



Exploring Homelessness

Assembly

EXPLORING HOMELESSNESS ASSEMBLY

AIMS

- To introduce the different ways people can experience homelessness
- To learn how The Salvation Army supports people who have no home

BIBLE VERSE

'I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was alone and away from home, and you invited me into your house.'

(Matthew 25:35 ICB)

RESOURCES

- PowerPoint presentation (standard and widescreen)
- Reflection sheet (optional)

You will need:

- A brown cardboard box
- Ripped-up pieces of brown cardboard, a piece for each pupil

Be sensitive in case pupils are homeless or have experienced homelessness. Ensure there are other adults in the assembly in case any pupil needs support.

INTRODUCTION

Slide 1

Introduce yourself and welcome pupils to assembly.

Hello and welcome to assembly. I've brought something to show you today, something really special. Are you ready? I hope you are excited to see it! *Make a big presentation, and hold up the cardboard box. Be prepared for disappointment!*

It's a box! A cardboard box. Wow! These are amazing things; they can be anything! *Place the box above your head. A hat. Balance it on one hand and strike a pose. Part of a statue. What else could the box be? Take a variety of suggestions and be playful. Eg a racing car, a boat, a drum ...*

The cardboard box can also be really useful for storing and sending things. But for some people, like people who are part of the homeless community, having a simple cardboard box can be vital.

MAIN TALK

Slide 2 - Rough sleepers

For rough sleepers, people who have nowhere to live and have to sleep outside, a cardboard box can be a really important piece of equipment. Any ideas why? *Take a variety of responses and acknowledge that each suggestion is a good way that the box would be useful.*



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Another use for the box is as a mattress. If you break it down, if you flatten it, it is something you can sleep on. It helps protect the body from the cold of the pavement or the damp of the ground. But ... when the cardboard gets wet, it is no longer useful; and sleeping on a cold or wet surface can make people ill.

Slide 3 - Temporary accommodation

When people have no homes, sometimes they are housed in temporary accommodation. Staying there might be for just one night or a few weeks or months. The accommodation could be a bed-and-breakfast or a bedsit, just one room to live and sleep in, sharing a kitchen and bathroom with others. How might cardboard boxes be useful if you're staying in temporary accommodation? *Take a few responses.*

Cardboard boxes can store lots of items, like clothes, or toys or books or even pots and pans - very helpful when people don't have a lot of space or cupboards or when they have to move again.

Slide 4 - Hidden homeless

Another group of the homeless community that might use cardboard boxes to help move their possessions are a group often referred to as 'hidden homeless' or 'sofa surfers'. These terms are used when people are continually staying with friends or family and moving on every few days or weeks. Even though they are living in homes, it is a form of homelessness. It is impossible to know how many people are living like this and to give them the support they need.

Slide 5 - The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is a Christian church and charity which is passionate about sharing God's love by helping people, including people who are experiencing homelessness.

Slide 6 - Christian perspective

In the Bible, Jesus talks about the importance of helping others, to support people as if they were helping Jesus himself.

'I was hungry, and you gave me food.
I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink.
I was alone and away from home, and you invited me into your house.'
(Matthew 25:35 ICB)

Which part of this Bible verse encourages people to help those experiencing homelessness? *Take a response.* A long time ago the only way to help was to invite someone into your home! But today we do things a little differently. As we now know there are lots of ways someone can become homeless, so there are lots of different ways that The Salvation Army can help people.



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Slide 7 - Helping rough sleepers

The Salvation Army helps rough sleepers by providing food and supplies and emergency night shelters. They also run drop-in centres which provide a wide range of services including food, support, advice - and sometimes a hot shower too.

Slide 8 - Helping rough sleepers

The Salvation Army is finding new ways to help too. Like the 'nap pods' - specially designed rooms that are secure, clean and comfortable and give shelter and supplies to a rough sleeper when they need it. For some, this is a first step to living inside again. There is the night bus that provides food, shelter and companionship. And The Salvation Army constantly campaigns to end rough sleeping for good.

Slide 9 - Lifehouses

The Salvation Army runs Lifehouses, which are specialised accommodation for people who have been experiencing homelessness. Lifehouses are not just a safe place to live, they provide a chance for each person to rediscover who they are.

Slide 10 - Lifehouses

Each person has individual support for their health and mental wellbeing, and opportunities to develop their work skills, their life skills and their creativity.

Slide 11 - Accommodation

The Salvation Army provides lots of different types of accommodation. For example, there is a specialised Lifehouse providing a home and support specifically for young adults. For families and adults who are ready for more independent living, there are flats, homes with as much or as little support as they need.

Slide 12 - Prevention

Preventing people from becoming homeless is important too. So The Salvation Army helps by giving people debt advice - how to manage their money and bills - training to have the skills employers want, and even cooking lessons, to help people stretch their money further.

Slide 13 - Meet Alan

Meet Alan. Alan used to drink a lot of alcohol. It was how he spent his free time and how he coped with life's problems. When Alan realised this wasn't how he wanted to live and tried to change, he didn't know what to do or where to go. He walked away from everything and ended up living rough. Alan became homeless.

Then, at a night shelter, Alan spoke to an alcohol counsellor who helped him get into a Lifehouse. There they helped Alan with his alcoholism and gave him the support and life skills he needed to rebuild his life. Alan now volunteers with one of the employment programmes at the Lifehouse called The Sandwich People, and has completely changed his life.



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‘While I was homeless, The Salvation Army looked after me. They gave me food, clothes and sleeping bags. I now volunteer at the Lifehouse with The Sandwich People. I really enjoy it because they make me feel so welcome. They are so helpful and always go the extra mile. Everyone here makes you feel you’re part of something.’

REFLECTION

Slide 14

Hold up a piece of cardboard. If practical, you may wish to give each pupil a piece of cardboard.

We started today by looking at the cardboard box and how people in the homeless community might use them. We’ve also looked at the different ways The Salvation Army helps people. Let’s take a moment to reflect on what we have learned and what message of hope might we think of for people experiencing homelessness.

Pause for a short reflection time.

Slide 15 - Goodbye

Ensure each pupil has a piece of cardboard (or give the pieces to the teacher). Suggest that perhaps pupils could write a message of hope on their piece of cardboard, a prayer - if appropriate - or something they have learned today about homelessness or The Salvation Army.

You may also wish to give teachers the Reflection sheet, for pupils to write or doodle their thoughts.

Thank the pupils and staff for letting you be a part of their assembly.