

Hosting The Gathering Inn

On behalf of those who would otherwise be homeless this winter, thank you for opening your church to them as a sanctuary and refuge from the harshness of cold and wet nights. In doing so, you have opened your hearts to the message of God's love for all people and may open the hearts of those you host to that mystery, as well. What follows is an outline of how Hosting works.

I. Overnight Hosting

- **Hosting can vary from church to church.** A Host Church provides the facilities for sleeping and space and supplies for cooking. Various ministry groups within the Host Church, or a Partner Church they coordinate with, prepare and serve supper for a maximum of 50 guests, share a spiritual message and offer evening hospitality.
- Prior to admission, the staff conducts screening of all guests which includes random drug/alcohol testing and Megan's Law offenders. All guests must have a current TB test administered.
- **Guest services:** Before being transported to the night's host church, guests are given an opportunity to shower.
- **The Gathering Inn bus brings guests between 6:30 and 6:45 P.M.** and then leaves. Two paid Staff from The Gathering Inn remain at the Host Church *at all times* to supervise. Guests bring only what they need for the overnight stay.
- **When guests arrive, the Host Church needs to have tables and chairs set up for supper.** Before supper, Staff will explain rules, the emergency exit plan and assign chores to guests.
- **The Host or Partner Church's ministry groups will share a brief spiritual message just before supper (no longer than 10 minutes),** using a scripture reading, homily, skit or music.
- **To meet public health standards, supper must be prepared in the Host Church kitchen or in a County-approved kitchen and transported to the Host Church at the temperature and in containers that are approved by the County.** Supper cannot be prepared in individuals' homes and brought to the Host Church. (However, there is some flexibility for churches which do not have adequate kitchen facilities to prepare meals onsite.) Ministries groups are responsible for purchasing and paying for the food. The menu needs to be approved by the Host Church Coordinator. The food should be nutritious, contain adequate protein and be sufficient to serve 50 guests plus staff and volunteers.
- **Following supper, guests do assigned chores under the supervision of Staff,** such as storing tables and chairs, emptying trash and bringing sleeping mats and blankets in from the van. Staff will determine the sleeping area layout, separating children and women from men. After sleeping arrangements are finished, guests may sleep or socialize.
- **At 9:30 P.M., guests will be directed by staff to prepare for "lights out" at 10 P.M.** Hospitality ministers may stay until 9 P.M. The two staff from The Gathering Inn will remain at the Host Church all night, changing shifts at midnight.
- **In the morning, guests get up at 5:30 A.M. and do clean-up chores.** The bus returns by 6:15 A.M. to pick up guests. One Staff will remain to meet the Host Church Coordinator at 6:30 A.M., who inspects the facility to ensure it is left in an acceptable condition and locks up.

II. Host and Partner Church Coordinator Responsibilities

Each Host Church needs to appoint a Host Church Coordinator, and if working with a Partner Church, to identify a Partner Church Coordinator before the start of each season. Their names, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, street addresses, and positions in the Church community should be provided to Staff from The Gathering Inn. Their responsibilities are as follows:

Host Church Coordinator

1. **Schedules** Host Church ministry groups who prepare supper and provide the spiritual message and evening hospitality.
2. **Maintains** a list of contact information for their ministry groups and any Partner Church Coordinators and their back-up.
3. **Contacts Partner Church Coordinators** to verify the dates they will prepare supper and to schedule the time they need access to the Host Church kitchen.
4. **Instructs ministry groups and Partner-Church Coordinators and their ministry groups** on proper menus, use of kitchen supplies/equipment and arrangement of tables and chairs for supper.
5. ***Opens the Host Church in the afternoon** for volunteers who prepare supper.
6. **Remains "on call"** on dates the Host Church is scheduled, to assist Staff with possible unusual situations, such as plumbing or heating problems.
7. ***Is present at 6:30 A.M.** the next morning to inspect the facilities with Staff and to lock up.
8. **Provides a floor plan of the area where the guests will have supper and be sleeping,** including the location of emergency exits, fire extinguishers, rest rooms and a statement on how many people the area can accommodate.

Partner Church Coordinator

1. **Schedules** the groups within the Partner Church community who will prepare the supper, provide the spiritual message and evening hospitality, maintaining a list of contact information for their volunteer ministry groups.
2. **Meets with the Host Church Coordinator** to receive information on proper menus, usage of kitchen supplies/equipment and how tables and chairs are to be arranged for supper.
3. **Ensures that at least one member from each Partner Church ministry groups who will prepare the supper attends the Host Church Coordinator's training.**
4. **Contacts the Host Church Coordinator** at least one week prior to the date they are scheduled to provide supper to give contact information on Partner Church volunteers and to confirm that there is enough food to prepare supper for the guests plus Staff and volunteers.
5. **Confirms that arrangements have been made to provide the spiritual message and the evening hospitality,** if those functions are part of the Partner Church's ministry.

*** If the Host Coordinator is not able to be present, the Host Coordinator must designate who their representative will be or make arrangements with the monitors to lock up the building when they leave in the morning.**