



MLK Jr. Day 2025 service opportunities

curated by the First Pres Committee on Anti-Racism & Equity

Offering time, talents, and spiritual gifts is an important way to answer Jesus' call to love our neighbors and become disciples. In honor of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his enduring Christian witness, we invite you to join Christians who have been inspired to help grow Beloved Community through service to others. Consider these ways to serve in 2025 and beyond!



The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses the crowd protesting for civil rights on the national mall in 1963. (public domain photo)

HIGHLIGHTED OPPORTUNITIES FOR JANUARY 2025:

MLK Day Restoration: 1-3 p.m. Monday, January 20, Crabtree Nature Center, 3 Stover Road, **Barrington**. Join the Forest Preserves of Cook County in improving the natural community by helping remove invasive species. Tools provided. Sign up via: fpdcc.com/event/mlk-day-restoration-2/.

Mr. V's Day Off: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, January 20, at the Gorton Center, 400 E. Illinois Road, **Lake Forest**. Join Mr. V. for a daylong musical sojourn, including a tribute to the legacy of Dr. King and the Civil Rights movement. The winter season will also be celebrated. **For ages 4-10.** \$49 for 9 a.m. to noon or noon to 3 p.m.; \$99 for the full day. For more information visit gortoncenter.org.

MLK Festival: Let's Dream Together: FREE Celebration of Peace & Unity in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Legacy. **Monday, January 20, 2025. Doors open at 10am.** Jazz Trio, Children's activities and feature movie presentation at 10:45 am. Wayfarer Theater, Highland Park. For more details visit <https://www.wayfarertheaters.com/movie/mlk-jr-festival-lets-dream-together>

MLK Day of Service Community Food & Household Essentials Drive: Drive-through from **9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday, January 20**, at First Presbyterian Church, 302 N. Dunton Ave., **Arlington Heights**. Volunteers available to help unload donations. All donations will go to local pantries. Donation ideas: Household items such as paper towels, toilet paper, dish detergent; canned goods with pop-top lids; olive oil, garlic, salt, pepper; coffee; sugar and flour; or Velveeta macaroni and cheese. For details visit firstpresah.org/events/mlk-day-of-service-2/.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Family Event: **10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, January 20**, at the Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark St., **Chicago**. Family-focused celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s ongoing influence on the fight for civil rights. Enjoy hands-on engagements, musical performances, and opportunities to learn about how to become more civically engaged. Free. For more information visit chicagohistory.org.

The College of Lake County in **Grayslake** will celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with performances of "The Mountaintop," by Katori Hall. Performances run from **February 23 to March 2**. Purchase tickets online at www.jlcenter.clcillinois.edu/ticket-purchase-options

Advocacy

1. Advocate on local issues through Lake County United (LCU)

Lake County United is a grassroots organization of Lake County citizens spanning ideological and faith affiliations who identify community needs and work together to promote human dignity, social justice, and the common good. Currently, Lake County focus groups are providing support and advocacy for quality attainable housing for seniors and essential workers, mental health services, education for at-risk children, and reasonable measures addressing gun violence. Lake County United educates and organizes citizens for advocating.

What is involved?

As the township and county review proposals and concerns regarding topics such as housing, the best way to make a difference is to attend village and county town halls and meetings (decently and in order – we are Presbyterians!). LCU notifies its member institutions when these topics are on the meeting agenda. Bring a friend! Build community together while uplifting our neighbors.

When's the next event?

There is a meeting of all LCU member institutions and guests on **Sunday, January 19 at 3 p.m. at St. Mary's of Vernon Catholic Parish Center, 236 Route 45, Indian Creek, Illinois (near Butterfield Rd & 45)**. Topics will include concerns and interests of our communities; plans for a March 2025 meeting will be announced.

Want to be notified of future events or get involved on one of LCU's Action Teams?

Reach out to Sue Kalman (skteach60048@aol.com), Kristin Marsden (kristindave.marsden@gmail.com) or Elyse Danckers (elysedanckers@gmail.com).

Earth and Environment

1. Help grow vegetables and fellowship with God's Gardeners (SEASONAL)

Grab your garden gloves and join us each week, from spring planting through fall harvest, at the Community Care Garden where we work with volunteers from other local churches to support Lake County food pantries and our own Mobile Food Pantry.

What is involved?

Prepare, maintain, and harvest our Community Care Garden with other volunteers by pulling weeds, planting vegetables, and harvesting fresh produce. Work times are scheduled at designated times on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and the third Friday of the month (in preparation for our Mobile Food Pantry).

What will you need?

Contact Amy Scovill at godsgardenersfpc@gmail.com to see what clothes and tools to bring.

No need to RSVP!

Show up at any of the scheduled work days and join the fun! Please reach out to Amy Scovill at godsgardenersfpc@gmail.com with any questions.

2. Join other garden mentors helping out at Mosaic Hub in North Chicago (SEASONAL)

CARE volunteers have been working to help the young gardeners at Mosaic Hub grow plants while they also grow relationships with each other at their community center in North Chicago this year. They hope to do more in the coming season, and more volunteers could help us grow our partnership!

What is involved?

This project is being developed in partnership with leaders at Mosaic Hub and roles are evolving.

First Pres Connection: Contact Beth Schrag (bethschrag@hotmail.com) or Leslie Koehler (lrkoehler9@gmail.com) for insight.

3. Help conserve and restore our natural spaces at Lyons Woods Forest Preserve

First Pres member Bob Shears helps lead conservation work at Lyons Woods (just north of Waukegan off of Sheridan Road), and work is done in all seasons. Bob is there on Wednesday mornings from 9-11 am, and he welcomes helpers as we honor MLK's legacy of service to community.

What is involved?

The service work will be outside and off the main trail in the woods. Volunteers will be clearing invasive plant species and cutting down and burning buckthorn. This is a great project for teenagers and adults, and volunteers can give whatever time they have.

What will you need?

- Wear sturdy shoes and dress for the weather!
- Bring clippers and saws if you have them - Bob will have clippers, bow saws, and loppers that can be used by volunteers.

Make sure to RSVP! Space is limited for parking (about thirty spaces total), so let us know if you are interested! Please email Bob Shears at robert_shears@hotmail.com.

Education & Mentorship

1. Help first-generation students prepare for college success through Waukegan to College

Waukegan to College is a local organization that aims to create brighter futures for first-generation students, their families, and their community by preparing students to enroll in and graduate from a four-year college or university. Since 2009, W2C has provided year-round college readiness services to students from 5th grade through college graduation.

What is involved?

You can apply to volunteer as a tutor, Read to Achieve volunteer, mentor, graduation coach, essay coach, Expanding Horizons Liaison, or other short-term opportunities.

What will you need?

Each volunteer opportunity will be slightly different. Find out more by checking out the website here at <https://www.waukegantocollege.org/volunteer-opportunities> or emailing office@waukegantocollege.org.

Make sure to apply!

To find out timing and schedules, apply via the Waukegan to College website at <https://www.jotform.com/212084259938060> or contact them at office@waukegantocollege.org.

First Pres Connection: Contact Dan Brame (danielbrame10@gmail.com) for insight!

2. Help students working on their GED and professional skills through Youth Conservation Corp

Youth Conservation Corps is a non-profit organization committed to providing Lake County's young people with education, certification programs, and career development to build skills for life. YCC mentors and empowers young adults to succeed through education and training in life skills, career pathways, and environmental stewardship.

What is involved?

There are a variety of ways to help at YCC, from serving as a mentor or tutor, to helping with mock interviews.

What will you need?

Different volunteer roles need different skills and availability. Find out more by checking out the website here <https://www.youthconservationcorps.org/> or emailing info@youthconservationcorps.org.

Reach out to express your interest!

Complete the online form at <https://www.youthconservationcorps.org/partnervolunteer/>, or contact them at info@youthconservationcorps.org.

First Pres Connection: Contact Rev. Amy Heinrich (aheinrich@boxp.org) for insight!

3. Help neighbors by getting involved at Roberti Community House

Roberti Community House is a community Center in Waukegan that provides free lunches and a food pantry with rescued produce as well as classes in language, sewing and cooking. RCH also hosts after-school activities and summer camps. They also have a culinary program that trains people to work in the food service industry through a catering service and café.

What is involved?

Volunteers can work with children and youth, make food pickups and deliveries, and help in other ways.

What will you need?

Each volunteer opportunity will be slightly different. Find out more by checking out the website here <https://www.roberticommunityhouse.org/>.

Make sure to apply!

Contact Pam Fisher at volunteerrch@gmail.com or contact the office at roberticommunityhouse@gmail.com.

First Pres Connection: Contact Carmen Lago (clago4673@comcast.net) for insight!

4. Become a mentor to a child through Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Metro Chicago

Big Brothers/ Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago is part of the oldest mentoring organization in the United States. They match adults and children in a 1:1 relationship to foster educational achievement, positive choices, and so emotional competency.

What is involved?

Volunteers can either serve as a site-based mentor, meeting their little in a facilitated group setting, or as a community-based mentor, picking up their little for community outings.

What will you need?

Just a willingness to commit to mentoring a child who needs positive relationships and support, either in a group setting (site-based mentors) or in an independently arranged setting.

Find out more about becoming a mentor!

Contact Dawn Steffen at steffen@bbbschgo.org.

First Pres Connection: Contact Debra Alexander (djba56@gmail.com) for insight!

Hunger & Housing

1. Help feed neighbors experiencing homelessness in Lake County

PADS Lake County is a community-based organization that provides trauma-informed support, resources, and shelter to individuals and families experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis. In past years, First Pres hosted guests as part of the PADS Lake County Emergency Overnight Shelter Program, but as of Fall 2023, guests are being housed in hotels. This year First Pres is collecting food every Wednesday to be delivered to the PADS shelter sites.

What is involved?

Check the approved list of non-perishable items below and bring your donations to church at the sanctuary door during the following hours (ONLY): Wednesdays through the end of April 2024, 4-7 pm. You can also sign up to help receive, sort, and package food during the same time frame.

What will you need?

The list of items you can donate is here: <https://firstpreslibertyville.org/serve/#PADS>

Make sure to RSVP!

No need to RSVP to drop off food, but if you would like to help process donations, sign up here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B4BA8AF23A5FA7-46094319-pads/90835273#/>

You can also learn more about this ministry by contacting Dave Marsden at dgmarsden@gmail.com.

2. Help feed women and children at The Lake County Haven

The Lake County Haven operates two homes in Libertyville for women and children experiencing homelessness, many of whom are escaping an abusive situation. The Haven's mission is to empower them to achieve permanent, independent living. We can support their work by helping to feed their residents.

What is involved?

You can help in two ways. One is by donating two bags of groceries for meal preparation. Or, you can provide a breakfast, lunch, or dinner for the residents.

What will you need?

You will be provided a list of requested groceries after you sign up. For meal donations, they ask for enough food for 10 (women and children). These meals can be homemade or from a store or restaurant.

Make sure to RSVP!

Sign up here: <https://lakecountyhaven.org/get-involved/volunteer/meal-donations/>

3. Help neighbors in need by sharing your repair skills as a Fix-It Crew volunteer

This group of volunteers donates time and talent to help senior adults and single parents who need a helping hand with "around-the-house" repairs such as carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and general "fix-it" jobs. Meets at various times as needed.

What is involved?

Help out with carpentry, electrical, and plumbing repairs. Contact Rich Alexander at rich30926@gmail.com for additional details.

What will you need?

- Repair and handyman experience is recommended.
- Relevant hardware and repair tools.

Reach out to get involved!

Contact Rich Alexander at rich30926@gmail.com.

4. Serve neighbors in need of a meal at the Waukegan Soup Kitchen

Our Deacon Community Ministry coordinates opportunities to serve at the Most Blessed Trinity Parish Soup Kitchen in Waukegan. Sign up for a date and time to help prepare and provide warm meals to families in Lake County, serving as Kitchen Lead, Volunteer Lead (recruiting a team of 3-5 volunteers), or individual volunteer.

What is involved?

Sign up for one of the volunteer slots on select Thursdays and Saturdays.

What will you need?

Just yourself! All supplies and resources are provided by Most Blessed Trinity Parish.

Sign up and find out more

Sign up for this ministry (<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0b4ba8af23a5fa7-most/14717241#/>) or reach out to John Sahagian at sahagian@live.com to find out more about volunteer roles.

5. Help distribute food to local families in need at our Mobile Food Pantry

The Mobile Food Pantry is held on the third Saturday of each month in front of the First Pres main entrance. We purchase hundreds of pounds of food from the Northern Illinois Food Bank that we distribute to 100+ families. Find out more about this vital First Pres ministry here: <https://firstpreslibertyville.org/serve/#Mobile%20Food%20Pantry>

What is involved?

Volunteers arrive at the First Pres sanctuary entrance on Douglas Ave. at 7:30 am to sort, bag, and box the food. Then carts are used to load the boxes into our guest families' vehicles. We are typically done by 9:30 a.m. This is a great program for families, small groups, sports teams, and students looking to earn school community service hours.

What will you need?

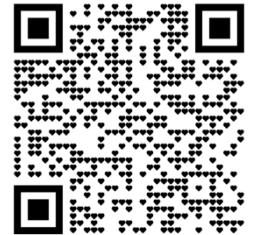
Just yourself! And perhaps a friend, neighbor, sibling, parent, or other friendly acquaintance. Please check the weather and dress accordingly as most jobs are outside.

Please RSVP via email.

Contact Contact Gary Holland at grh726@aol.com or Sue Ellen Skeens at settnt@aol.com.

6. Help stock local food banks by donating groceries to our Meal-A-Month

The First Pres Deacon Community Ministry coordinates regular opportunities to contribute needed grocery items to the Lake County food pantry as well as St. Joseph's Food Pantry. Pick up a Meal-A-Month bag with a list of needed supplies at worship each month (see dates below). New this year is a QR code linking to an Amazon Wish List to benefit the food pantries (aim your phone camera at the code to the right).



What is involved?

This is a very simple, ongoing way of demonstrating care for our neighbors in need. Pick up a Meal-A-Month bag after worship, fill it with the list of requested items, and return it to church by the following Sunday. Bags will be available to pick up on January 12, February 9, March 9, April 13, May 11, June 8, August 10, and October 12.

What will you need?

Just a little time in the grocery store or virtual shopping cart and a willingness to share your resources.

No need to RSVP!

To learn more about this ministry, contact Kim Schambow (schambowk@hotmail.com).

7. Make meals for hungry kids overseas with Feed my Starving Children

Feed My Starving Children is a nonprofit organization empowering volunteers to pack meals for the malnourished in nearly 70 countries. FMSC works with food distribution partners that stay with communities for the long haul, empowering them to move from relief to development. Volunteers can pack meals on their own or with a group at permanent sites in Libertyville, Schaumburg, and Aurora. Please note that reservations are required, and popular dates do fill up quickly.

What is involved?

Sign up for a time slot when you will join a small team to pack meals, refill each station's supplies, and prepare boxes to be shipped (tasks are delegated based on volunteers' comfort and ability).

What will you need?

Bring yourself and a friend! All supplies and resources are provided by Feed My Starving Children. Please note that you will be handling food, so do not register if you or someone in your household is ill.

Make sure to RSVP!

Reservations are required for each volunteer. Sign up at the Feed My Starving Children website here:

<https://www.fmsc.org/get-involved/volunteer>

8. Help stock and maintain St. Joseph's Food Pantry

The St. Joseph Food Pantry is a supermarket-style food pantry located in the strip mall at 112 North Milwaukee Avenue, Libertyville, in the Formation Center. Financial donations are used to buy food from the Northern Illinois Food Bank as well as other local grocery stores. They also accept donations from the public.

What is involved?

Adults and teenagers are welcome to help sort through donations, check expiration dates, stock shelves and bag groceries on various dates and times each month.

What will you need?

The Food Pantry requests that people not register if they have reason to believe they or a household member has been exposed to COVID-19, are awaiting the result of a COVID-19 test, or are sick.

Make sure to RSVP!

Sign-up to volunteer in the Pantry here: <https://stjoseph.ivolunteer.com/#4>

Find out more at the St. Joseph's Food Pantry website: <https://stjoseph-libertyville.org/food-pantry>

Incarceration Recovery

1. Help formerly incarcerated individuals with reintegration at Legacy Reentry Foundation

The Legacy Reentry Foundation is a faith-based not-for-profit organization that helps people who are formerly incarcerated reintegrate into society. LRF assists with employment and therapeutic services, social service applications, home furnishings, clothing and life skills. In addition, they mentor at-risk youth and provide them with experiences in the arts.

What is involved?

Adults can volunteer to sort clothes at the Community Closet, help staff the front desk and tutor at their youth center.

What will you need?

Needs vary based on role. Contact Pastor George and ReGina Moore at legacyreentryfoundation@gmail.com.

First Pres Connection: Contact Rob Heinrich (rh6353@gmail.com) for insight!

General Community Service Resources

1. Explore other Lake County Volunteer Opportunities

Looking for more local opportunities to help in our community? Check the Lake County, IL website for information on Adopt a Highway, Emergency Management Agency, and more: <https://www.lakecountyil.gov/3253/Volunteer-Opportunities>.

2. Serve through United Way of Lake County

United Way is an international network of over 1,800 local nonprofit fundraising affiliates. United Way of Lake County unites leadership and resources to create lasting change that will improve and save lives in Lake County, IL by providing educational support to students across grade levels, empowering families to become and remain self-sufficient, and helping connect individuals and families to life-changing support. There are a variety of ways to volunteer. Find out more at the United Way website: <https://www.liveunitedlakecounty.org/portfolio/volunteer/>.

3. Volunteer at Love INC

Love in the Name of Christ (Love INC) is a national movement mobilizing local churches to transform their communities. Our Lake County affiliate in Waukegan provides a wide variety of services, including referral services, financial management training, and life skills classes. In the past, our church has provided volunteers to deliver furniture to people moving into a new apartment who can't afford to furnish it themselves. Find out more at their website:

<https://loveinclakecounty.org/>