

INTERFAITH SUNDAY SOUP KITCHEN AT ST. PAUL'S: A GUIDE FOR SERVING GROUPS

Every Sunday afternoon of the year, St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Evanston hosts a community meal, known as the "Interfaith Sunday Soup Kitchen at St. Paul's" for between 70 and 110 hungry people in the community. The Sunday Soup Kitchen is supported by Evanston Interfaith Action and is one of six weekly meals provided to the hungry in Evanston. The meals are provided by serving groups from many kinds of organizations, including a broad spectrum of faith-based congregations, as well as secular groups such as service groups, book clubs, local businesses, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and sororities. Anyone is welcome to provide a meal!

Following are answers to **Frequently Asked Questions** about serving at the Interfaith Sunday Soup Kitchen. If you have additional questions, please contact us at: office@stpaul Evanston.org.

- ***Where is it?***

At St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Evanston, **1004 Greenwood St., Evanston**, on the corner of Maple Avenue & Greenwood Street. We are one block south of Dempster, and two blocks east of Ridge. We do not have a parking lot, but street parking is usually available by 1:00 on Sunday afternoons. For those taking public transportation; we are easily accessible – 3 blocks from the Dempster Street El stop, and 4 blocks from the Davis Street El and Metra stations.

Although our sanctuary is on Greenwood Street, the main Soup Kitchen entrance is on the Maple Avenue side. There is also a small side door on Greenwood Street, just west of the sanctuary. Food and supplies can be brought through this door and directly up the stairs to the kitchen.

See also: <http://www.mapquest.com/#b83bf18616fbe3881e61927a>

- ***What time does it start?***

The meal is served at 3:00 p.m. Serving groups usually arrive between 1:00 and 1:30 p.m. If the meal is already prepared and hot, groups may arrive as late as 2:00. If you need to prepare the meal from scratch, you'll want to arrive earlier. If you want to get into the kitchen to begin preparing before 1:00 p.m., please let us know in advance.

- ***What time does it end?***

The meal ends, and most guests leave, by 4:00. The serving group is usually done with clean-up by about 4:30-4:45.

- ***How many guests will we serve?***

The number of guests ranges from 70 to 110 or so. Usually, we have more guests at the end of the month than at the beginning of the month.

- ***What do we need to provide?***

There is no set menu, and each serving group is free to decide what to serve. The Sunday Soup Kitchen meal is the only meal that many of our guests have that day, so it should be filling. Think about what you would like to eat, or what you would serve guests in your home. Most of our guests are very appreciative of wholesome, fresh food. If you would like more ideas, large-scale recipes, or sample menus, please contact us. Following are some ideas and guidelines:

- ✓ Main dish with protein. (Examples: spaghetti & meatballs, sloppy joes, pasta casseroles of all kinds, other casseroles of all kinds, baked or fried chicken, sliced ham, turkey, or beef, hot dogs, hamburgers, pasta salads, submarine sandwiches, Italian beef or other hot, substantial sandwiches, hearty stews (bulky, with protein), hearty goulashes or curries over rice or noodles, etc...)
- ✓ At least a small amount of a meatless main dish. (Some guests don't eat meat or pork, so if you are serving ham, for example, consider providing about ten-fifteen servings of a meatless alternative.)
- ✓ Side dish (a carb or starch unless you are serving a main dish that combines the starch and protein) (Examples: pasta, potatoes, rice...)
- ✓ Vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned) or green salad
- ✓ Fruit (fresh or canned, whole or peeled and sliced) (keep in mind that many guests have dental problems – they can't bite into hard fruits like whole apples)
- ✓ Bread or rolls
- ✓ Dessert (cake, cookies, bars, ice cream or ice cream bars in the summer)
- ✓ Condiments for the meal (ketchup, mustard, salad dressing)
- ✓ 3 gallons of milk (1% or 2%)

- ***How much food should we bring?***

The number of guests varies, so there is no easy answer. A good rule of thumb is: if you are serving the first two/three Sundays of the month, provide enough for 80 generous first servings of each item you are serving; if you are serving on a Sunday toward the end of the month, provide enough for 100 generous first servings. Guests are grateful for second helpings of at least the main dish.

- ***How much does it cost to provide a meal?***

It depends on what you serve. Costs range widely from about \$3.00 per person to about \$7.00 per person (roughly \$250 to \$700). Some groups spend less by having part of the meal donated, either by individual members or by stores or food suppliers. To hold down costs,

some groups have many volunteers prepare part of the meal and donate it; others purchase all of the food out of a single budget. Fresh produce and proteins tend to cost more. We recommend buying in bulk at stores such as Costco, Sam's Club, and Food4Less (which often has great deals on fresh produce). The bottom line is that groups have wide discretion to decide how much to spend on a meal.

- ***How many volunteers do we need?***

You will need at least 10 adults, and no more than 30 volunteers (including children). That is a big range, but the number of volunteers you will need depends on how much meal preparation you are doing (the more you cook from scratch, the more people you'll need); how many dishes you are serving; and the age, ability, and motivation of your volunteers. If the volunteers are very young and need lots of direction, you'll need more adults to supervise. If you have lots of volunteers, consider asking them to come in shifts – 1:00 to 3:00 and 3:00 to 4:30. Make sure your volunteers plan to stay through clean-up.

- ***How old do volunteers need to be?***

Children as young as seven to ten years can help, as long as they have plenty of supervision. Many families enjoy serving together. Please keep in mind that although the vast majority of our Soup Kitchen guests are gracious, appreciative, and very polite, some guests suffer from mental illness and/or substance abuse issues, and a few may use offensive language or otherwise behave rudely or obnoxiously. Our coordinators do their best to monitor the dining room and address conflict quickly, but you should plan to closely supervise young children and talk with your children in advance about the possibility that they may hear offensive or disturbing language or witness conflict between guests.

- ***Are the kitchen, dining room, and facilities accessible to people with special needs/limited mobility?***

Unfortunately, for now, we are minimally accessible. Our kitchen and dining hall are on the second floor, and we do not have an elevator. We have an electric "stair chair" for people who are willing and able to use it. Our bathrooms are not accessible to people in a wheelchair or unable to use stairs. We are sorry that we cannot accommodate people with limited mobility, and we are working to fix this problem.

- ***What kind of kitchen space, equipment, and utensils can we use?***

Thanks to a recent renovation, we have a bright, clean, and reasonably spacious kitchen with plenty of counter space, a hand washing sink, food prep sink, and large commercial three-part sink. We have two residential-size refrigerators and a 16-burner commercial stove with two large commercial ovens. The ovens will accommodate eight large foil baking pans or four full sheet pans. We supply basic cooking equipment and utensils: large, commercial-size pots and pans, bowls, large strainers, cutting boards, and sheet pans. We also have many knives, serving spoons, mixing spoons, and spatulas. We also supply kitchen towels, aprons, and head scarves (which guests must wear if their hair is not pulled back or otherwise covered, and

which we wash weekly). St. Paul's also supplies all cleaning supplies – detergents, sponges, paper towels, etc...

- ***What about plates, napkins, cups, eating utensils?***

All paper goods (plates, cups, napkins, plastic utensils) for the Soup Kitchen are provided by Interfaith Action of Evanston, which relies on donations from congregations and individuals. You do not need to bring any paper supplies (except to-go cartons if you think you will need them).

- ***Do we provide beverages?***

You only need to provide milk (ideally, 3 gallons of 1% or 2%). St. Paul's supplies all other beverages. We provide, and our coordinators will prepare and have ready: coffee, tea, water, lemonade, hot cocoa (in the winter), creamer, sugar, and sweeteners. Donations of coffee, tea, hot cocoa mix, and lemonade mix are completely optional, but much appreciated.

- ***Who is in charge? Will anyone be there to show us around, answer questions?***

St. Paul's always has at least one, and usually two, volunteer coordinators on hand to supervise the meal, answer questions, show you and your group where to find things they need, supervise the dining room, and generally make sure everything runs smoothly. The coordinators will introduce themselves to you when you arrive. We wear bright yellow aprons and name tags, so you can spot us easily.

- ***How is the meal served?***

At 3:00, after a brief introduction and a blessing (usually led by someone in the serving group), one of the Soup Kitchen coordinator calls guests by number (guests receive numbered tickets as they arrive), in groups of ten, to line up and go through a serving line. Serving group volunteers serve the meal from a serving line. After everyone has been served, we call guests up for second servings.

- ***What do we do with leftovers?***

Many guests are very grateful for leftovers – many bring their own containers, and ask for foil and plastic bags. If there is leftover food after guests have taken everything they want, your volunteers may either take the food home with them or they may take it to the McGaw YMCA, just a couple blocks away. The residents of the YMCA do not have kitchens in their apartments and are very happy to receive the food. No food can be left behind in our kitchen, because it will not get eaten during the week, and it often has gone bad before the following Sunday. We end up throwing it out – a huge waste and a nasty job. Unopened, non-perishable leftovers may be taken to a food pantry.

- ***What does clean-up involve?***

The serving group washes all kitchen equipment and utensils that have been used and wash all of the individual serving trays, water pitchers, and other dishes used in the meal. (The meal is served on paper plates, with plastic utensils, so it's mostly the trays.) We have no dishwasher, so dishwashing is done by hand. It is a hot, messy, wet job, so a serving group must have one or two designated adult dishwashers. The dining room floors must be swept, tables wiped down, trash and recycling put out, and everything put away. Except spills, no mopping is required.

- ***Can we bring sack lunches for guests to take with them?***

Yes. Although it is certainly not required, many of our serving groups prepare sack lunches to hand out to guests after the meal. Please remember that many of our guests are homeless or lack refrigerators, so please avoid packing lunches with meats, mayonnaise, or other ingredients that can quickly go bad.

- ***Can we bring clothing donations to the Soup Kitchen?***

No. We do not have the space to accept clothing donations. You may be able to provide donations of some items, such as winter coats, to Hilda's Place, a transitional shelter with supportive services for adult men and women. Hilda's Place is just a few blocks from St. Paul's, at 1458 Chicago Ave, Evanston. Please call Hilda's Place directly at 847-424-0945, ext. 15 to find out if they are accepting donations.

- ***Can we bring other food donations, such as canned foods, to the Soup Kitchen?***

No. We do not have the space to store canned food donations, and we are not set up as a food pantry. Also, many of our guests are homeless or live in single-room occupancy-style places with no kitchens. We take any unopened, non-perishable food that is left behind to Evanston's Hillside Food Pantry. See www.hillsidepantry.org. If your group would like to donate food items directly or participate in a food drive, please consider supporting the Hillside Food Pantry or the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

- ***How do we sign up?***

Each November, we circulate a sign-up sheet for January to December of the following year. To see this year's serving group schedule, go to: <http://sundaysoupkitchen.blogspot.com/>

Dates during the school year fill up quickly, but we have a great need for serving groups on holiday weekends and during the summer months.

If you would like to sign up for an available date, please email office@stpaulevanston.org and your request will be sent to one of our coordinators.