

Guidelines for Engaging in Service to Others

We acknowledge the importance of charitable contributions for short-term relief. However, we are committed to looking at the root causes of, and engaging in sustainable solutions to, the systemic problems that are not addressed by such acts of charity. We do this by advocating for policy changes, by opposing culturally-entrenched prejudices, by supporting education efforts, and by participating in legal protests.

Our principles of service call us...

- To see Christ in those we serve and to be Christ to those we serve.
- To abstain from imposing our beliefs onto others. We assume that God is already working for shalom in our world, and we are called to join in that ongoing work, which then opens us to ever deepening experiences of God.
- To serve others as a recursive spiritual practice that stems from and leads to theological reflection and discerning prayer.
- To partner with those whom we serve in relational, sustainable, respectful, and mutual ways.
- To challenge ourselves to be open to fresh understandings, be in new relationships with diverse people, listen humbly to others, and get outside our comfort zones. We do this to follow in the ways of Jesus, who ministered to those who were marginalized; and because sacred transformation often happens "on the margins."
- To maximize our service by matching our unique gifts, experiences, and passions to the community's needs.
- To recognize the systemic causes of much that harms and diminishes God's children and creation. In so doing, we hope to understand root causes and respond not only with aid but also with actions for advocacy and empowerment.
- To prioritize working for justice over providing charity.
- To cultivate and strengthen community both within and outside of our congregation through love and service.

- To keep the boundaries between our congregation and our community thin, permeable, and not particularly important.

Examples of our Service to Others

- Host homeless families through [Family Promise](#), which provides temporary shelter, related services, and nurturing support to families as they work to achieve and sustain independence.
- Advocated for marriage equality, hosting town hall meeting, participating in prayer vigils and marches.
- Participate in environmental causes like Coastal Clean Up and Earth Day.
- Provide volunteers and donations for [Soul of Somanya](#), a nonprofit organization that offers the dignity of work at a living wage to young artisans in Ghana, West Africa.
- Provide leaders, participants, volunteers and donations to social justice and ecumenical groups that include Manos Helping Hands, which tutors local immigrant children; the [North Mobile County Food Park and Market](#); the [Mobile Area Interfaith Conference](#); and the [Mobile Triologue](#) (for Christians, Muslims, and Jews).
- Founded (with [Free2Be Huntsville](#)) Free2Be Mobile to create an LGBTQ peer teen support group that meets 2nd and 4th Saturdays, 2:00 to 4:00, in the youth room at 151. S. Ann St.