

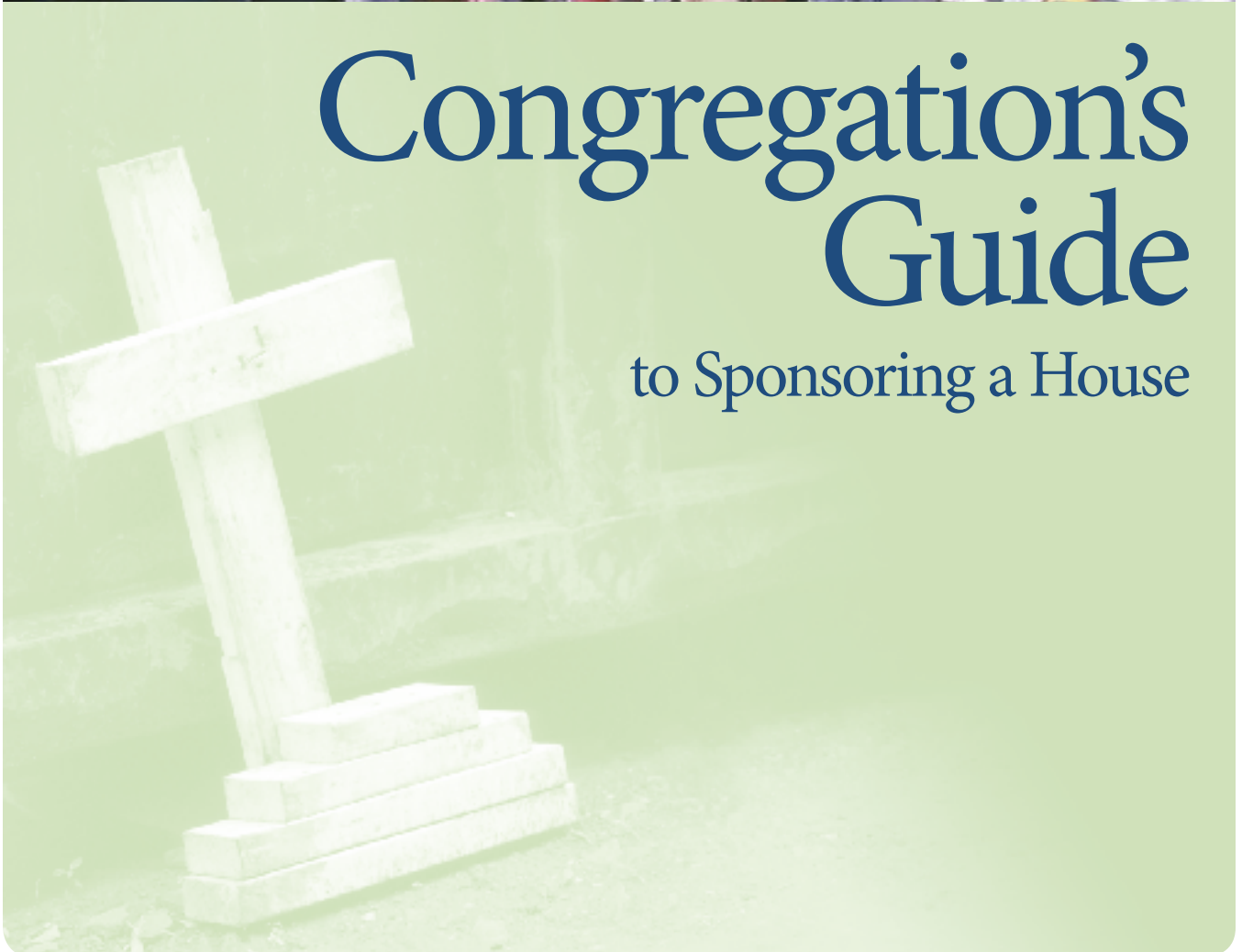


Church Relations Department



Congregation's Guide

to Sponsoring a House





Preface

When a church in San Antonio, Texas, adopted a vision statement that emphasized putting faith into action, building a Habitat for Humanity house seemed to be the perfect opportunity to carry out that vision.

When a relentless volcano destroyed the homes of thousands of families in the Philippines, church members in Korea felt the call to help their neighbors many miles away by sending funding and work teams to aid in Habitat's rebuilding effort.

All over the world, throughout the year, the church and Habitat for Humanity are working together to build affordable houses with people in need.

Founded in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller, Habitat for Humanity International seeks to end poverty housing worldwide. An ecumenical Christian housing ministry, Habitat works in partnership with people in need to build simple, decent, healthy houses. Habitat is not a give-away program. The houses are sold to partner families at no profit. Habitat homeowners invest hundreds of hours of their own labor, called "sweat equity," into building their houses and the houses of others. Homeowners' mortgage payments go into a revolving Fund for Humanity that is used to build more houses.

As a Christian ministry, it is appropriate that the church—Christ's body in the world—is Habitat's primary partner in this important work. Churches of all sizes and denominations have experienced profound blessings by putting their faith into action and building houses in partnership with their brothers and sisters in need. Former President Jimmy Carter has said that if every church and every synagogue built or repaired at least one home a year, the United States could totally transform the problems of housing and homelessness.

Many congregations get involved in this exciting building ministry because one person is moved to action. The person who will not let up until the job is done is often the spark God uses to provide decent shelter for a family in need. Are you that person? Is God asking you to call your congregation to action?

Do not let obstacles like "our congregation is too small or too busy" stand in your way. Congregations of all sizes can build a house either on their own or in partnership with others. A sense of urgency to answer God's call often moves congregations beyond any obstacles and gives them confidence to proceed.

For the name of the Habitat for Humanity affiliate nearest you, look in the telephone book under "Habitat for Humanity," check our Web site at www.habitat.org or call (800) 422-4828.



KIM MACDONALD



Table of Contents

From Vision to Action

- Seeing the Vision and Hearing the Call 1
- Gathering Information . ☒ 2
- Getting the Congregation Behind You 3
- Formalizing the Agreement 3
- Recruiting Leaders and Volunteers 4
- Raising the Funds . . . ☒ 6
- Working With the Homeowner Family 9

Special Events

- Kickoff Event ☒ 11
- Groundbreaking Ceremony 11
- Worship Service and Dinner 11
- Halfway-home Party . ☒ 11
- The Dedication Service 12
- Recognition Dinner . ☒ 12

Special Concerns for Multi-congregation Partnerships and Mega Churches

- Coordinating a Partnership 13
- The House Sponsorship Agreement 13
- Steering Committee . ☒ 13
- Including Every Congregation 13
- Special Events and Meetings 14
- Mega Churches ☒ 14
- Interfaith Builds ☒ 14

What Happens Next?

- Community Development 17
- Advocacy ☒ 18
- Conclusion ☒ 18

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Habitat Volunteer Sign-up Sheet 19
- Appendix 2: Construction Crew Volunteer Application 20
- Appendix 3: So Your Church Wants to Raise Funds for a Habitat for Humanity House 21
- Appendix 4: A Quick Look at Organizing Partnerships 23

Habitat for Humanity Resources for Churches

- Resources ☒ 25



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ERIN HOOPER

All over the world, the church and Habitat for Humanity are working together to build safe, decent, healthy and affordable houses with God's people in need.

From Vision to Action

Seeing the Vision and Hearing the Call

You have come to the decision that you must do something about the problem of poverty housing in your community. More than likely you have mixed feelings about the idea. One moment you are on fire—ready to start construction today—and the next minute you wonder how on earth your congregation could undertake such a project. Take a moment to look at the big picture.

- One of the most appealing aspects of working with Habitat for Humanity is that building a house provides a tangible opportunity to live out your faith. Giving of your time and talents makes faith come alive.
- Building a Habitat house allows you to have a new understanding of poverty housing. When you work side by side with the future homeowner family, you break through barriers and see one another as real people—as partners. Also, getting to know people in need of housing creates an urgency to respond.
- Through tithing on the money you raise for a Habitat home in your community, you can help in the effort to eliminate poverty housing in another country as well. Each Habitat for Humanity affiliate is asked to set aside 10 percent of the money it raises locally to fund the construction of houses in another location. The title on your project may pay for the construction of an entire home in a country where construction costs are lower.
- Strong feelings of community develop as people work together to plan and build a Habitat house. New friendships are created within the congregation and within the community. When the house is finished, volunteers and homeowners feel a great sense of pride and connection with one another.
- Many congregations experience great spiritual renewal when they build a house. Lives are changed. Often new families join the church and the congregation as a whole sees new purpose. The Rev. Al Kinsey, pastor of St. Michael Lutheran Church in Berkeley County, S.C., said, “Our church was turning blue and passing out from inactivity before Habitat came along and resuscitated us.”

Making the commitment to sponsor a Habitat for Humanity house means praying about the project, raising the money and recruiting the volunteers for construction. It is a big step of faith. However, those who take that step realize incredible blessings when the church obeys the call of Christ to help our neighbors in need.

Pray for Guidance

Begin with prayer. Pray specifically and ask God to direct you. Ask God to help you discern if building a house is right for your congregation. Pray with the assurance that if God calls you to this work, God will provide. Isaiah 40:31 reminds us that “those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary.” (TEV)

Gathering Information

The Relationship Between Churches and Habitat for Humanity

When congregations agree to build Habitat houses, the local Habitat affiliate and the congregations each make specific commitments. These are the typical arrangements.

The Habitat affiliate provides:

- a building lot.
- a homeowner family screened for willingness to partner, ability to pay and need.
- construction supervision and direction.
- legal work for closing and processing a mortgage.
- guidance and resources to help the church organize and promote the building project.

The congregations agree to:

- pray for the ministry of Habitat.
- provide the funds or in-kind contributions needed to build the house or a portion of the house.
- provide volunteers.

Cost

The cost of building a Habitat house varies according to location. Your local Habitat affiliate can give you the price of houses they are building in your community.

Some affiliates significantly trim the sponsorship price for churches by seeking contributions from banks and other businesses. Two Georgia foundations provided challenge grants totaling \$2.8 million that became the seed money for construction of 155 church-sponsored homes. Many denominational organizations also have provided generous grants for Habitat projects. Perhaps your church body has a similar grant program. Do some research within your church and with the local Habitat affiliate.

Forming partnerships that include several congregations also can make the cost more affordable—especially for small congregations that otherwise would not be able to participate in sponsoring a home.

Time Commitment

Construction schedules vary. Some groups choose to work every weekend for 10 weeks or so. Large, multifamily units may take even longer. Other churches choose to blitz build a house—that is, complete construction in about a week. Your local Habitat affiliate can help you develop a building schedule with a definite starting and ending date.



KIM MACDONALD

Volunteers

The local Habitat affiliate will be able to help you determine how many people you need, depending on the size of the project and the building schedule. Keep in mind that in addition to seeking construction volunteers, you will need to recruit people to organize the project and to take care of many tasks other than the actual building. (See information about specific tasks and leadership positions on pages 4–6.)

Be sure to include children and youth whenever possible. Insurance regulations prohibit young people from being on the construction site, but adult volunteers can help them make items for the homeowner family such as bird houses, book racks, planters, flower boxes and so forth.

The Church Relations department can help you secure plans for projects such as these or you can design your own. The devotional book entitled “Building a House of Love” (see page 25) is intended to help children feel a part of your church’s Habitat project. As families complete devotions each night, children add stickers to a drawing of a house in the book. After completing all the devotions, children will have built their own houses.

Getting the Congregation Behind You

If you have prayerfully considered the idea of sponsoring a Habitat house and if you have gathered specific information about what is required, begin talking with close friends in your congregation. Remember that they may not have spent the amount of time that you have considering the idea. They may or may not share your enthusiasm. The more they hear, however, the more likely they are to get excited.

Talk with friends in other congregations, too. They may be interested in forming a partnership and building the house together. Decide which churches might want to be involved. Do you want to ask churches in your denomination? in your neighborhood? Do you want to create a diverse partnership? Make a list of potential church partners and give them a call. Also talk to leaders of your local affiliate. They can help you create partnerships with other congregations.

Next, speak to people who make decisions and make things happen in the congregation. Set up meetings with different groups and recruit Habitat speakers. Have Habitat homeowners and people who have led their churches in a Habitat project tell their stories. Their successes can be very inspiring.

If your church has a mission statement or vision statement, examine it to see if it speaks about putting faith into action. Introduce the idea that building a Habitat home would allow many church members to serve others as Jesus called us to do.

Remember that you cannot force a Habitat project on the congregation. Talk up the idea and listen carefully to responses. If you feel that you have informal support, form a Habitat committee and put together a proposal. Include fund-raising goals and an estimated project schedule. Be clear that there are many options.

- Many congregations, including very small churches, have sponsored a house on their own. That means they raise all the funds and provide all the labor for construction.
- Churches can also form partnerships with neighboring congregations or with other churches in their denomination, or they can work with the local Habitat affiliate to form partnerships with diverse congregations in the community.

When you have completed the proposal, present it to the pastor and/or governing body of the congregation and get official approval. This process varies from congregation to congregation, so follow the plan that works best for your church.

Formalizing the Agreement

Once the congregation makes the commitment to build a house, put your agreements with Habitat in writing. (See the sample on page 4.) This is not a legally binding document; it simply sets forth the commitments agreed upon by the congregation and by Habitat.

If the agreement involves more than one congregation, set goals for each church. Consider relative sizes and resources. Agree upon a name for the project that reflects all the congregations involved. Make sure a representative from each congregation signs the agreement.

Recruiting Leaders and Volunteers

Sponsoring a house requires the work of many people with various abilities. Along with construction volunteers, you need good communicators, fund-raisers, people to direct food service, people who can organize and serve on committees and willing souls to take care of the tasks you never anticipated. If you are working with other congregations, be sure to divide the responsibilities so each congregation has ownership in the project.

Project Director

Someone from your church (or one of the partner churches) has to be in charge. The project director oversees all the committees and serves as the liaison between the church(es) and the affiliate throughout the project. All information should flow through this person. If you are working with other congregations, each church should have a primary contact person to get information out to its members.

Skilled Workers and Construction Volunteers With General Skills

Construction of the house is under the supervision of the affiliate. Your church, however, may have members who are skilled construction workers or who possess other skills necessary in house building. These people may be asked to take leadership positions.

Sample Letter of Intent

Letter of Intent

This agreement is established between Habitat for Humanity (Habitat) and _____ congregation (or congregations). In signing this letter, the parties agree to the following:

1. Habitat will select the partner family, provide a building lot and will provide construction personnel to oversee the building of the house.
2. _____ congregation will pray for the ministry of Habitat and will exert its best effort to provide the labor (_____ crews for _____ days) and funds (\$_____) to construct the house. Construction is scheduled to begin _____ (date). The payment schedule is as follows:
 - A. \$ _____ in cash 30 days before construction begins.
 - B. The remaining balance will be due at framing inspection.
 - C. A contribution of \$_____ that will be used for construction of a Habitat house in a developing country is due at the dedication service.
3. Habitat agrees to sell the _____ congregation house to the partner family and will use the zero-interest house payments to enable other people in need to get decent housing.

In partnership,

Habitat Affiliate President

Authorized Congregational Leaders

Individuals with little or no building experience but who are willing to work hard and get their hands dirty are also essential. With some direction and encouragement, they will be able to perform most of the building tasks. Volunteers may have acquired a variety of skills by doing maintenance and repairs on their own homes.

Volunteer Coordinator

The volunteer coordinator keeps the master schedule and assigns people to all the different tasks needed to plan and build the house. The skills inventory (see Appendices 1 and 2) will help assess the skill levels and interests of volunteers and will help in assigning people to committees and tasks. It also will help ensure that you have ample skilled workers available for each step of construction.

The coordinator should send out reminders and/or post the work schedule in the newsletter or on a bulletin board so volunteers are clear about what they are to do and when they are supposed to do it.

Project Registrar

This person must keep accurate records of who is working on the site each day. This is essential for recognition and for insurance purposes. The registrar also directs workers to the proper person for job assignments.

Project Chaplain

The chaplain makes sure someone offers a devotion on the construction site at the beginning of each work day. The devotion should not be a last-minute scurry. It is a time to center all your efforts on God's message for you. The chaplain also works with the affiliate and partner family to plan the dedication ceremony.

Fund-raising Committee

This important committee is responsible for working out the specifics of your fund-raising plan and for collecting the money. The chair and members of this committee should be comfortable and enthusiastic about asking people for money. Previous fund-raising experience is ideal, but enthusiasm is a great substitute.

It is essential that this committee give regular updates on the amount of money that has been pledged and collected. The more creative and upbeat the reports, the more responsive the congregation will be.

Publicity Committee

This committee needs enthusiastic people who can keep something new and exciting happening all the time to draw attention to the Habitat project. Putting up a bulletin board in a high traffic area of the church, keeping the board updated and producing articles for newsletters and bulletins are good methods of communication. You may want to secure a photographer and videographer to record project events.

In addition to keeping the congregation updated, the publicity committee should work in cooperation with the local Habitat affiliate's public relations committee to keep the community aware of your progress. If the local media receive accurate information in advance, they may cover special events such as the groundbreaking, fund-raisers and the house dedication. Members of the publicity committee may want to identify key people in the church for media interviews. They also need to explain that any volunteer on the work site could be approached for interviews or photographs.



JOHN CURRY

Food Service Committee

This committee works with the project coordinator to plan and organize meals, snacks and drinks and to ensure that food is at the site when needed. This is an area where many people in the congregation can help.

Affiliate Committee Members

Volunteers also are needed to work on an ongoing basis with the Habitat affiliate on committees such as church relations, family selection, site selection and so forth. Serving on affiliate committees is a great way to keep enthusiasm going and can help you envision your participation in another Habitat project.

Raising the Funds

One of the first lessons Habitat volunteers learn is that God will provide. In many instances, the money for building a house will come from individuals. Before people are persuaded to give over and above their regular contributions, however, they want to know that their money will be spent for something they consider worthwhile. When members of your congregation hear personal testimonies from homeowners or see homeowners on a Habitat video, they can see the real difference a Habitat house makes in people's lives. Potential contributors can visualize their contributions being transformed into nails, boards, concrete blocks, siding, shingles, windows and doors.

Another wonderful aspect of a financial gift made to Habitat is that the gift keeps on giving. As a homeowner family makes house payments to Habitat, the money is recycled in the affiliate's revolving Fund for Humanity and is used again and again to help more families have simple, decent houses.

How do you get people to give? You ask. You ask again. And then you ask again. Timidity can only limit the possibilities. Once the cost for sponsoring a house has been established with the local affiliate, determine how much money is available in the budget for building the house and how much money will need to be raised outside the budget. Then create a financial plan.

Develop a Habitat Campaign

Five to six weeks before you collect pledges or a special offering, saturate the church with information about Habitat for Humanity and your specific project:



- Include inserts or special articles in the newsletter and bulletin.
- Have a speaker tell about Habitat for Humanity each week during the worship service.
- Send out a church wide mailing, including a response envelope.
- Create publicity posters and place them around the church.
- Plan a Habitat Sunday when everyone comes to church in overalls and work clothes. Collect the offering or pledge cards in hard hats.
- Invite a partner family to speak during one or more worship services to tell your congregation about the blessings of owning a home.
- Use any of the resources on pages 25 and 26 to help your congregation understand more about the ministry of Habitat for Humanity in local communities and around the world. You may want to use one or more of the books and study guides for Sunday school classes or other small groups.

Pledges

The most significant element in your fund-raising efforts will be obtaining pledges. Design pledge cards and distribute them with a letter of explanation. Then personally follow up with as many persons as possible. Have one special day of worship when you dedicate the Habitat pledges. You might invite people to wear work clothes to worship on that day and have music, Scripture and the sermon all focused on the theme of building. Invite your partner family to be a part of this service.

Sample Pledge Card

Habitat Pledge Card

In faithfulness to God's call to help our brothers and sisters in need, I (we) pledge to make the following financial commitment to help fund a Habitat for Humanity house. I will give \$ _____ as a one time gift or \$ _____ per month to be paid by (date) _____.

Signed _____

(Include your local affiliate logo and contact information as well as directions for turning in the pledge card.)

Seek Large Gifts From Individuals

Identify and approach any members of your congregation who can make sizable contributions to the project. Do not hesitate to ask for large gifts. Otherwise, you might get \$250 from a person who could give \$2,500.

Ask for Smaller, Regular Contributions

Break down the remaining amount needed in terms of individual contributions. For example, announcing that you need \$40,000 may seem like an unreachable goal, but suggesting that 100 people agree to give \$50 a month for eight months makes it seem possible. Perceptions are very important.

Seek Funding for a Specific Portion of Construction

The building committee of the local affiliate can provide you with the specific costs for each construction task. Then ask individuals, groups or an entire congregation to raise the funds and help provide the labor and materials for specific jobs. This is an excellent approach for very large congregations that have many communities within the church. For example, one group could buy and install the doors and windows; another group could fund the materials for and help install the roof.

Seek In-kind Contributions

Ask for both materials and professional labor. (You will need a licensed plumber, electrician and heating contractor to do codes-regulated work.) Ask members of the congregation who may be (or know) building suppliers or subcontractors to offer goods and services. Their contributions are just as valuable as cash.

Be sure to coordinate these contributions with the local affiliate. Habitat accepts only new materials, and the building supervisor will know the specifications for what materials are needed when. If you are promising to secure in-kind contributions for the project, make sure the building supervisor approves the materials being donated and get firm commitments as early as possible. If you rely on a good faith promise but do not follow up on a regular basis before construction begins, you may get stuck without having what you need at a critical time. This creates tremendous problems for a blitz build.

Do not be too demanding, however. You have to be flexible but realistic—gracious but definite. Contributing companies are interrupting their schedules and may be foregoing profits for you. Work diligently to cooperate with them.

Make sure to recognize companies that donate materials and/or labor. Put a sign in front of the site thanking them for their support. If those who participate in building your house have a positive experience, they may continue to work on subsequent Habitat houses.

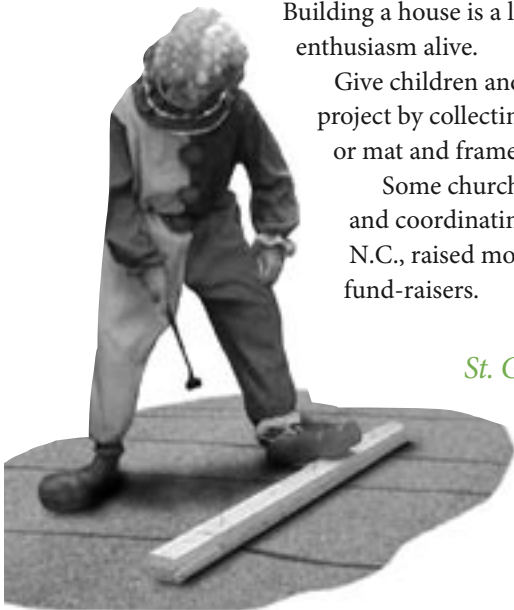
Organize Your Own Fund-raisers

The possibilities for these events are limited only by the imagination of your congregation. See the suggestions in Appendix 3. Bake sales, suppers, ice cream socials, 2 x 4 sales, bazaars, auctions, carnivals, golf/tennis tournaments, Christmas ornament sales, fun runs and T-shirt sales are great ways to promote the building project. When everyone wears a T-shirt that proclaims your mission, you are a team.

Building a house is a long process from the first approval to dedication, so it is important to keep enthusiasm alive.

Give children and youth an opportunity to participate as well. They can raise funds for the project by collecting money in Habitat house banks or by selling artwork that they can laminate or mat and frame.

Some churches are very successful at organizing big events, and they say that the planning and coordinating is well worth the effort. St. Andrews United Methodist Church, near Garner, N.C., raised more than \$71,500 in a one day. These events are often friend-raisers as well as fund-raisers.



St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Greenville, S.C., distributed \$500 checks to groups and individuals who invested the money in their own fund-raising events. One group organized a carnival— complete with an energetic clown. Church members tripled their \$21,000 investment for Habitat in this modern parable of the talents.



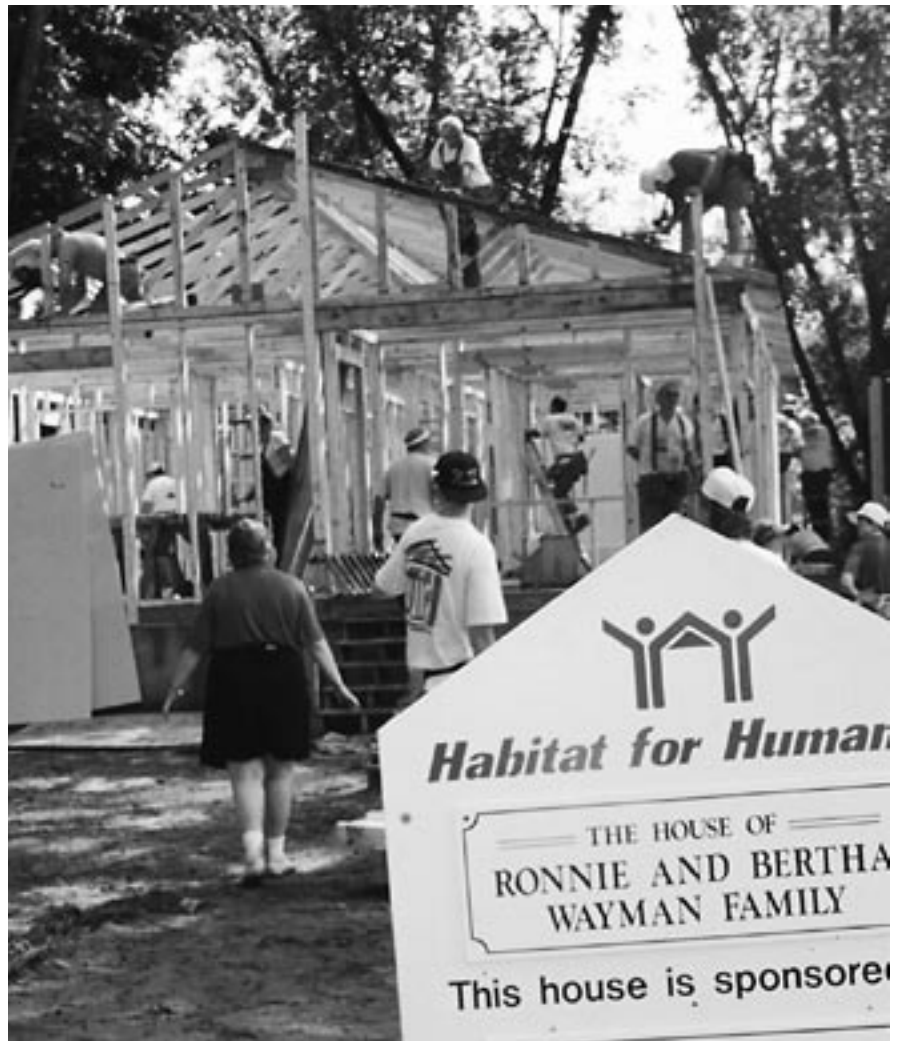
STEFFAN HACKER

Working With the Homeowner Family

The relationship you build with the partner family is just as important as the house you construct. The entire congregation should be focused on the fact that helping the family is the reason you are building the house. Get to know the family before construction begins and help them feel a part of your group. Involve them in fund-raisers, worship services and other events that build community.

Be careful, however, about doing too much. It is tempting to overwhelm the family without considering their likes and dislikes. Also check with the affiliate about their policy concerning gifts. Though you may want to donate a refrigerator or furniture, remember that a family's sense of pride can be endangered when well-meaning friends shower the family with extras. Also consider that if you buy a refrigerator and the sponsors of the house next door do not, bad feelings can result.

Many churches experience great spiritual renewal when they build a Habitat house. New friendships are created and often the congregation as a whole sees new purpose.



ROBERT BAKER

HFIH FILE PHOTO

Special Events

Much of the initial planning for building a Habitat house takes place in small groups and involves hard work. Special events and celebrations along the way are essential to keep the energy flowing and to provide opportunities for building community.

Kickoff Event

Once you have made the commitment to build a home, plan a kickoff event to celebrate. You may choose to have a dinner or perhaps light refreshments after an informational meeting where a homeowner speaks. The goal of this event is to build excitement throughout the congregation.

Groundbreaking Ceremony

During the groundbreaking ceremony, several shovels of earth are ceremoniously turned to mark the official start of construction. More importantly, however, this is a time to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the foundation for this ministry, to thank God for the love of those present and to seek God's blessings and direction.

Work with the affiliate to plan this special event. If the homeowners have not been introduced, this is a good time for everyone to meet them. Invite as many people as possible: the entire congregation, members of the Habitat affiliate, the mayor, the county executive, other political leaders, other pastors and congregations and all volunteers and contractors.

You may wish to use one or more of the sample groundbreaking services printed in the "Celebrations" worship resource (see page 25) to guide you as you plan your ceremony.

Worship Service and Dinner

Consider having a worship service the night before you begin construction. Make it full of celebration and thanksgiving. Acknowledge the love and power of Jesus Christ as you begin the most visible part of your work. You may want to follow the service with a dinner or reception. Offer simple fare and make it free. This is a great way to get volunteers inspired and ready to work. It is also an ideal forum for offering last-minute instructions and making introductions. Start building up your team before you hammer the first nail.

Halfway-home Party

Don't let enthusiasm fade once the initial excitement begins to wear off. Plan some special events, such

as theme lunches or have a “halfway-home” party when you have raised half the money or when you are halfway through construction. These events are great ways to keep the project before the congregation and to keep it exciting.

The Dedication Service

Work with your affiliate to plan a service in which you dedicate the completed home to God. Encourage everyone in the congregation(s) to attend the house dedication service. This is a tremendous opportunity to celebrate the spirit of giving shown to us through Jesus Christ. Volunteers need to feel a sense of completion and have a chance to celebrate the fruits of their labor.

Offer to help the affiliate plan the service. Again, invite as many people as possible. Let children carry banners, ask the choir(s) to sing, include community leaders and so forth. Let everyone share in the joy of witnessing another victory for Christ.



MIKEL FLAMM

Recognition Dinner

Recognition of a job well done is essential. Sometime after the dedication, plan a celebration where volunteers and the family can relax and enjoy a simple dinner.

- Prepare certificates for those who participated and make sure everyone is recognized. Work with your local affiliate to coordinate your recognition efforts.
- Use a humorous approach as you look back on the project with videos or slides.
- Make sure everyone goes away feeling good about having made new friends and joining together to build a home.
- Plant the seeds for participating in a new and more exciting project within the coming year.

Special Concerns

for Multi-congregation Partnerships and Mega Churches

Coordinating a Partnership

When two or more congregations decide to sponsor a house together, it is critical that responsibilities are articulated clearly. The more congregations that are involved, the greater the need for cooperation and communication. Issues of fairness, responsibility and community-building must be considered. Remember that if you encounter problems, you should address them with a spirit of love. Keep your commitment and your goal always before you.

The House Sponsorship Agreement

In drawing up the agreement for multiple congregations that agree to work together to build a Habitat home, be sure to include these specifics:

- How much money is each congregation contributing? Encourage congregations to set fund-raising goals that are appropriate for their size and resources.
- How many work crews will be provided by each congregation?
- What will the project be named?

Deciding these issues is essential in helping to promote ownership by all congregations—especially if one congregation is providing most of the financial support. The guiding principle must be that all congregations in the partnership are equal partners, working together to share God's love.

Steering Committee

Form a steering committee that includes one or two representatives from each congregation. Keep the size of this group manageable. Members of the steering committee will serve as liaisons to their congregations. They will accept assignments on behalf of the congregation and will seek volunteers to do the assigned tasks. This group should choose the project director, volunteer coordinator, project chaplain and committee chairs.

The project coordinator should preside at steering committee meetings. The project can have only one boss, the project coordinator.

Including Every Congregation

All the individuals in leadership roles and all committees must take special care to include volunteers from each congregation as they plan and carry out their work. This will help keep communication flowing about important issues such as work schedules, publicity and fund raising. This also helps to ensure that each congregation carries its fair share of the load.

Special Events and Meetings

Celebrations such as the groundbreaking, kickoff service, dedication and recognition dinner, as well as planning meetings, are wonderful opportunities for building ties between congregations. Rotate locations and responsibilities for these events. Celebrate the variety of gifts God gives to each person and be intentional about bringing together people from different congregations. Plan joint worship services and invite partner congregations and the homeowners to various events at each church. This is a great way to build community.



COURTESY OF NEW SONG CHURCH

Mega Churches

Communication is a key issue that churches with thousands of members must address daily. Leaders of a Habitat project in a mega church must employ or create communications systems that will allow as many people as possible to support the project. Make sure there is a clear line of communication from the affiliate to appropriate church leaders. Recruit plenty of committee volunteers early. It takes some time to get the message out.

Mega churches also tend to have many staff members. Pulpit time is limited and personal contact with the staff may be difficult. You may not be able to speak directly with the pastor. Again follow the protocol of the congregation in presenting information to the appropriate

people, but keep in touch with as many staff members as possible. Let them hear your excitement.

Interfaith Builds

If you are participating in a build that involves a variety of faith groups, it is especially important to be respectful of one another. For example, the food coordinator of one interfaith build noted that cooking for 1,200 Muslims, Jews and Catholics takes not only careful planning but an appreciation for religious customs. Kitchen volunteers took care to avoid using chicken stock and to separate the food on the serving table. The food was kosher and halal—cooked in accordance with Jewish and Muslim traditions—and included a vegetarian option. Workers also took breaks during the project while Muslims observed prayer times.

Participants in interfaith projects often report that building the house breaks down many barriers and allows participants an opportunity for honest dialogue and newfound respect for one another. Organizers for one interfaith build met together for lunch on a regular basis for a year before the build discussing issues close to their hearts. Building relationships is the first step to take before building houses.

Establishing a strong steering committee that is careful in its planning and attention to detail is



STEFFAN HACKER

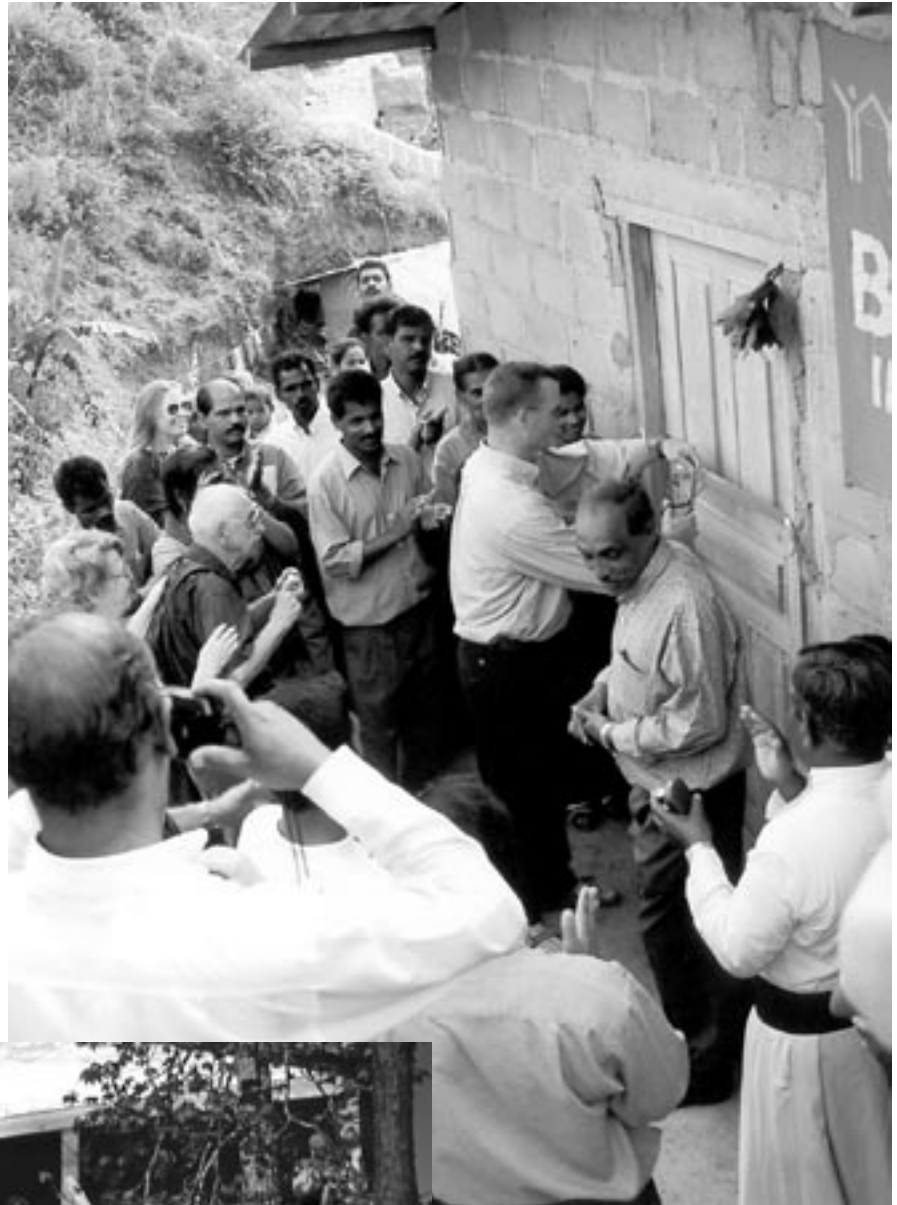
essential for an interfaith build. Members who are open and eager to learn about one another can create an environment that is respectful and comfortable for everyone.

The steering committee can help clarify that Habitat for Humanity is a Christian ministry. For example, the Habitat affiliate will present a Bible to the homeowner family at the house dedication. If a mosque chooses to present copy of the Koran or if a synagogue presents a copy of the Torah, that is fine, but Habitat presents a Bible.

Habitat for Humanity maintains its integrity by being open to partnerships with people and organizations of all faiths while still proudly holding to its own faith.



ROBERT BAKER



JULIA SUMMERS



HFH FILE PHOTO

Churches that continue to build Habitat houses know that it is important to make each project a little different.

What Happens Next?

After completing a house or houses, some congregations are exhausted and need a break. Others seem to stay pumped up and ready to go. When the time is right, it generally takes one individual or small group to get the ball rolling to build another home. Maybe your church wants to be a part of a different kind of partnership. If you have been a part of a neighborhood coalition of churches, maybe you want to partner with a church in another part of town or with small churches who would never be able to participate without your help. Maybe you are ready to build your first house on your own. Churches that continue to build Habitat houses know that it is important to make each project a little different. Keep it exciting and put a new twist on the idea. You might, for example, frame the house in a parking lot during a community event to raise awareness and then transport it to the building site.

You might put together a work team to travel to another part of the world to build a home. An exciting possibility would be to partner with churches in another country as a part of HFHI's Global Church Partnership program. In addition to building houses, partner churches in this program minister to local communities in other ways according to God's call. Often they build during celebratory events such as an Easter Build or Building on Faith (see below), and often the houses are blitz built—completed in a week or two. Church partners pray for one another, worship together and share dreams, struggles and joys as they discern God's call to serve. Visit the Web site for more information (http://www.habitat.org/cr/gcp_default.html).

Work with your local affiliate to plan a bold Building on Faith project with churches in your community. Each year in September, Habitat for Humanity groups around the world celebrate their partnerships with the faith community by organizing church-sponsored building projects and urging churches to become advocates for housing. This is a terrific opportunity for inviting new church support.

Serve as a mentor congregation for other churches. After you participate in a successful build, you can be a powerful voice in persuading other congregations to join the ministry of Habitat for Humanity.

Also make plans to involve your congregation in the International Day of Prayer and Action for Human Habitat. On this day churches around the world lift up in prayer the issue of poverty housing and seek God's guidance on how they can help. See page 26 for information on ordering Day of Prayer bulletin inserts to use on this day.

Community Development

It is also imperative that churches look for ways to support the communities in which they are building homes. Building houses is a terrific boost to families and neighborhoods, but there are other needs to be met. If your church is located in a neighborhood where Habitat builds homes, you can help by providing lists of families who could be potential homeowners and by providing leads for building sites. You can also work with the affiliate to provide support services to homeowners. For example, you already may

have in place services such as employment counseling, child care and after-school programs, tutorial and other educational programs, health awareness programs, small business development and so forth that can strengthen the lives of Habitat's partner families and the neighborhood.

If your church is located in an area that is not near Habitat homes, you can support the community development efforts of neighborhood churches by offering prayer, financial contributions and volunteers. You can also prayerfully and financially support those who have felt God's call to relocate into communities where Habitat homes are being built.

Advocacy

Once your congregation settles back into a routine following the excitement of building a house, you may want to go a step further. You may decide to adopt housing as a congregational emphasis. This requires reselling the idea, and it requires prayer and commitment on the part of the entire congregation.

Churches can play a key role in raising the consciousness of the community to make poverty housing unacceptable. Members of your congregation can do research (see statistics on the Habitat for Humanity Web site: <http://www.habitat.org/how/stats.html>) and write articles about your experiences. Don't forget church publications as well as community newspapers and other media. You can hold informational meetings and work with your local Habitat affiliate to network with other housing agencies.

You can also help shape legislation. For example, Habitat for Humanity supporters in the Denver, Colo., area successfully challenged proposed changes in land-use laws that would have, in effect, prohibited them from building Habitat houses.

Call upon the strengths of your church members. Some can be effective public speakers. Others are terrific organizers. Some members of your congregation have the local connections that can help you move forward. Others are willing to make phone calls and write letters. Be in prayer to determine what God is calling your congregation to do next. Then work with your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate to create a plan.

Conclusion

Building a Habitat for Humanity house requires careful planning, enthusiastic volunteers, generous donors and diligent prayer. If God calls your congregation to this task, God will provide. Seek God's blessings with the confidence of Elijah who prayed, "Answer me, O Lord...so that this people will know that you...are God." (1 Kings 18:37, TEV)

Thank you for your ministry and for your willingness to serve God by serving others. May the house that your congregation builds shine as a light in your community to glorify Almighty God.

Sample:

Habitat Volunteer Sign-up Sheet

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ Zip _____

I will support our Habitat for Humanity project by doing the following:

- I will pray for our congregation, for the homeowner family [insert name] and for Habitat for Humanity.
- I will prepare a lunch or snack for construction workers.
- I will pick up or deliver food to the site.
- I will work on publicity.
- I will make phone calls/send out reminders.
- I will be a fund-raiser.
- I will work with the affiliate to provide support services to the family.
- I will be a "gofer" to pick up/deliver people, materials.
- I will help build the Habitat house (see construction crew application for details).
- I will be responsible for a short morning devotional at the site.
- I will provide child care so a parent can work on the house.
- I will be a first aid volunteer at the site.
- I will help plant flowers/shrubbery.
- I will help clean up the site and keep it neat.
- I am a child _____ years old. I would like to help too!
- Other (you list) _____

Sample:

Construction Crew Volunteer Application

(Must be _____ or older)

Name _____ Telephone _____
Address _____ Zip _____

Indicate your experience or interest in the following construction tasks. Note that the electrical and plumbing work require a licensed/certified professional. If you (or someone you know) could donate these services, the cost of the home can be significantly reduced. First aid should be administered by someone with training and experience as well.

Crew or skill	Extensive experience	Some experience	Can learn
Framing			
Sheathing			
Installing windows			
Hanging doors			
Roofing			
Hanging vinyl siding			
Trimming			
Painting			
Doing deck construction			
Installing insulation			
Doing electrical work		XXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX
Plumbing		XXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXX
Landscaping			
Helping with first aid			XXXXXXXX
Cleaning up			

Special needs:

1. Clean-up coordinator _____ 2. Trailer materials coordinator _____ 3. Paint crew coordinator _____

What days and times of day are you available?

So Your Church Wants to Raise Funds for a Habitat for Humanity House...

One of the first lessons Habitat volunteers learn is that God will provide. Below are some ideas that can help you raise money and awareness about Habitat's ministry. Remember that the number one rule for getting people to give is to ask. Timidity can only limit possibilities.

- **Pray about it!**—Prayer empowers us to do God's work and helps us make difficult decisions.
- **Make Habitat a line item in the congregation's budget**—This will ensure regular participation in Habitat's work.
- **Serve up your congregation's favorite dinner, desserts or ice cream**—Plan a social and spice it up with a speaker or a dance or performers. (Partner families make great speakers.)
- **Trade treasures at a garage sale**—People seem to give more, in every way, when a garage sale is connected with a cause.
- **Make noise with a silent auction**—Offer baskets to biscuits and music to meals. Persuasive organizers can obtain terrific donations from area businesses. Proceeds can number in the thousands.
- **Get creative with a craft show**—Solicit crafters from the congregation and the community to donate items or a portion of sales.
- **Ask for alternative gifts**—A young man at a synagogue raised more than \$800 for Habitat as a bar-mitzvah project.
- **Make a model house**—Build a model house in which to collect donations. Place the house in high traffic areas.
- **Distribute Habitat house banks and fund-raising calendars**—Children learn to count their blessings and join in the giving as they collect dimes for every closet in their home and pennies for every light fixture and so forth. This is a great Lenten project. The calendars (Item #3079) are \$1.22 per pack of 50, and the house banks (Item #1600) are 13 cents each. Visit Habitat for Humanity's BuildBrand Resource Center at <http://buildbrand.habitat.org> or contact the Help Line at (800) 422-4828 Ext. 2552, to obtain these materials.
- **Buy a brick**—Create a grid on a poster containing a drawing of a house. Sell sections of the grid and write donors names in the spaces.
- **Organize a 2x4 Sunday**—Sell the 2x4's that you will use for construction. Invite purchasers to sign the 2 x 4's and to write Scripture passages or encouraging messages on them. Expand the campaign to include other building materials.
- **Pound it home with a nail sale**—Paint the tips of nails and sell them—\$1 for a bronze nail, \$3 for a silver and \$5 for a gold nail.
- **Step out with the youth for a walkathon**—Set a high goal and challenge youth to obtain "over the top" pledges.

- **Phone a friend**—Have the walkathon youth challenge another group in the church to match their donations through a phone tree campaign.
- **Collect a mile of pennies or nickels or dimes**—Have your resident genius figure out how much that would net and then get to work.
- **Crank up a concert**—Invite members or local artists to give a benefit concert for Habitat.
- **Collect aluminum cans**—Your local Habitat affiliate can tell you about great possibilities in partnering with the Aluminum Association.
- **Promote an alternative Christmas**—Christ Our Hope Lutheran Church in Riverdale, Ga., raised more than \$700 by selling simple Christmas ornaments. Offer other items or simply ask for donations; gifts aren't always necessary. Provide gift/acknowledgement cards indicating that a donation has been made to Habitat.
- **Honor special friends at homecoming**—When you gather to celebrate the heritage of faith in your congregation, ask for donations to be made in honor or memory of special people. Create certificates for presentation.
- **Plan a special offering or offerings**—Designate a specific Sunday, a holiday, a Habitat month or fifth Sundays as times for special Habitat offerings. Publicize this early and be aggressive.
- **Multiply your talents**—Provide seed money and distribute checks (\$100 to \$1,000) to individuals or groups. Urge supporters to plan projects that will allow them to make more money from their investments. This modern parable of the talents can yield great profits through bake sales, carnivals, golf tournaments, etc. When St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Greenville, S.C., distributed \$21,000, creative church members tripled their proceeds to more than \$66,000.
- **Try the tried and true**—Bake sales, auctions, babysitting, preparing mailings for businesses and clean up days for donations are often still great fund-raisers.

A Quick Look at Organizing Partnerships

There are no absolute guidelines or schedules for creating partnerships among churches to build homes. In some cases, one church may take a strong leadership role. In other partnerships, the steering committee may represent all the churches early in the process. Some churches are able to organize and raise the money quickly. Others may need time for church members to make monthly pledges. The following schedule is a possible guide that may help direct your project. Adapt it to fit your needs.

Establishing a Plan (six to 12 months before construction begins)

- Pray for guidance. Is this what God is calling your church to do?
- Contact your local Habitat affiliate and gather information.
- Seek support in your congregation and form a Habitat committee.
- Recruit church partners and determine what level of support each congregation can provide. Be very specific.
- Make a project proposal to the governing body of each congregation. The proposal should contain fund-raising goals and an approximate project schedule.
- Get approval from the governing body of each church. Have a representative from each church sign a letter of understanding that outlines each church's commitment.

Organizing and Raising Money (usually takes six to nine months)

- Form a steering committee that includes at least two representatives from each partner church. This committee should elect a project coordinator, a volunteer coordinator, project chaplain and committee chairpersons. The committee should meet monthly with a representative from the affiliate to discuss coordination issues and to plan fund-raisers, publicity and recognition events.
- Each congregation can do its own fund raising and publicity, but working through the steering committee will allow you to share ideas and support one another.
- Conduct a kickoff event for the project. This should include something to help inspire the congregation and build ownership in the project. A dinner works well. Try to have an outside speaker from Habitat. The best choice is a homeowner who can tell his or her Habitat story.
- Concentrate on fund raising. Possibilities: Recruit people to ask for donations. Organize church dinners, garage sales, silent auctions, T-shirt sales, bake sales and so forth. Check for donations and grants that may be available from denominations or from local businesses. For example, a local restaurant may donate food for a fund-raising dinner or a denominational group may provide grant money to cover a portion of construction costs.
- Plan opportunities to worship together. Invite the homeowners to join you. Also invite members of each congregation to attend various events at each church.
- Consolidate funds from all congregations.

- Make sure plans are in place for all in-kind donations.
- Plan groundbreaking, dedication and worship services.
- Have construction dates set and use sign-up sheets to help organize work parties. Try to schedule volunteers so people work with members of their own congregation and with members of at least one other congregation. This allows volunteers to be comfortable around people they know and allows them to meet new people.

Habitat for Humanity Resources for Churches

General Resources

Habitat for Humanity's Christian Principles—Use this document to discover the Christian principles upon which Habitat for Humanity was based.

Item #1532 \$1.19 per pack of 5

Offering Envelopes—Use these envelopes, which include the Building on Faith logo, at any time for collecting Habitat offerings.

Item #3093 \$3.30 per pack of 100

Name Tags—Keep plenty on hand for meetings and work days. The Building on Faith logo reminds everyone that Habitat builds on faith every day.

Item #3177 \$1.79 per pack of 100

Worship Resources

Celebrations—Worship resource that includes ground breakings, dedications, devotions and more; loose leaf binder included.

Item #3347 \$3.18

Building a House of Love—Family devotional booklet including stickers and daily devotions that emphasize caring and sharing.

Item #3802 \$1.00

Study Tools and Resources

Kindergarten Sunday School Lesson—This Leader's Guide can be adapted for older and younger age groups.

Item #3382 \$0.43 per pack of 5

The Theology of the Hammer (book by Millard Fuller, founder of HFHI)— Describes the biblical foundations upon which Habitat for Humanity was founded and operates.

English—Item #1411 \$0.39 each

Spanish—Item #1411S \$0.72 each

Theology of the Hammer Study Guide—Offers suggestions for individual consideration and group discussion of the material in *The Theology of the Hammer*.

English—Item #3289 \$0.50

Spanish—Item #3281 \$0.50

Note: Millard Fuller has written several other books about *Habitat for Humanity*. For more information call the Help Line at (800) HABITAT, Ext. 2552.

Fund-raising Tools

Share the Blessings Fund-raising Calendar—One-month calendar (for use any month) for use by families to remember and contribute to Habitat. May be used with House Banks (see below).

Item #3079 \$1.22 per pack of 50

House Banks—Small cardboard house with slot for coin donations

Item #1600 \$0.13

Day of Prayer Resources

The “Litany for Shelter” on the Day of Prayer bulletin inserts can be used in worship services at any time of year. For current item numbers and pricing information for these Day of Prayer resources, call the Help Line at (800) HABITAT, Ext. 2552.

English—Item #3464 \$0.93 per pack of 100

Spanish—Item ##3469 \$1.95 per pack of 100

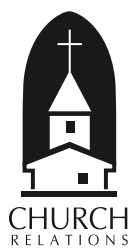
Ordering Information

For any of these resources, call the Help Line, (800) 422-4828, Ext. 2552. Shipping and handling charges are added to all orders.

*Indicates items available by contacting your local affiliate.



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