

God's Closet Handbook

A Seventh-day Adventist outreach to communities that helps local families in need by providing free clothing for children

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION 4
- DISCLAIMER 4
- I. WHAT IS GOD’S CLOSET?5**
 - a. Ministry Profile
 - b. Mission, Vision, & Goals
 - c. History
- II. STARTING & OPERATING A GOD’S CLOSET CHAPTER AT YOUR CHURCH7**
 - a. Pastoral and Board Approval
 - b. Chapter Registration
 - c. Assembling Your Team
 - d. Setting Up Your Budget
 - e. Online Setup
- III. CLOTHING DONATIONS—HOW TO PROACTIVELY MAINTAIN A CONSTANT SUPPLY12**
 - a. Proactively Seeking Donations of Children’s Clothing
 - b. Storing and Processing Donations
- IV. FREE SHOP DAY EVENT13**
 - a. Choosing the Right Location
 - b. Advertising and Promotion
 - c. Event Preparation
 - d. Here Come the Shoppers!
 - e. Post-event
 - f. Free Shop Day Troubleshooting Questions
- V. GOD’S CLOSET SUCCESS STORIES14**
- VI. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES20**

Introduction

Get ready to make a genuine, lasting impact on your community!

God's Closet is a practical and inspiring ministry that empowers your congregation to reach out to neighborhood families, meet a felt need, and build relationships!

This handbook will take you through the fundamental steps of establishing a God's Closet ministry at your home church. You'll also learn about best practices, recommendations, and options for adapting this ministry to your own unique church and community.

Many Seventh-day Adventist churches of varying sizes, whether in bustling cities or quiet suburbs, have made each of their God's Closet chapters flourish into a recognized and respected presence in the community. God has worked wonders with these churches through their desire to help those in need—and He can do the same with yours!

Disclaimer

It's important to consider that God's Closet started at the grassroots level, responding to a specific need for children's clothes in low-income families. It became a flourishing community ministry through prayer, commitment, and determination. As this ministry continues to grow and spread across the North American Division, however, the framework for its operation has had to grow and adapt as well. Chances are it will continue to do so.

The fundamentals in this handbook are meant as a guide—not a manual—to the setup and operation of your own church's God's Closet chapter. Keep in mind that there's no one way to run a successful God's Closet ministry. What works at one church may not work as well at another. It's best to think about what fits the needs, abilities, and collective personality of both your congregation and your church's surrounding community.

Additionally, before registering as a new local God's Closet chapter, a church should prayerfully take into account the degree of commitment required to sustain this ministry.

While the Free Shop Day events only happen a few times a year, it takes continual effort to collect, store, and process clothing donations so they're ready for each recurring event. Maintaining a constant supply of donations, with enough items in each size to make a community shop day event truly worth it, demands consistent and proactive effort. What's more, the church will need to determine if it has space to store large amounts of clothing donations in between events.

Remember, this is a community-facing ministry. It's best to be certain everything is in order before hosting a Free Shop Day. A hastily-planned or underprepared effort may do more harm than good when considering what may be a first impression of your church to many community families.

But if you feel called to bring this ministry to your local church, you don't have to be discouraged. Move forward in careful prayer and see what doors might open!

I. What Is God's Closet?

Ministry Profile

God's Closet is a ministry that collects and distributes gently-used children's clothing to local families in need through recurring Free Shop Day events.

Clothing items size newborn through 12 are collected throughout the year, utilizing a donation network that includes church members, community members, and local businesses.

Each local chapter of God's Closet hosts Free Shop Day events typically once a quarter, though it may vary depending on church and community size. Clothing donations are sorted by size and gender and displayed throughout the shop area, where community guests can browse and select the items they need until the designated number of shopping bags are full.

The way Free Shop Day events are typically run, shoppers pay a small entrance fee, such as \$1, to come in and shop. Once inside, all the clothes they fit into their shopping bags are free of charge.

While the primary purpose of God's Closet is to provide children's clothing for families in difficult circumstances, it has many secondary benefits as well. It can create new opportunities for the local church to build relationships with community families, local businesses, and local media. It can also be a great opportunity to advertise church events, children's programming, and more.

Each God's Closet chapter is registered through *AdventSource*, where they may also purchase resources if needed. However, each chapter is locally managed and is under the direction of its host church(es).

Mission, Vision, and Goals

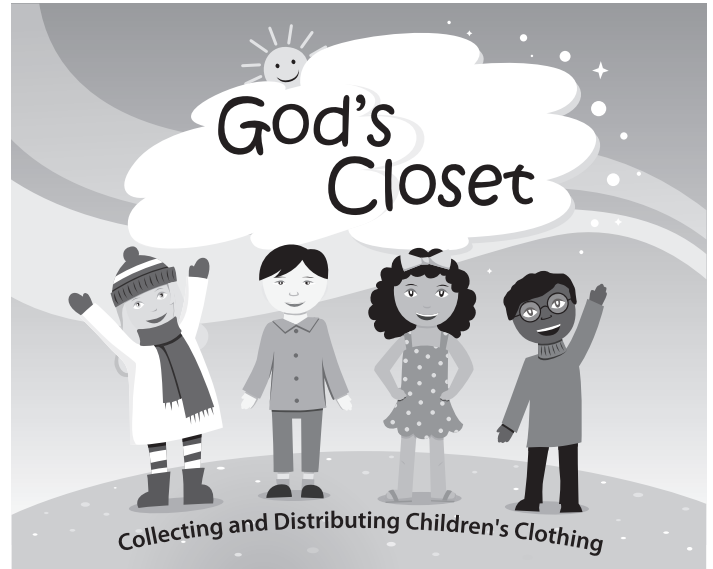
"I was without clothes, and you gave Me something to wear. ...Anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me" (Matthew 25:36, 40, NCV).

Mission: To provide children's clothing for families in need while building relationships with the community.

Vision: To be a ministry that empowers local churches to provide community families with a helping hand during a time of need, making connections that can help grow God's kingdom on earth, starting with the local church.

Goals:

- To collect enough clothing donations for multiple successful Free Shop Day events
- To establish and host a friendly, organized, and helpful Free Shop Day event
- To get to know your community better
 - Families in need
 - Community members that wish to serve alongside your church
- To gather contact information
- To promote local church programs, ministries, and activities



The God's Closet Story

The God's Closet idea was brought to the Adventist Church in 2009 by Meryll Tschoepe Moore, who at the time attended the Spokane Adventist Church in Washington. While helping out in the foster system, she attended an event where foster families could "shop" for articles of children's clothing that were donated from the community.

When a family Meryll knew found themselves in great need, she immediately thought about how that type of community outreach could help people like them get through their tough time. She thought about how fast children grow and how clothing needs change with each season. It's no wonder an event like this is beneficial for foster families. But wouldn't it be great if there was an event like this for *all* families in the area that needed it?

She brought the idea to the Spokane church and the God's Closet Free Shop Day event was a success! The ministry gained momentum, working with various local conference Adventist Community Services (ACS) and women's ministries departments as well.

Today, the central resources and guidelines for God's Closet are compiled and made available for local churches throughout the North American Division via *AdventSource*. Any church in any type of location can start a chapter of the God's Closet ministry using this framework and connect with the community in a lasting, meaningful way.