

By order of **HIS GRACE BISHOP MESROP PARSAMYAN**
Primate of the The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

INTRODUCTION TO THE
Community Outreach
SERVICES GUIDE



CHRISTIANITY IS MORE THAN BELIEF it is action. As Christians, we are called to manifest our faith through good works, for faith without works is incomplete. As Ephesians 2:10 reminds us, “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,” and in II Timothy 3:17, we are charged to be “thoroughly equipped for every good work.” This call to service is rooted in the Gospel of Matthew 25:35-40, where Christ identifies Himself with those in need: “For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited me in.” These passages remind us that to follow Christ means to serve others in His name.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) offers a profound portrait of compassionate service. Christ Himself is the Samaritan, rushing in to care for the broken and forgotten, an example for us to follow. Just as the Samaritan brought healing and hope to the wounded man on the roadside, we are called to bring Christ’s love and mercy to those in our communities who are in need of care, support, and compassion.

This *Community Outreach Services Guide* has been developed to assist Armenian Church parishes in fulfilling this call. It provides practical steps and programs designed to meet the various needs of the community, from senior care and support for children to aid for the homeless, food assistance, and even animal welfare. These initiatives offer parishes the opportunity to put faith into action, creating programs that reflect the love of Christ and are a light to the community.

We encourage each parish to adopt these programs to suit their local needs, recognizing that every act of service, no matter how small, is a reflection of our faith in action. As you use this guide, remember that in every meal served, every senior visited, and every child supported, we are following Christ’s example of love and service. Together, we can live out the Gospel, becoming not just places of worship, but true centers of compassionate outreach.

Upon successfully completing any of these outreach programs, parish participants will receive a Certificate of Completion from the Diocese. This certificate will acknowledge your dedication to Christ’s work and serve as a testament to your commitment to Community Service, celebrating the meaningful impact you have made within your community.

May this guide inspire and equip your parish to serve others with the same love and dedication that Christ shows us.

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Senior Care & Support Program Guide

INTRODUCTION

The *Senior Care & Support* program is designed to help parishes of the Armenian Church provide meaningful outreach to elderly members of the community. By organizing visits to nursing homes and encouraging regular volunteer efforts, parishioners can offer companionship, engage in enriching activities, and create lasting connections with seniors who may feel isolated or in need of support. This guide provides simple, practical steps for implementing these efforts at the parish level, fostering care and compassion within the community.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Organize Monthly Visits to Nursing Homes or Senior Centers

Parishes can develop a meaningful connection with local nursing homes or senior centers by planning visits to provide social interaction and entertainment for residents. Here's a step-by-step guide to organize these visits:

1. Identify Local Facilities and Individuals:

- † Research and compile a list of local nursing homes or senior centers near the parish.
- † Identify any seniors and assisted living facilities that have an Armenian population.
- † Reach out to these centers to determine their needs and visiting guidelines.
- † Create a list of homebound parishioners.

2. Establish a Partnership:

- † Contact the facility management to propose visits. (In the case of homebound parishioners, you may contact a family member.)
- † Ensure the partnership outlines the parish's goals and understands the needs and preferences of the seniors.

3. Volunteer Recruitment:

- † Create a sign-up sheet for parishioners to

participate in these visits.

- † Announce the opportunity during Sunday services, through newsletters, and parish bulletins.
- † Encourage youth and families to get involved, fostering intergenerational engagement.

4. Plan Activities:

- † Coordinate with the facility to determine suitable activities. Some ideas include:
 - **Cultural Performances:** Organize Armenian folk music performances, poetry readings, or storytelling sessions.
 - **Interactive Games:** Play board games or make simple crafts.
 - **Faith-Based Engagement:** Provide opportunities for prayer, Scripture reading, or short reflections.
- † In addition to providing prayer, Scripture reading, and short reflections during visits, consider organizing seasonal faith-based events. For example, a Christmas service to share the birth story of Christ, or Easter reflections on Christ's resurrection. Encourage volunteers to offer to pray with the sick or share devotional readings that bring comfort and hope to the elderly.

- † Ensure activities are tailored to the abilities and interests of the seniors.

5. Prepare Volunteers:

- † Offer a short training or orientation session for volunteers to set expectations.
- † Discuss important topics like communication with elderly individuals, sensitivity to needs, and understanding the facility's policies.

6. Implement a Consistent Schedule:

- † Establish a set date and time each month for the visits.
- † Ensure volunteers are committed and clear on their roles for each visit.

7. Post-Visit Reflection:

- † After each visit, gather feedback from both volunteers and facility staff to improve future events.
- † Share experiences with the parish community through social media, newsletters, or during service to inspire others to participate.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Volunteer Regularly at a Senior Center

Encouraging regular volunteering at a senior center can provide long-term companionship and support for seniors. Here's how parishes can facilitate this:

1. Partnership Development:

- † Establish a relationship with local senior centers that welcome long-term volunteer involvement.
- † Discuss the center's needs (assisting with activities, helping with meals, or simply providing companionship).

2. Volunteer Program Setup:

- † Develop a clear volunteering schedule that fits the needs of both the senior center and parish volunteers.
- † Assign parishioners to specific days and roles at the senior center based on availability and skills.

3. Recruitment and Training:

- † Actively recruit parishioners interested in making a regular commitment.
- † Offer training on topics such as elder care, active listening, and emotional support.

4. Activity Assistance:

- † Volunteers can assist with daily activities like:
 - Exercise sessions:** Help seniors with light exercise or stretching.
 - Arts & Crafts:** Guide seniors through creative projects.
 - Discussion Groups:** Facilitate small group conversations or discussions.

5. Companionship:

- † Emphasize one-on-one engagement, such as talking, reading aloud, or just being present for seniors who may feel isolated.
- † Encourage long-term relationships, fostering trust and consistency.

6. Support for Family Members:

- † Consider organizing support groups or information sessions for parish families with elderly relatives. Offer guidance on senior care, community resources, and how to support loved ones in nursing homes.

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Support for Children & Education Program Guide

INTRODUCTION

The *Support for Children & Education* program focuses on fostering the well-being and growth of children in need, whether through providing comfort during difficult times, supporting education, or offering guidance in learning. By mobilizing parishioners, this program seeks to address immediate needs and offer long-term support to children and students in the community. The following guide outlines ways to implement these initiatives at the parish level.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Donations of Toys, School Supplies, and Books

Parishes can provide comfort and educational support to children through coordinated donation drives. These efforts can be organized seasonally or as ongoing initiatives, ensuring that children in hospitals, low-income schools, and libraries receive the resources they need.

1. Identify Local Partners:

- † Reach out to children's hospitals, schools, and local libraries to understand their needs and establish partnerships.
- † Determine specific donation requirements, such as types of toys, school supplies, or books, and ensure all donated items meet the necessary health and safety standards (e.g., for children's hospitals).

2. Plan and Announce Donation Drives:

- † Create a yearly calendar for donation drives, grouping toys, school supplies, and book donations during times of greatest need (e.g., back-to-school season, holidays).
- † Announce the donation drives during parish services, in bulletins, and through social media. Provide specific lists of needed items to encourage focused donations.

3. Organize Collection:

- † Set up clearly marked donation bins in the church or community center.
- † Offer to pick up donations from parishioners unable to drop them off.
- † Coordinate volunteers to organize, sort, and distribute the donations to partner organizations.

4. Deliver and Follow-Up:

- † Once donations are collected, organize a delivery team to ensure the toys, supplies, and books reach the right recipients.
- † To ensure that the message of Christ's love accompanies the physical gifts, include Christian children's books, a simple Gospel presentation, or a kid's Bible in the donation packets.
- † Encourage volunteers to stay connected with partner organizations to provide updates to the parish about the impact of the donations and future needs.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Tutoring and Language Support

Supporting children's education through tutoring services and language assistance can make a lasting difference in their lives. By offering academic help to struggling students or volunteering

as language tutors for individuals learning English, parishioners can empower the next generation with vital skills.

1. Identify Local Needs:

- † Partner with schools, after-school programs, or community centers to identify students in need of academic or literacy support.
- † Work with local organizations or immigrant communities to find individuals who need language tutoring.

2. Recruit Volunteers:

- † Seek parishioners with teaching experience or a passion for education to volunteer their time as tutors.
- † Create a database of volunteers, categorizing them based on the subjects or skills they can tutor (e.g., math, reading, English as a Second Language).

3. Organize Tutoring Sessions:

- † Establish a consistent tutoring schedule, either at the parish or at a nearby school or community center.
- † Offer one-on-one or group tutoring sessions, depending on the needs of the students and the availability of volunteers.
- † Consider online tutoring options if in-person sessions are not feasible.
- † During tutoring and language support, volunteers can integrate Bible stories or moral lessons to gently introduce Christian values, especially in communities where this approach is welcomed.

4. Track Progress:

- † Keep a record of students' progress with the help of their teachers or school staff.

- † Periodically review the program's effectiveness and make adjustments as needed.

5. Provide Resources for Tutors:

- † Offer workshops or provide educational materials to help tutors improve their teaching methods.
- † Connect tutors with local teachers or education specialists who can provide additional guidance.

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Aid for the Homeless Program Guide

INTRODUCTION

The *Aid for the Homeless* program seeks to address the basic needs of the homeless population by providing essential items, food, and regular volunteer support. By organizing care packages, donating necessities, and delivering meals, parishes can make a significant impact on the lives of those experiencing homelessness. The following guide outlines practical steps to implement these initiatives at the parish level.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Create and Distribute Care Packages and Essential Items

Parishes can support the homeless community by organizing monthly care package drives that provide much-needed hygiene products and essentials like blankets, socks, and gloves.

1. Identify Local Needs and Shelters:

- † Research and partner with local homeless shelters or organizations that serve the homeless population to understand their specific needs.
- † Establish a regular communication line with these shelters to stay updated on what is most needed (e.g., hygiene kits, and seasonal items).

2. Plan and Announce Care Package Drives:

- † Create a schedule for care package drives, with clear goals for each drive (e.g., hygiene kits, winter warmth kits).
- † Announce the drives during parish services, in bulletins, and on social media, encouraging parishioners to donate items or funds.

3. Collect and Prepare Items:

- † Items to collect for care packages may include:

- Hygiene products: soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, hand sanitizer.
- Warm clothing: blankets, socks, gloves, hats, scarves, and undergarments (especially in colder months).
- Basic medical supplies: bandages, antiseptic wipes.

- † Organize volunteers to assemble care packages at the parish, ensuring each package is well-stocked and ready for distribution.

4. Distribute Care Packages:

- † Work with shelters or outreach organizations to coordinate delivery or direct distribution of the care packages.
- † If feasible, organize small groups of parishioners to personally distribute packages in areas where the homeless gather, fostering a personal connection.
- † When distributing care packages or meals, volunteers can offer to pray with individuals or share a brief message of hope and encouragement. Include a small card with a scripture verse or a simple Christian message in each care package.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Participate in or Organize a “Meals on Wheels” Program

Offering consistent access to food is a vital part of supporting the homeless community. Parishes can organize or join existing meal delivery programs, or volunteer at local soup kitchens and meal programs.

1. Partner with a Meals Program or Soup Kitchen:

- † Connect with local “Meals on Wheels” programs, soup kitchens, or shelters that provide regular meals to the homeless.
- † If there’s no existing program, consider starting a parish-led initiative focused on delivering meals to the homeless.

2. Volunteer Recruitment and Training:

- † Announce meal program volunteer opportunities during parish services and through newsletters or social media.
- † Create a volunteer sign-up sheet and set up training for those who will assist with meal preparation, packaging, or delivery.
- † Provide guidance on safety and sanitation procedures, especially when handling food.

3. Organize Regular Food Donations:

- † Set up a schedule for meal preparation, encouraging parishioners to donate food items or funds for purchasing ingredients.
- † Work with a core team of volunteers to prepare, cook, and package meals on a regular basis (e.g., weekly or monthly).
- † Prepare a variety of nutritious meals, keeping in mind dietary restrictions and seasonal needs.

4. Deliver Meals and Volunteer at Meal Programs:

- † Coordinate a team of parish volunteers to deliver meals directly to the homeless or to local shelters.
- † For those unable to participate in the delivery, encourage volunteering at soup kitchens or shelters, assisting with serving meals, and offering companionship.
- † For Meals on Wheels and similar programs, though direct spiritual engagement may be challenging, consider including Christian literature or a note expressing that the meal is provided in the love of Christ, where appropriate.
- † Track participation and feedback to improve the program’s reach and effectiveness.

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Food & Basic Needs Assistance Program Guide

INTRODUCTION

The *Food & Basic Needs Assistance* program aims to support families and individuals facing food insecurity and other basic needs challenges. By organizing donations for local food banks and hosting community blood drives, parishes can provide essential aid to those in need while fostering a spirit of generosity and care within the community.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Organize and Donate Food and Supplies to Local Food Banks

Supporting local food banks helps ensure that families in need have access to nutritious meals. Parishes can mobilize their communities to donate food and other essential supplies on a regular basis.

1. Identify Local Food Banks:

- † Research local food banks and charities that provide food to low-income families.
- † Reach out to these organizations to understand their specific needs and the types of donations they accept.

2. Plan and Announce Food Drives:

- † Organize regular food drives (monthly, quarterly, or during holidays) to collect non-perishable food items, including:
 - Canned goods (vegetables, fruits, beans, soups).
 - Grains (rice, pasta, oats).
 - Shelf-stable milk, peanut butter, and other essentials.
- † Publicize the drives in parish bulletins, through social media, and during Sunday services, providing a list of needed items.

3. Set Up Collection Points:

- † Designate collection bins or boxes in the church or community center where parishioners can drop off their donations.
- † For large-scale donations, consider organizing special events where the community can bring food items and participate in a parish gathering.

4. Organize Volunteers:

- † Recruit parishioners to help collect, sort, and transport donations to local food banks.
- † During food drives and distribution, include a small booklet with comforting Bible verses or prayer cards. This helps reinforce the message that this support is provided in a spirit of Christian love and service.
- † Coordinate with food bank staff to ensure smooth delivery and distribution.

5. Track Impact:

- † Keep a record of how much food has been donated and share the impact with the parish community, encouraging ongoing participation.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Host Community Blood Donation Drives

Blood donation drives are a valuable way for parishes to contribute to the health of the community and support local hospitals in times of need. Parishes can hold these drives on significant dates to honor the history and humanitarian efforts tied to the Armenian community.

1. Partner with a Blood Donation

Organization:

- † Contact local hospitals or organizations like the Red Cross to organize a blood drive. They will provide guidance on logistics and requirements.
- † Schedule the blood drive in advance and confirm the date and location with the partner organization.

2. Suggested Dates for Blood Drives:

- † **December 8:** In appreciation of the Red Cross's vital assistance during the Armenian Earthquake of 1988, this date can serve as a tribute to those who offered life-saving help.
- † **Around April 24:** In remembrance of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, this blood drive can honor those who helped survivors and reflect on the enduring support for life and humanity.

3. Recruit Donors:

- † Announce the blood drive through church bulletins, newsletters, and social media.
- † Educate parishioners on the importance of blood donations and encourage them to participate.

- † Provide detailed information about eligibility, safety measures, and what to expect during the donation process.

4. Set Up the Blood Drive Location:

- † Host the blood drive at the church or a nearby community center with ample space and easy access for donors.
- † Coordinate with the blood donation organization to ensure they bring the necessary equipment, medical staff, and supplies.

5. Offer Additional Support:

- † Arrange refreshments for donors after they give blood, ensuring they feel comfortable and cared for.
- † Consider having a follow-up event, like a community gathering, to thank donors for their participation and raise awareness about future drives.

6. Track and Promote Success:

- † Share the results of the blood drive with the parish, highlighting how many lives were potentially saved through their generosity.
- † Build on the success by making blood donation drives an annual or bi-annual event.

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Community and Homeland Fundraising & Support Program

INTRODUCTION

The *Community and Homeland Fundraising & Support* program provides parishes with a structured approach to raising funds for both Armenian charitable organizations and local causes. Through organized fundraising events, parishes can mobilize resources to meet the financial needs of their communities and make a broader impact on society.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Raise Funds for the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) or Other Charitable Organizations

Supporting organizations like FAR and other Armenian or international charities allows parishes to contribute to global and national causes that align with their mission of service.

1. Select a Charitable Organization:

- † Choose a well-established charitable organization to support, such as the *Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR)*, which provides critical services to vulnerable populations in Armenia.
- † Consider rotating between different Armenian or global charities each year, such as the *Armenia Tree Project*, *COAF*, or other non-profits that align with the parish's values.

2. Set a Fundraising Goal:

- † Establish a clear fundraising goal based on the organization's needs and the parish's capacity.
- † Share this goal with the parish community to encourage broader participation.

3. Plan and Promote the Fundraising Campaign:

- † Announce the campaign through church services, newsletters, and social media,

detailing the organization's mission and how the funds will be used.

- † Utilize online platforms such as *GoFundMe* or dedicated parish donation pages to make it easy for parishioners to contribute.
- † Consider organizing a donation-matching campaign, where a major donor matches smaller contributions, to increase momentum.
- † At fundraising events, open the occasion with a prayer or a short reflection about the importance of serving others in Jesus' name. Consider providing Christian-themed giveaways like bookmarks or small crosses that can subtly share the faith.

4. Organize Fundraising Events:

- † Host fundraising events, such as a *Benefit Dinner*, *Charity Walk*, or *Silent Auction*, that engage the parish community and raise funds in an enjoyable way.
- † Partner with local businesses or sponsors to donate items or services for raffles or auctions, creating more opportunities to raise money.

5. Track and Share Progress:

- † Keep parishioners updated on the progress of the fundraising campaign through announcements and regular updates.
- † After the campaign ends, celebrate the success by sharing the total funds raised and how they will be used to impact the chosen cause.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Organize Fundraising Events for Local Causes

In addition to supporting larger charitable organizations, parishes can raise funds for local needs, addressing specific challenges faced by their own communities.

1. Identify a Local Cause:

- † Survey the community to identify pressing needs, such as support for local schools, food banks, shelters, or individuals in need of medical assistance.
- † Focus on causes that resonate with the parish's values and where the impact will be immediately visible in the local community.

2. Plan a Fundraising Event:

- † Organize an event tailored to the community, such as:
 - **Community Bake Sale:** Parishioners can donate baked goods to sell, with proceeds going to the chosen cause.
 - **Charity Concert:** Involve local musicians or choirs in hosting a concert, with ticket sales benefiting the cause.
 - **Dinner Fundraiser:** Host a community dinner where all proceeds go to the selected cause, while also creating a space for fellowship.

- In communication materials (e.g., flyers, social media posts), explicitly mention that the fundraising is an act of service reflecting the love of Christ, helping to distinguish it from secular humanitarian initiatives.

3. Promote the Event:

- † Promote the event through church announcements, social media, and flyers in the local community.
- † Engage parishioners as volunteers to help with organizing, setting up, and managing the event.

4. Engage Sponsors and Donors:

- † Approach local businesses for sponsorships or donations to help cover event costs or provide additional support.
- † Acknowledge sponsors publicly at the event and in promotional materials to encourage future partnerships.

5. Evaluate the Impact:

- † After the event, calculate the funds raised and share the success with the parish community, highlighting the positive impact on the local cause.
- † Consider holding annual or recurring events for local causes to maintain ongoing support and community involvement.

6

Animal Welfare Program Guide

INTRODUCTION

The *Animal Welfare* program encourages parishioners to extend compassion and care to animals in need by supporting local shelters through donations and volunteer work. This program aims to help ensure that animals receive the necessary care and attention while awaiting adoption.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Collect and Donate Pet Supplies to Local Animal Shelters

Providing shelters with essential supplies helps alleviate the burden on shelter resources and improves the quality of care for animals.

1. Identify Local Animal Shelters:

- † Research and connect with nearby animal shelters to determine their current needs, such as food, bedding, toys, or cleaning supplies.
- † Establish a partnership with the shelter to maintain regular communication and understand their ongoing requirements.

2. Organize Pet Supply Drives:

- † Schedule regular pet supply drives to collect items such as:
 - Pet food (canned or dry).
 - Blankets, towels, and bedding.
 - Leashes, collars, and toys.
 - Cleaning supplies (disinfectant wipes, paper towels).

3. Deliver Donations:

- † Coordinate volunteers to gather and deliver the collected supplies to the shelter.
- † If possible, arrange a visit for parish volunteers to see the impact of their donations.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Volunteer at Local Animal Shelters

Beyond donations, hands-on support at shelters can make a significant difference in the care of animals.

1. Organize a Parish Volunteer Group:

- † Create a team of volunteers willing to donate time regularly to help at the shelter. This can be done on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- † Tasks might include cleaning cages, walking dogs, feeding animals, and assisting with adoption events.

2. Coordinate with Shelters:

- † Partner with local shelters to schedule volunteer shifts that meet their needs and fit within the parish's availability.
- † Provide any necessary training to volunteers to ensure they can safely and effectively help with shelter operations.

3. Promote the Initiative:

- † Highlight the benefits of volunteering during services and parish gatherings, emphasizing the positive impact on both the animals and volunteers.
- † Share stories and photos from volunteer activities to inspire others to join and spread awareness about the importance of animal welfare.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Fr. Yeprem Kelegian
Dn. Levon Altiparmakian
Emily Movsesian
Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan

EDITING AND OUTLINE

Diocesan Ministries



THE DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)

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630 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10016 | WWW.ARMEIANCHURCH.US