival of the guests.

### Monday – Friday

Wake-up about 5:30 a.m. If guests aren't up by around 5:45 a.m., one of the overnight volunteers should knock on the door to let them know the time.

Breakfast – 5:30 a.m. – 6:00 a.m.

Van arrives at 6:00 a.m. Guests are not allowed to eat or drink on the bus so they must have eaten breakfast or take something in a bag. The overnight volunteers may wish to offer assistance in packing up a breakfast, but it's up to the guest as to whether they wish to have or take breakfast. Guests will spend their day either going to work, school, or spending time at the Day Center in Ridgewood looking for a job, doing laundry, applying for services or other activities. Since none of the congregations, except St. Catharine can offer showers, they generally take their showers at the day center using the two bathrooms there. (yes, up to 14 people sharing two bathrooms!)

Guests arrive back at St. Catharine about 6:15 p.m. Dinner is generally served between 6:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.

Between dinner and bed time, we try to provide some options for fun – whether it be time in the gym, doing arts and crafts, or playing games or homework. We try to allow the moms (and dads!) some time to relax by offering to watch and entertain the children. Most parents have had a very hectic day and welcome the respite. However, we must defer to the wishes of the parents and must ask permission to take and watch the children.

Younger children (10 and under) must be in bed by 9:00 p.m. and all guests must be in their room by 10:00 p.m.

### Saturday and Sunday

Wake up at about 7:00 a.m.

Breakfast – 7:00 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.

Van arrives at 7:30 a.m. for pickup

Guests arrive back at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday and as stated above at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday (both arrival day and the Sunday in between)

Dinner at about 6:30 p.m.

Bed times and activities are the same for during the week as noted above.

Sunday morning guests will pack their belongings into their bins, strip the air mattresses of linens, deflate their air mattresses and roll them up. The van driver will come about 2:00pm to pick up belongings and mattresses.

## St. Catharine Mission with Family Promise

### St. Catharine Mission Statement

We, the parish community of St. Catharine, nourished and sustained by the Eucharist, are dedicated to spreading the Good News by word and example.

As a parish community, St Catharine has a long standing history of our commitment to “spreading the Good News by word and example”, especially to those disadvantaged and needing assistance and hope.

Those finding themselves homeless, for whatever the reason, are vulnerable in so many ways. For many years, under the leadership of Jack Wagner\*, St. Catharine provided overnight overflow shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness. Fortunately, new shelters have been built and there is no longer a need to provide overflow shelter for individuals. Currently, St. Catharine continues an active ministry to support programs to feed the homeless and hungry through donations to the food bank, and providing meals to Paterson and Hackensack (the Hackensack program is a program of Family Promise – see the section about the various programs of Family Promise).

Now, more and more families are finding themselves homeless – right here in Bergen County. There are no shelters available in our area for these families, except for this program under Family Promise. In the spring of 2011, St. Catharine hosted families experiencing homelessness for the first time. Over 200 people from the parish assisted by cleaning, shopping, making beds, setting up warm and inviting rooms and common areas, chaperoning, reading, providing home cooked meals and engaging with guests on a one to one level.

While the primary mission is to provide clean, safe overnight housing and meals, our goal at St. Catharine is to provide even more. Whenever possible, the goal is to provide support to parents and children and making them feel welcome and part of our parish family – even if only for the week or two they are with us. By providing small extras such as toiletries, books, games, activities, TV, and getting to know the guests and their needs, we hope to make their stay as good and enjoyable as possible.

And yes, it’s true... for those who have participated in this ministry, we tend to learn more, and get more from it than those we serve. Thank you and God Bless to all who help make life a little better for these families going through such a difficult time.

\* The room used as a “Family Room” for the families was named for Jack in late September 2012. Jack died in early November 2012 knowing that the homeless were still being ministered to by the faithful of St. Catharine parish.

## Volunteer Opportunities and Descriptions

There are many tasks to be done to prepare and host the guests. Whether you prefer to play a “behind-the-scenes” role or a more active role directly with the guests, there are many opportunities to become involved. The goal is to provide a nurturing and enjoyable experience during the families’ stay at St. Catharine. For that to happen, many hands are need.

A brief description of each volunteer opportunity is outlined below.

<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Host/Hostess</b> 2-3 each night	These people are present to greet guests and volunteers. A host/hostess will be here every night of the week, providing consistency for the guests, as well as resource for the volunteers. Currently, Pam Biggs, Aileen Gianelli, Ann Marie McCann or Fran Robertson will fill the host/hostess role each evening. One or more of the four is present 5:30 – 9:00 p.m. each evening.
<b>Dinner/Kitchen</b> Need one person or group for each of the 7 nights	Provide dinner for up 18-20 people. It could also be fewer people depending on how many guests we have from Family Promise. The maximum number of guests from Family Promise is 14. The additional people include a host/hostess, the dinner coordinator and 1 or 2 other volunteers that may be on hand. Simple dishes are the most popular. We will learn of any food allergies or major dislikes prior to the start of the week. Dinner needs to be fully cooked and ready to serve by 6:30 p.m. each evening (6:00 pm on Sunday night). There are two wall ovens, 10 burners and a microwave available in the Ministry Center kitchen.
<b>Evening Volunteers</b> Need 2-5 people each evening depending on the number of guests	Evening volunteers will come to help with a variety of activities – playing games, going outside to watch the children play basketball or soccer, reading stories, just talking to guests and possibly helping with some cleanup. Evening volunteers should plan on arriving by 7:00 p.m. and plan to stay until approximately 9:15 p.m. This is truly a ministry of presence – sometimes you just sit and watch TV. What’s most important is that you are there if someone wants to talk, or do a puzzle or play a game.
<b>Overnight Volunteers</b> Need 2 people each evening	Overnight Volunteers should to arrive no later than 8:00 p.m. giving them a chance to meet the guests before they go to bed. These volunteers sleep over (yes, you can sleep) and get up early the next morning to set up breakfast, put out lunches and make sure the guests are up to catch the bus on time. The morning is early / hectic for the guests, so anything these volunteers can do to help the children get breakfast and/pack lunches and get on the bus is encouraged. These volunteers would also clean up breakfast items. Generally volunteers are done by 6:30am on weekday mornings and by 8:00 am on weekend mornings.
<b>Activity Volunteers</b> Someone (or a couple people) to run an activity on 3 of the evenings.	For a few of the evenings, someone is needed to coordinate an activity. This could be as simple as coordinating a craft night, or a game night or a Karaoke night... We may need to be flexible on this as the ages and/or interests of our guests are made known to us! All activities should be planned to occur on the premises of St. Catharine.



<b>Shopping</b> 1 or 2 people for advance shopping and for “on-call” shopping	These people would shop for various items that are not donated. This would most likely be needed to be done the day or two before the arrival of the guests. The “on-call” people would pick up any item(s) we find we need during the course of the week
<b>Daily Cleaning</b> 1 person to come each day	This person or people will come in and “spruce up” each day which may include running the vacuum in the hallways, freshening the bathroom sinks, emptying wastebaskets and straightening the common areas. Guest rooms are cleaned by the guests themselves while they are here.
<b>Cleaning &amp; Set-up</b> 3-5 people Saturday before guests arrive	This group will clean guest rooms and all common areas of the Ministry Center in preparation for the arrival of the guests. While the center is pretty clean, so we would like to take extra care to have it ready for our guests who will call this “home” for the time they are with us. This will occur on the day before our guests arrive (Saturday). Things will be staged for setting up on Sunday when the beds arrive. This should take about 2 hours on Saturday and about an hour on Sunday.
<b>Bed Set-up</b> 4-6 people Sunday the guests arrive	These people will inflate air mattresses, make the beds, check that each guest room is ready, as well as the common areas. This will take place on the Sunday afternoon they arrive and takes an hour or so.
<b>Laundry</b> 6 – 10 people	Wash and dry the sheets and towels. If our guests are staying only one week, this will be done at the end of the week stay. If our guests are staying with us for two weeks, it is done at the end of the first week and again at the end of their stay.
<b>Clean-up</b> 4 – 6 people Sunday the guests leave	Once the guests leave on Sunday morning, there is still much to be done to arrange to get the guests air mattresses and bins picked up by Family Promise and to clean up the ministry Center so it can be used for meetings and other events the following week.

If there is anything else not listed above that you can think of and would like to do, please feel free to contact Pam Biggs at [psbiggs@optonline.net](mailto:psbiggs@optonline.net) or 201-670-8760 to discuss further. All ideas welcome!

## Opportunity to Donate

If you wish to support this ministry with donations of specific items, please see below for the list of items needed. **Before purchasing or donating items, please contact Pam Biggs at 201-670-8760 or [psbiggs@optonline.net](mailto:psbiggs@optonline.net) to see what is still needed.**

Monetary donations are always welcome as well. Checks can be made out to St. Catharine Church and left at the rectory. Please indicate that the contribution is intended to support the Family Promise Ministry. Monetary donations will be used to purchase items not received through donations or to provide some additional amenities for the Family Promise guests.

You can always donate directly to Family Promise as well to support their various programs. Money should **never** be given directly to the guests. There are many factors we don't see or understand and each family works closely with a case worker to ensure they are not going without something they need.

### Supplies needed for Guests

Supplies needed change each time depending on what we have on hand from the previous times.

#### Bedroom Supplies

Bath Towels  
Hand Towels  
Wash Cloths  
Blankets  
Pillows  
Twin Sheet Sets (fitted, flat, pillow case)  
Crib Sheets  
Small Desk/Reading Lamps  
Hangers

#### Personal Toiletry items

Toothpaste  
Mouthwash  
Deodorant  
Body Lotion  
Razors  
Net Shower Scrubbers  
Feminine products  
Toothbrushes  
Floss  
Shampoo/Conditioner  
Emery Boards  
Nail Clippers  
Liquid Hand Soap  
Small First aid kits

#### Family Room/Activity Supplies

Books – Adult and Children  
Magazines  
DVDs (rated G, PG or PG13 only)  
Arts & Crafts Supplies  
Frisbees  
Basketballs  
Soccer balls  
Playground balls  
School Supplies – pens, pencils, notebooks, backpacks

## Basic Food Items

Coffee  
Tea Bags  
Filters  
Sugar  
Equal or Splenda  
Yogurts/gogurts  
Peanut Butter  
Jelly  
Ketchup  
Mustard  
Mayonnaise  
Syrup  
String Cheese

Bread  
Butter  
Cream Cheese  
Milk  
Half & half  
Juice Boxes (Capri Sun are popular)  
Milk Boxes  
Bottled Water  
Salt & Pepper  
Snacks – small bags of chips, cookies, etc  
Frozen Waffles  
Bacon  
Bread, rolls  
Cold Cuts

## Cleaning Supplies

Sponges  
Dishwashing liquid  
Clorox wipes or spray  
Comet  
Toilet Bowl Cleaner

Dust Rags  
Mop  
Laundry Detergent  
Buckets  
Rubber Gloves

The second floor meeting room is set up as a “family room” for the week. A TV with cable and a DVD is available for the guests. There are children’s books, adult books, magazines, children’s games and arts and crafts supplies available.

## Information for Volunteers

Being a volunteer who interacts with guests is a special and crucial role. However, it's not always easy to know the right thing to say. We can mean well, but sometimes find ourselves not doing or saying the right thing. After all, we aren't used to being in this situation. By taking the time to think about the role of being a volunteer and educating ourselves, we can be a little better prepared to be the kind of volunteer we all wish to be.

**The following was provided by Family Promise. It is a good start to understanding our role as volunteers and how we can best help.**

### *The Ministry of Presence*

*The Ministry of Presence is the compassionate act of simply being “present” to someone in need. By taking the time to sit with someone, pay attention, not judge, listen, not judge, listen, not talk, and be open, you are giving the incredible gift of treating that person as an equal, and thereby restoring value and worth in that person.*

*Homelessness is a very difficult social concern with no easy answers or solutions. Although our natural tendency is to fix problems, one may never be able to solve the problems of homelessness or poverty. Instead, through the act of “presence”, you are able to give aid and support to (not fix) someone who may be experiencing a very dark time of their life.*

Another good way to think about your role, is to think about The Ministry Center as our guests **“HOME”** for the length of their stay. Each time we enter the Ministry Center, we are entering their home and therefore should act accordingly. After all, these are not homeless people, they are people experiencing a period of homelessness in their life.

### **Family Promise Videos**

Additionally there are two very good videos on the Family Promise website that should be viewed by all prospective and current volunteers.

About Family Promise - <http://www.bergenfamilypromise.org/bfp/ihnvideo>

How to talk to Guests - <http://www.bergenfamilypromise.org/bfp/videoHowCanIHelp>

## **Tips for being a Good Volunteer**

One on one interaction often works best. Don't overwhelm guests by outnumbering them - one or two volunteers talking with a guest at a time is probably good.

Learn their names. Tell them your name.

Be interested in the individual while respecting privacy. Sometimes just having a good listener can be the best experience for you and the guest.

Be careful of discussing things that the guests can't relate to – your busy day at work, the car you have that needs fixing, renovating your bathroom, parish issues... or volunteers talking amongst themselves.

Keep the number of children from St. Catharine's (10 and under) to a few at a time. Too many children at once seem to overwhelm the guests. But the presence of children from St. Catharine is often a treat for the Family Promise children and a great learning experience for St. Catharine children. Older children from Family Promise may have difficulty interacting at first – this can be embarrassing for them.

Guests may be aloof at first or even during the course of the week – remember they are staying in different places every week and seeing new and different faces every day. This isn't an easy time for them and they may not feel up to conversation or pleasantries. They often find themselves answering the same questions over and over since there are different volunteers each evening.

Provide Consistency – while we all want to make the week pleasant, it's important to follow the rules and provide consistency day to day and from congregation to congregation.

Try to remember what being an ideal volunteer is and who is our focus. Be the very best volunteer you can be – which means not wanting anything in return – perhaps not even gratitude. It's always hard not to have expectations, but this really isn't about us – it's about trying to help people who need a little help right now. There is much we can't understand about this situation, so we take our cues from the guests and what works for them.

## **Lessons Learned/Things that work well**

- Getting to know the guests and their interests
  - Books, food likes/dislikes
- Being flexible – some planned activities were not embraced by the guests, while other unplanned activities worked very well.
  - Cake decorating, sports, outdoor time
- Offering help but still respecting their independence
  - Offering to help parents with kids, especially with helping to get breakfast items ready in the morning
  - Backing off when a guest indicates they prefer not to have help

## Policies

No guests must ever be transported by volunteers, even for medical. A complete policy on handling medical emergencies is in place and should be followed. **If a true emergency occurs at any time, 911 should be called immediately.** If an urgent situation occurs, one of the host/hostesses should be involved immediately. For overnight, this means calling Pam Biggs or Ann Marie McCann. (numbers posted in notebook and in volunteer rooms)

No money or gifts should be given directly to a guest. If you see a need you believe warrants attention, bring it to the attention in a discreet way to one of the hostesses.

Avoid being alone with a child. When taking children outside to the gym or outside the Ministry Center, or even to the play room in the basement, a minimum of two adults must accompany the children.

Never challenge or contradict a parent about how they handle their children. If you are concerned about something you see, discuss as soon as possible with one of the hosts/hostesses. Obviously if a situation occurs where a child may get hurt, take action, but for all other situations, remember the parent has the last say.

Information you learn about a guest is to be considered confidential. We all deserve privacy.

## House Rules for Guests

- All Guests to be treated with respect
- No children in the kitchen for their own safety
- Only guests residing in a room are allowed to be in that room. No other guests or volunteers should be in a guest room.
- Men and boys over 10 will use bathroom on first floor. Women, girls and boys under 10 will use the community bathroom on the second floor.
- Do not go into areas marked "private". Stay in common areas (dining room on first floor or activity room on 2nd floor).
- No running inside
- Parents to watch children at all times, unless volunteers have offered, or have been asked to watch the children for a specific period of time.
- Kitchen closes at 9:00 p.m.- any snacks should be taken before 9m:00p and lunches made before the kitchen closes.
- No food or eating in the Family Room or individual rooms.
- No smoking after 10:00 p.m. Smoking is outside ONLY in designated area. All cigarette butts are to be put in designated bucket by front door. Front door is locked at 10:00 p.m.
- Lights out for children under 10 years old by 9:00 p.m.
- Lights out in common areas for all others absolutely no later than 10:30 p.m.
- No alcohol or drugs.