

Loads of Love: Doing Jesus' Laundry

1 John 3:17



My name is Caroline Gowan and I am 15 years old. I began Loads of Love in my community, Bonaire, Georgia for my [Girl Scout Gold Award](#) service project. I am not the first person offer a free laundry service to people in need, but I am hoping that as people learn what a blessing it is to serve others in this way, they will want to start a ministry like this one in their own communities because *the need exists everywhere*. God has blessed this project from the very beginning. Members of [Bonaire United Methodist Church](#) embraced the idea and helped me launch this ministry. Generous people have donated money, talent and time to make this a success. It has gotten a lot of attention from the media and quite a few people have contacted me to ask me about this ministry and how they can help. Because I have a strong desire to see this service offered in other communities, I am writing a guide to give charitable and community organizations information that I learned as our ministry grew. The requirements for my Girl Scout Gold project were met last year but this ministry continues because God is continuing to bless it.



Loads of Love is a **free laundry** ministry offered at a local Laundromat one night per month. It is offered to anyone who does not have the ability to wash their laundry. People bring their dirty laundry and we wash, dry and fold it while they wait. We have volunteers who sing praise and worship songs and the patrons often join in, especially those who enjoy gospel music. Some people will ask volunteers to pray with them. We usually have sidewalk chalk, balls and bubbles to entertain little children who come to the Laundromat with their parents. Our motto is, "come with your dirty laundry. Leave with a renewed spirit!"

Clean laundry is a basic human need that most of us take for granted. Being clean makes us feel good, be productive and happier. There are no government programs that allow for people to clean their laundry and while many churches offer a food pantry or clothing closet, very few offer to serve this need in their own communities. Everyone needs clean laundry but there are many people who don't have soap, machines or even water.

When we began, we needed a way to let people know the service was available. We placed flyers in the food bags of nearby church food pantries letting the people who need food know there is also a place to get clean laundry. We also hang notices on the door of the Laundromat. We serve "regular customers" who come almost every time but we also meet new people every month as well. Initial news stories also helped get the word out about this free service.

One of the things we wondered about most is what this ministry would cost. Of course, most of it depends on the cost of operating the machines and the number of loads the patrons bring in. We initially intended to make all of the soap like we use in our own machines at home. It is an unscented liquid detergent, appropriate for high efficiency washers. We quickly learned that was not the best option. When people don't have access to laundry regularly, clothes are often worn numerous times and stored even longer until they can get them cleaned. We have found that Jesus' laundry needs a highly fragranced, powdered detergent to produce a fresh scent we all associate with cleanliness. The machines at our Laundromat will accept powder or liquid detergent but we get best results with powder. With the donations, we purchase laundry detergent, bleach, dryer sheets, and inexpensive baskets, but the bulk of the money is spent operating the machines. We now average about \$250 each month doing Jesus' laundry.

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' - Matthew 25:40