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Putting Love in Action

By Denise Rice

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.... If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.” PETER 4:10–11 NIV

God calls us to serve others. We take care of others by sharing our resources and by being willing to work for the benefit of those in need.

God calls us to love others. We are to lead others step by step into a greater understanding of what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Finding new and different ways to serve and love others isn’t always easy. It is especially difficult during this time of COVID-19.

How can your students help others outside your congregation? How can they show love to those in need? Listed below are some organizations that are looking for support. Please note that listing an organization does not indicate an endorsement of it.

Operation Gratitude <https://www.operationgratitude.com/> serves troops, first responders, veterans, recruit graduates, wounded heroes and their caregivers, and military families. There are a multitude of opportunities with this organization. Knitting and crocheting, creating handmade greeting cards, sewing, making paracord bracelets, writing letters, and collecting Beanie Babies® are all opportunities to serve this group.

Ronald McDonald House <https://www.rmhc.org/> If one is near you, they always appreciate collections of toiletries. Another opportunity is to collect/purchase gift cards to provide dinner for residents. If you aren’t near a house, hosting a fundraiser and sending your funds to the organization is an appropriate response. Some cities still do the canned “tab top” collections as well.

Soldiers’ Angels <https://soldiersangels.org/> also helps service members and their families. An intriguing way to help is to sign up for their Holiday Stockings for Heroes program. You must register in advance for this program, but they always list other ideas to help.

Books for Africa <https://www.booksforafrica.org> allows you to collect new and gently used books for children.

Lutheran Church Charities <https://www.lutheranchurchcharities.org/> Everyone has heard of the Comfort Dogs, but did you know they need help to minister to others? Your group could support a particular dog, or you could support the program in general.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis <https://www.csl.edu/support/adopt-a-student/> and **Concordia Theological Seminary Ft. Wayne**



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Now find all of LEA’s resources under one roof.



What do you like most about teaching middle school students?
 What do students most like about you?
 Recall a defining moment that shaped your classroom ministry.



<https://www.ctsfw.edu/support-ctsfw/give-for-today/student-adoption/> Both seminaries have opportunities for your group to support a seminarian.

Meals on Wheels <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org> needs financial help year-round in order to provide meals for those in need.

Love for Our Elders <https://loveforourelthers.org/letters> is looking for letters or cards to send to shut-ins that have no family.

Little Free Library <https://littlefreelibrary.org/> Build a library for your neighborhood and stock it. This supports literacy in a unique way.

Elderly/Shut-in Care: Go out and rake the lawns of members of your church who can't do it themselves.



Food Banks: Hold a canned good or diaper drive. Many families are in need. Consider supporting a local church food bank. One Lutheran school (St. Paul, Des Peres, Mo.) used the offering given at their school Christmas worship service to send their Honor Association to shop for a food bank. They gave each child an item to purchase (example canned vegetables or macaroni and cheese) and the challenge was to use the money wisely and yet to purchase as much as possible. Then the group delivered the food in person and learned about the food bank.

Brown Bag Lunches: Some shelters need bagged lunches for their residents. Check to see if the one in your area will allow you to serve in this manner or find out what they need for lunches and hold a drive to collect it.

Cheer Signs: Create a poster with a thankful or inspirational message for a local hero and affix it to a garden stake (or tape over an old lawn sign if you have one around). These selfless servants will be touched as they drive to and from their jobs. Have the students either place them on the lawn of your church/school or on their lawns at home.

Kindness Rocks: Paint inspiring messages on rocks to plant outside your home or on local walking paths. (Just make sure there are no "leave no trace" rules on your community

trails.)

Operation USPS, UPS, Amazon, and Delivery Driver: Collect prebagged snacks and water bottles and make delivery bags for your drivers. When someone makes a delivery to your church/school, give them a bag to show your appreciation for what they do.

Baked Goods for First Responders: Depending on your community, you may be able to bake cookies, cupcakes etc., wrap them, and give them to your first responders.

This is a partial list of ideas of how to support your community (and beyond). If your school has been completing service projects this year, send a description and pictures to LEA at denise.rice@lea.org, and we will be happy to put it on our social media to shine a light on service hearts. Your ideas will inspire others, and in doing so, will show Christ's love to those in need.

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