



## Introduction Activity

*Leaders – Read this activity and determine where in your community you will have your participants meet to reflect on the various stations outlined below.*

*This activity can be done with a small group. If your group is large (over 15 people), it would be advisable to break up into smaller groups.*

### Introduction

The ELCIC and ACC have been engaged in a full communion partnership since 2001. Since then, our churches have found ways to live out that partnership together – the National Youth Project is one of those ways! For this cycle of the National Youth Project, we have chosen the topic of Housing and Homelessness for the reasons listed below.

At the 2013 Joint Assembly, our churches committed to work together to engage issues of homelessness and affordable housing. The commitment includes:

- to learn about the issues that contribute to poverty, homelessness, and substandard housing and to raise awareness within our communities of the challenges and the potential engagement in supporting initiatives to address these challenges
- to act by nurturing and supporting our own networks of agencies and programs with and for the homeless, the under housed, and refugees
- to act by exploring new models and working with partners, on innovative approaches to address poverty and homelessness
- to advocate for renewed Federal funding, an integrated national collaborative strategy, and greater accountability on the part of provinces and municipalities in addressing underlying causes of homelessness and in providing opportunities for affordable housing
- to pray for safe, affordable and adequate housing for all.

In light of this commitment, it felt like it was time to engage the youth of our churches in this initiative as well. You get to participate in the first activity of Welcome... Home, the 2018-2020 National Youth Project of the Evangelical Lutheran and Anglican Churches in Canada!



*Leaders - Have your group move to a different area in your community where you can be together to learn about the information on Youth and Homelessness. Ideally, this will be done outdoors for your group to get a feel for what it like to be out of the comfort zone of our churches and warm buildings.*

## **Station 1**

*Leaders – Feel free to find statistics about homelessness in your own community to include here.*

### **Stats and info**

- An estimated 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness each year
- 35,000 Canadians experience homelessness on any given night
- 50,000+ Canadians experience hidden homelessness, such as couchsurfing, sleeping in a car, or other precarious housing
- 20% of the homeless population are young people aged 16-24
- Indigenous peoples are over-represented in the homeless population – 1 in 4 people experiencing homelessness identify as Indigenous or First Nations. This statistic varies from city to city across the country. In Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, it is estimated that approximately 50% of the homeless population is Indigenous.
- One of the fastest growing demographics of the homeless population is children & families
  - 10% of Canadian families live below low-income cut-off
  - 14% of Canadian children live in poverty
- Core need is defined as paying more than 50% of income on housing. There are millions of Canadians living in core need. These people are at serious risk of homelessness. Families that are spending more than 30% of their income on housing also fall into this category.

*(Stats from [raisingtheroof.org](http://raisingtheroof.org) and [homelesshub.ca](http://homelesshub.ca))*

### **Questions for reflection**

Did anything in the list of information surprise you? What fact stood out for you?

Do you know what the housing statistics are for your town/city?

Do you know anyone who is homeless? Have you ever been homeless?

How do you see these statistics affecting youth and young adults? Do you know of any young people that have needed to couchsurf? Did you consider that to be connected to homelessness?

What are some of the programs available to young people in your community?

*Leaders - With your group, move to another place in your community where you can be together to reflect biblically on the issue of housing and homelessness.*

## Station 2 – Theological/Biblical Reflection - Who is our Neighbour?

*Leaders - Prior to reading the scripture, ask for help from your group to play the variety of roles in the reading. They are listed below. Whenever the bolded words are said in the reading, the volunteers say their phrase. The leader may want to print out the lines on small pieces of paper to help the readers remember. Some parts repeat a few times so might take some participants by surprise (you may need to remind them to repeat their line). The part of "the person" repeats many times so giving that part to someone who likes to be dramatic is highly suggested! If you have some keen volunteers who would be willing to come early to your event, you may want to run through this reading beforehand.*

Done by the whole group - **the wind howled and the rain poured down** – group makes howling sounds and claps their hands on their thighs (to make rain sounds)

**person** – "Would somebody please help me?"

**robbers** – "Arrrgh!... another victim... arrrrgh! (pirate like...)"

**priest** – "I am holy... oooohhhh so HOLY!"

**Levite** – "Yikes, I gotta get outa here!"

**Samaritan** – "No worries... It's all good!!!"

**Innkeeper** – "We also accept visa, mastercard, paypal, e-transfers or square..."

### **Luke 10:25-37 (modified for interactive storytelling)**

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, the lawyer asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

And Jesus told this story,

"Once upon a time, on a dark and stormy night... **the wind howled and the rain poured down**... and a **person** was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, when they fell into the hands of **robbers**, who stripped them, beat them, and went away, leaving them half dead.

Meanwhile, **the wind howled and the rain poured down**...

Now by chance a **priest** was going down that road; and when he saw the **person**, the **priest** passed by on the other side.

Meanwhile, **the wind howled and the rain poured down**...

Then, a **Levite**, when he came to the place and saw the man all beaten and bloody lying in the ditch. The **Levite**, also crossed the street to pass by the **person**.

Meanwhile, **the wind howled and the rain poured down**...

Then a **Samaritan** came down the road. Stopped and saw the person and was moved with pity. The **Samaritan** went to them, and bandaged their wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then they put them on their own animal, brought them to an inn, and took care of them.

The next day the **Samaritan** took out two denarii, gave them to the **innkeeper**, and said, 'Take care of them; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

Meanwhile, **the wind howled and the rain poured down**... and the **person** felt like they were in paradise.

Which of these do you think, was a neighbour to the **person** who was attacked by **robbers**?

The lawyer said, "The one who showed them mercy." Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."

## Questions for Reflection

Who passed by the person in need? Can you resonate with their reasons for passing by – when have we felt scared, better than, too busy, etc?

What was significant about the Samaritan stopping to help? What was the relationship between the people of Samaria and the Jewish people?

What does Jesus encourage us to do in situations like this? How do you see this encouragement relate to the issue of housing and homelessness?

## Station 3 – Interactive experience

*Leaders – Select a place in your community that can act as a homeless shelter for this activity. You may need to head back to your church or maybe you can connect with another agency who would let you use their space for this activity. You will want to make it a bit difficult to find – simulating how word travels when people are living in the street. Depending on the size of your group (i.e. if you need to split into multiple groups), you can decide how many are allowed into the shelter at once. This will lead some reflecting on the questions about if they got into the shelter and others reflecting on the questions about if they didn't get into the shelter.*

Weather is turning bad. The temperature is going to drop and there is freezing rain in the forecast. There is a homelessness shelter in our community. If our group is going to sleep with a roof overhead this evening, they will need to find it. Space is limited.

*Move with your group to find the homeless shelter. Be creative and use whatever means you can to find the location. Please ensure your group stays together. Only full groups will be let into the shelter.*

## Questions for reflection

**If you got into the shelter** – What was the experience like in trying to find the shelter?

How did it feel to get a roof over your head for the night?

How did it feel to know that so many others didn't make it in?

Do you think this is a common experience for many who don't have stable housing?

**If you did not get into the shelter** – What was the experience like in trying to find the shelter?

How did it feel to get turned away and know that you would be without shelter for the night?

Why do you think you were turned away from the shelter? What were the factors that led up to not securing your group a spot for the night?

How does it feel to know you need to find shelter from the cold and freezing rain tonight? Where will your group go?

*Leaders – After reflecting on these questions, have your group move toward the next location.*

## Station 4 – Action

*Leaders – Prior to this event, connect with a local community organization that works directly with street involved people. Tell them your plans to lead this activity with your group to educate about issues of housing and homelessness. Let them know that as part of the Action section you want to collect items that would be useful to their organization. Ask them what would be helpful for your group to collect. Ask your group to bring these to the activity. Determine a space in your church that will serve as the donation area.*

In the scripture reading today, Jesus asks us to find compassion for our neighbours – those we know and those we don't know. Please bring the items you have collected to the donation area. Giving things to those who need them is one way to act with compassion towards our neighbours.

## Questions for Reflection

Why do you think we asked for these donations?

Do you use some of these products in your day-to-day life? What would it be like to not have access to them on a regular basis?

Tell your group where the donations will be given. Give them a bit of background on the organization and their work. You may even want to arrange a trip to the organization to deliver the donations as a group and learn about their work.

*Leaders - After reflecting on these questions, have your group move to a space where they can read and sign the postcards.*

## Station 5 – Advocacy

*Leaders - Postcards will need to be printed from the website (url???) prior to the event. Alternatively, you could have the group write their own postcard to their government officials talking about what they learned from this activity, their concern about the topic and what they are asking their government to do about it. We suggest writing to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau as he is the Minister of Youth (as well as the Prime Minister), your Member of Parliament, and perhaps local municipal officials.*

Another way of showing compassion for our neighbours is to speak out against injustice when we see it. Speaking out can influence those in positions that have the authority to make policy changes.

*To help participants find their local Member of Parliament they can visit this site <https://www.ourcommons.ca/parliamentarians/en/constituencies/FindMP>. They will need their postal code to enter into the search function.*

*When the group has finished signing their postcards, gather them and send them to your representative. You do not need to use a postage stamp to send mail to the House of Commons in Ottawa.*

*Gather your group together and move to a quiet space to do some final reflection on this activity.*

## Station 6 - Closing Reflection

In this activity, you were offered two ways that we could show compassion to our neighbours who need support. What are other ways you could show compassion?

Youth and Young Adults make up a substantial proportion of the precariously housed or homeless community. Can you think of ways that can support young people who are vulnerable in this way?

We hope that your Youth Group can bring the issue of housing and homelessness back to your church community. How can you share what you learned today with them?

*When your group has finished with the reflection questions, please gather them to close in prayer. This prayer was written by Ray Simpson and offered at the Joint Assembly of the ELCIC and ACC in Ottawa, July 2013.*

Heavenly One, Who although homeless at your birth, Made your home with us on earth, And thus marked each with divine dignity: Imbue us with your mercy Inspire us to offer each of your children a safe home, That we may live on earth as they do in heaven. AMEN.