

# *The Gift of Hospitality*

**Room In The Inn**

**November 1-March 31**

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## **How Do We Get Started?**

To begin, imagine that you are homeless and on your way to a shelter. What would be some of your basic necessities? Here is a list of items congregations should provide.

- Sufficient mattresses, cots, and blankets
- Space for comfortable arrangement of cots and blankets (fellowship hall, gym, classrooms, etc.)
- Table and chairs for sharing the meals
- A place to prepare and serve food
- Enough food and drink for two meals and a snack
- Adequate bathroom facilities
- Sufficient heating and cooling
- Proper ventilation
- Approved safety exits with clear access
- Adequate lighting
- Designated smoking area
- Telephone service with posted emergency numbers for volunteers
- First aid kit
- Fire extinguisher
- Toiletry items like towel, soap, wash cloths, etc.

## **How Many Volunteers Will We Need?**

Your congregation will also need volunteers to operate your program. Some of the responsibilities include:

- Transporting guests from the downtown center
- Setting up for Room In The Inn
- Preparing the evening meal
- Serving the evening meal
- Spending the night (2 volunteers)
- Preparing the morning meal
- Serving the morning meal
- Transporting guests to downtown center in the morning
- Cleaning up after Room In The Inn
- Scheduling volunteers and providing oversight of the program

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### Giving Your Best: Ideas for Congregational Volunteers

The heart of Room In The Inn is the local volunteers who open their doors and welcome in strangers as honored guests week after week. The volunteers give Room In The Inn its power and meaning. No matter how many congregations participate and how large the program grows, the intimate experience of eating together and sharing stories is the critical element. Each volunteer has a unique opportunity to offer the gift of hospitality. Here are some volunteer guidelines to make the Room In The Inn experience positive for everyone.

- Dress appropriately.
- Maintain confidentiality. Do not share personal information such as your telephone number or address. Also, do not share personal information about guests with other people.
- Be respectful of each guest and volunteer.
- Refrain from accepting gifts and giving gifts to individual guests.
- If you wish to do something additional for an individual guest, please speak to a Room In The Inn staff member.
- Consider each guest as an individual.
- Listen to each guest but do not expect to “fix” the situation.
- Be honest and do not make promises that can’t be kept. Feel free to say “I don’t know” or “I can’t.”
- Always use a calm voice.
- Do not touch a guest without permission under any circumstance.
- Accept responsibility for your actions.
- Welcome the guests to your congregation and explain all rules upon arrival, including lights out, smoking area, wake-up times, etc.

- Give the guests clear expectations. Your guests go to different congregations every night and each one has a different set of rules.
- Check your heating system. Some systems are on a timer and operate at lower temperatures at night, which can result in uncomfortable sleeping conditions.
- Monitor your clothing room. One or two changes of clothing should be sufficient for any guest.
- Ensure all blankets are returned to the downtown center by the volunteers.
- Complete the summary sheet from the previous night and return it to the downtown center the following morning. This form is critical in evaluating the ongoing program, in identifying problems and concerns, and for capturing data about Room In The Inn.
- Do not overstep your bounds as a volunteer.
- Use your instincts. If you are uncomfortable with a guest or a situation, let someone know.
- If your congregation has leftover food, please have your van driver take it to the Guest House door by the wooden fence. It can be used for participants in our residential programs.

### *Helping Individual Guests*

*Room In The Inn guests often share their personal stories with volunteers at each congregation, and their experiences can inspire generosity and kindle a desire to become more deeply involved with a particular individual. This might include offering special assistance with employment, housing, medical needs, or some other request.*

*Before providing help to a guest, volunteers should consider consulting with a member of the Room In The Inn team. Staff members may not know about the difficulties a guest is experiencing and can provide additional support and guidance. They can serve as liaisons between the congregation and guest in order to protect confidentiality and fairness. Finally, Room In The Inn staff members might be able to present a more complete picture of someone's specific needs.*

*Reaching out is an act of faith. Room In The Inn provides a venue for fellowship that can result in empowerment and change. Its staff serves as a sounding board in determining appropriate assistance for individual guests so that a congregation's resources can be used in the most effective way.*

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## Small Gifts of Hospitality

- When planning meals, please remember many guests have chronic health conditions. It is a good idea to offer low-sodium and sugar-free options at dinner.
- Serve your guests at the table. They have to wait in line for so many of their meals.
- Serve only decaffeinated products in the evening.
- Have the cots and mattresses set up before the guests arrive.
- Place a mint on each pillow.
- Provide the daily paper.
- Watch television for evening entertainment.
- Have a “movie night” with popcorn and sodas.
- Have a “tailgate” party and watch a football game on television.
- Let volunteers show off their talents. There may be singers, magicians, or musicians in the congregation who would love to perform for the guests.
- Provide and mail holiday cards for the guests.
- Eat with your guests instead of sitting with other volunteers.
- Include guests in special activities at your church like musical performances, holiday events, and parties.
- Take time to listen to your guests, even if what they say doesn’t seem important. They need to be heard.
- Play dominoes, checkers, or board games with your guests.
- Have a sundae bar for the guests.
- Place an inspirational card at each place setting at dinner.

### Holiday Gifts

Here are some ideas if your congregation would like to give your guests holiday presents.

- Bus passes
- Phone cards
- Backpacks
- Wallets
- Socks
- Fast food gift certificates
- Puzzle Books
- Batteries
- Hand Warmers
- Thermal Underwear
- Inexpensive Watches
- Inexpensive radios with headphones
- Flashlights
- Jewelry and makeup for women
- Sewing kits
- Toiletries
- Razors
- Pens and notepads

Your guests would also enjoy a holiday party with hot chocolate, cookies, and a holiday movie.

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## Ways for Youth Groups to Help

All members of your congregation have something they can give your guests. Here are some ideas for involving youth.

- Have children decorate the sacks for sack lunches.
- Ask children to create centerpieces for the tables.
- Allow the youth choir to perform for the guests.
- Have children make cards for the guests.
- Ask each child to give part of their Halloween candy to be placed in sack lunches or on guest pillows. Candy has value to children and can be used to teach about generosity.
- Give teens the responsibility of setting up the cots or mattresses.
- Ask the youth to manage the clothing closet. They can solicit clothing donations, sort the clothes, and arrange them before distribution.
- Have children bring a dollar to Sunday school for a field trip to a dollar store. After some discussion, allow the children to buy what they think is needed for Room In The Inn. The outcome is usually great for this project. Some may wish to pool their money.
- Give teens the responsibility of planning and preparing an evening meal.
- Ask the youth to do fundraisers to provide the money for sack lunches.
- Allow teens to plan a drive for holiday gifts for the guests.
- Have teens plan a holiday or football party for the guests.
- Ask the youth to put together a talent show for the guests.

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### Other Ways to Help

Some members of your congregation may not be able to serve dinner or spend the night with your guests. Here are some suggestions on ways they can join in the program.

- Provide financial support to your congregation for Room In The Inn.
- Donate food or supplies for the program.
- Coordinate a donations drive for holiday gifts.
- Help put holiday gift bags together.
- Collect toiletries from hotels while traveling.
- Organize the Room In The Inn pantry at your congregation.
- Do shopping for supplies and food.
- Help organize the clothing closet.
- Donate magazines for the guests to read.
- Call congregational volunteers to remind them of their Room In The Inn commitments.
- Write thank-you notes to congregational volunteers.

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## Sample Volunteer Sign-up Sheet

### **Preparing Evening Meal**

Please arrive by 6 p.m.

Volunteer Name	Telephone Number	Food
		Meat dish for ___ people
		Meat dish for ___ people
		Vegetable dish for _____
		Vegetable dish for _____
		Fruit or tossed salad for _____
		Bread for ___ people
		Dessert for ___ people

### **Serving Evening Meal**

Please arrive by 6:15 p.m.

Volunteer Name	Telephone Number

### **Overnight Hosts**

6 p.m.-6 a.m.

Volunteer Name	Telephone Number

### **Set Up**

Please arrive by 5:30 p.m.

Volunteer Name	Telephone Number

### **Clean Up**

Please arrive at building after guests leave.

Volunteer Name	Telephone Number

### **Drivers**

Volunteer Name	Telephone Number	Driving Time
		Leave at 5:20 p.m. to go downtown
		Leave at 6:15 a.m. to go downtown

### **Breakfast**

Please deliver the evening before.

Volunteer Name	Telephone Number	Food
		Cereal, pastries
		Milk, orange juice