

Lend a Hand

By Susan Vogt



Summer is a time when a lot of outdoor work gets done. Once you've taken care of necessary repairs at your own home, look around to see if any of your neighbors need some help. One of the Corporal Works of Mercy is to shelter the homeless. And remember, your neighbor isn't just the person next door.

For

Adult / Couple

Season

Summer

Needed

Internet access (or a lot of knowledge about resources in your community) to research possible service locations.

Prepare in Advance

- Talk with your family to decide whether you want to shelter the homeless as a family, as a couple, or just solo.
- Decide how you want to shelter the homeless. It could be by;
 - volunteering for Habitat for Humanity
 - helping a neighbor with a home repair
 - donating money or goods (sheets, towels, toiletries, dressers, etc.) to a homeless shelter or similar charity that helps people with housing
 - giving advice on how to weatherize a home to reduce heating or cooling costs
 - lend a tool (or several) to someone who needs to do some home repair
 - offer to house someone who needs temporary shelter such as a foster child, a baby waiting for adoption, a special needs child, a pregnant teen, an exchange student, travelers...
- Once you've decided what kind of housing service you want to provide, you need to do some research to find local groups to connect with. This advance preparation is probably the hardest part of this activity. Check out [Habitat for Humanity](#) and [Rebuilding Together](#) as a start.

Activity Plan

1. Always combine work with prayer for as Scripture says, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead" (James 2:26). On the day you plan to take part in sheltering the homeless call to mind the early Christian community and read Acts 4:34-35.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Pray this prayer:

God, giver of all good things, I (we) thank you for the shelter my (our) own family has and take this time to share our time and talent so that others can have decent shelter also. Amen.

2. Now, implement your chosen way to shelter the homeless. Whether it means spending the better part of the day on a *Habitat for Humanity* house or simply lending a neighbor a tool, do it with good humor and humility. Your service is not something to feel self-satisfied with but rather consider it only right and just that you should share what you have – time, talent, or money.

Age Consideration

If doing serious repair work with young children, they will not be able to contribute much practical help. (*Habitat for Humanity* does not allow children under 14 to be on site during active construction.) Children can, however, make lunch or cookies for the workers and *Habitat* has youth programs for children as young as 5 years old. Everyone can lend a hand, it just might not look like a carpenter's hand.

