

## Service Ideas Suggestions

We are called to live out our faith in our families, parish and community. The opportunities for getting involved and making a difference in the lives of those around us are limitless. What follows is a brief list of ideas that may guide you in identifying the experience you wish to seek.

1. Arrange to visit a nursing home, senior center or senior housing complex to play games with the residents. Games like cards, checkers and chess provide an opportunity to get to know seniors and bring them some companionship.
2. Surprise someone with flowers – maybe a neighbor, an elderly person, a friend who is struggling, a teacher you appreciate or someone who just needs a reason to smile. You will let them know how special they are today, and you may help them remember a time when a loved one brought them flowers.
3. Make homemade treats for the homebound, a senior citizen or someone struggling with a loss. Deliver the treats and be sure to include a little note.
4. Interview long-time members of our parish and write a bulletin article about their story and connection to St. Joseph Church. Submit the article to your religious education teacher, and we will try to have it published.
5. Find out if there is anyone in our parish or in a local senior-living facility who needs someone to write for them. For some people, failing vision and finger dexterity make writing letters and notes difficult for them. You can help them keep in touch with their loved ones.
6. Do yardwork, gardening or snow shoveling for neighbors, especially those who are unable to work outdoors for any reason.
7. Make prayer cards or holiday cards for children, adults or seniors in hospitals or other care facilities or for front-line workers. When possible, deliver the cards in person.
8. Become a prayer partner to someone suffering from a long-term illness, a senior citizen, a student in our religious education program who is preparing to celebrate First Holy Communion or someone who lives alone.
9. Organize a prayer partner project for children preparing to celebrate First Reconciliation or First Holy Communion. This project would be coordinated with your religious education teacher, and you would make cards with the names of the children on them, assemble the cards in a basket and place the basket near the entrance of the church. Parishioners would then be invited to take a name and pray for the child throughout their preparation.
10. Contact local hospitals, care facilities, nursing homes or senior centers to find out what needs they may have and how you can help.
11. Organize a diaper coupon collection and distribute the coupons to parents in our church or donate them to FISH or another charitable organization.
12. Baby-sit or pet-sit for free. You could reach out to new parents who might welcome your help while the new mom or dad takes a much-needed nap.
13. Organize with a group of friends a collection for Catholic Charities Adoption Services or our local pregnancy center. Collect items such as diapers, clothing, blankets, baby formula, toys and books.
14. Make welcome cards for children and their families who are new to St. Joseph Church.

15. With friends and an adult, provide free childcare at parish events. This service may make it possible for parents of young children to attend an event.
16. Host after-school activities for children in your neighborhood. Help the children prepare puppet shows, design a circus, make crafts, read books, and play games or sports.
17. Volunteer at a local library. Libraries are always looking for people to read to children or shelve books.
18. Contact the AOD Office of Immigration and Refugee Services to inquire about specific needs and how you can be helpful to new immigrants.
19. Assist with a clothing drive. Especially with the changing seasons in Michigan, people are often in need of clothes and outerwear.
20. Help new classmates at school. Offer to guide new students to classes, through lunch and in extracurricular activities. Reach out to your school counselor to coordinate this activity.
21. Collect materials for disaster relief care packages. Care packages could include blankets, toiletries, clothing and writing materials. Distribute the packages to Catholic Relief Services ([www.catholicrelief.org](http://www.catholicrelief.org)) or the American Red Cross ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)). Contact these organizations for details.
22. Collect teddy bears for children displaced by fires, parental arrests and natural disasters. Distribute the teddy bears to fire and police departments or to the American Red Cross. Contact these organizations for details.
23. Reach out to local charitable organizations, such as FISH, to find out what items they need and organize a collection. It might be a collection for food items, gloves and mittens, socks, shoes or other things.
24. Collect donations for Oxfam International ([www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)). Oxfam is dedicated to fighting poverty and injustice around the world.
25. The Humane Society is an organization that relies on volunteers. Contact them ([www.nhes.org](http://www.nhes.org)) and find out how you can help.
26. Be a pen pal with a younger student. Contact a local elementary school for some ideas.
27. Make homemade desserts for shelters that offer free meals. There are community meals every Tuesday through St. Joseph Church/Love INC.
28. Make fleece quilts and pillows for the homeless shelter in your area.
29. Prepare the fixings for a complete holiday meal for a family in need. Bring your donations to church or to FISH. Holiday meals can be costly, and low-income families will appreciate your generosity in helping them share in a special holiday meal, too.
30. Make birthday boxes to help children celebrate their birthdays. Collect cake mixes, frosting and candles. Add a birthday card to each package. Donate the boxes to FISH.
31. Organize a children's book collection or start a "little free library." Donate the books to shelters, hospitals, or churches and schools in low-income areas.
32. Collect school supplies and inexpensive kids games and toys for shelters and hospitals. Ideas might include decks of cards, bubbles, jump ropes, coloring books and crayons. Distribute to shelters, such as FISH or Love INC, or local hospitals.
33. Participate in Earth Day, April 22. It's a national day set aside for cleaning up and caring for our creation. You can usually find locally-planned activities for that day just by "googling."

**\*\*\*Most families in need will want to remain anonymous. Be sure to respect their privacy.\*\*\***

Sometimes “people in need” are not so readily identified by us. “People in need” can also be hard-working people who would welcome support and a gesture of appreciation. Work is more than a way to make a living. Many people really dedicate their hearts to their work, and they serve in a way that helps others and shares the love of God in the world. We are all really “people in need” – people in need of love. Taking time to recognize and uplift one another is another form of service. Below are some suggestions for helping those who serve others.

1. Arrange to host a teacher appreciation breakfast or after-school cookies day for teachers at your school.
2. Order pizza for the school custodians to thank them for keeping your school clean. Have a group of friends donate one dollar each to pay for it. Little Caesar’s still makes pizzas for \$5.
3. Bring flowers to someone who works at your school, church or sports place and makes a difference to others.
4. Serve hot chocolate to school bus drivers on a cold winter morning.
5. Offer to help teachers, church staff and others with special projects.
6. Write letters to military personnel who are away from their families. There is a list of area service members in our parish bulletin.
7. Create thank-you cards for our pastor, priests and deacon or other people who make your life better in some way. Try to thank them for something specific. You might even consider sharing your favorite scripture verse on the cards.
8. Get involved with Habitat for Humanity ([www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)).
9. Organize a “Random Act of Kindness” day.
10. Help teachers and kids by volunteering to tutor or read to elementary students at a nearby school or day care center.
11. Help trash collectors and community members by picking up litter at area parks, schools, playgrounds and other public areas.
12. Leave a note for your mail carrier or other delivery person, thanking them for their service and wishing them a nice day.

**Have fun, work with friends and make a difference!**