

Service Projects from A to Z!

By Peter Freedman Bowden

Service is an essential component of an effective Small Group Ministry Program. Yet some congregations find it challenging to actualize this aspect of their program. Group members often find it helpful to have a list of service project ideas to look at when discussing what their group might do. To that end, we have developed the following list in hopes that it will help and inspire you and your group. As you explore engaging in service remember that there are many ways to serve! You may engage in service projects large and small, within your congregation or in the larger community. We hope this list is a useful springboard for discussion.

A dopt. Volunteer to adopt a highway, park or simply the church sidewalk. Keep it clean for a designated period of time.

B lood Drive. Give blood or even organize a church blood drive. Those who can't give can keep others company.

C ollect food for a local charity.

D enominational Affairs. Check in with the denominational affairs committee of your church to see what opportunities are available for service.

E nvironment. If your church does not recycle see if there is a way your group can assist to make this happen. Often a church will have people take recycling home.

F ellowship. Volunteer to help set up and clean up for the coffee hour or another fellowship event.

G roundskeeping. Volunteer to tackle a grounds keeping project such as raking Fall leaves.

H andy work. Volunteer as a group to spend a morning or afternoon doing handy work (repairs, etc...) for either the church or a member of the church in need.

I is for INSPIRATION and INNOVATION. Be creative when considering project ideas.

J oin a larger project. There are many organizations coordinating larger volunteer efforts. See if you can help out a given day with a larger effort.

K now-how! What do your group members know how to do? Figure this out and then put it into action!

L ay Ministry. See if your group can assist with your lay ministry or care giving community in some way.

M is for MINDFULNESS. While you are working on your project be mindful of how doing this work makes you feel and how it transforms the group

N ew Members. Volunteer to help with a new member event, be it clean up or hosting. You might also volunteer to help welcome guests on a Sunday.

O rganize something. Check in with your congregation's staff and lay leadership to see if there is an event or project you can help organize.

P aint. Volunteer to paint a room or some other part of your church facility. Try and keep projects to one day.

Q is for Quick. For your first project try selecting something that can be done quickly!

R eligious Education. Offer an adult religious education class as a group.

S unday Service. Volunteer to help with one of the Sunday Services. If you have lay led Summer Services perhaps your group could lead one together.

T is for TEDIUM. Try not to take a long time to plan your service project. Make sure you have a clearly outlined and agreed upon process for selecting it up front.

U NICEF. Help with your congregation's UNICEF card sales or Guest at Your Table boxes.

V is for VISIBLE. Consider identifying a project that makes your group and church visible to the larger community.

W rite a Session Plan. Work as a group to create a complete session plan to be shared with the other groups.

X is for EXCUSES for not engaging in service. Identify them up front and people will be less likely to use them.

Y is for YES! Make sure you get the appropriate permissions to undertake a project!

True story: Once a group decided to fix the old decrepit church handicap ramp. They took it down not realizing it was grandfathered in as is. The church ended up having to spend \$10,000 to bring the new one up to code. Oops!

Z ero In. Try to zero in on a real need within the church and community. Put your time and energy to good use!

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Special thanks to Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, PA, for sharing their great list of service project ideas. Their list inspired this A – Z list. Get the Quarterly mailed to you or your congregation. Join the UU SGM Network at www.smallgroupministry.net