



Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness
www.pnteh.org

Homelessness and

Affordable Housing Sunday



August 4, 2013
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



June 2013

Dear Friends,

We are delighted that you have requested a Resource Packet for Homelessness and Affordable Housing Sunday. The Presbyterian Hunger Program partners with the Network to End Homelessness to provide you with helpful resources to highlight Homelessness/Affordable Housing Sunday recognized by the Presbyterian Church, USA on **August 4, 2013**

Presbyterians care about homelessness. Homelessness and affordable housing go hand in hand. This packet highlights some of the faithful and exciting ways many of our congregations are engaged in serving unprecedented numbers of homeless families and individuals in the United States. We encourage all congregations, specialized ministries and presbyteries to take this opportunity to learn more about homelessness and affordable housing in your communities.

To complement local, ecumenical ministries in your own communities, many Presbyterians are members of the Network to End Homelessness to learn from other communities and to connect their work to state and national policies that impact homelessness and affordable housing. The Network to End Homelessness are Presbyterians volunteering their time to network and think strategically. They pulled together this wonderful packet and want to connect with you. We encourage you to join the Network to End Homelessness.

One of the causes of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. Four percent of the One Great Hour of Sharing offering supports congregation-based community organizing focused on providing affordable housing. These funds have leveraged millions of dollars of affordable housing so that families and others are now living in safe housing. Please contact Trey Hammond if your congregation is involved in affordable housing projects as part of its community ministry.

Thousands of prayers, liturgies, sermons and activities will happen on August 4, 2013. As we face an election year in which creative solutions to issues like homelessness seem to be forgotten, let us claim boldly that God does not forget even one person. God sees, God hears and God calls each of us to open our hearts and homes to one another. Blessings on you, your congregation, and your community as you use these resources to deepen your ministry.

Handwritten signature of Ruth Farrell in cursive.

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Worship Ideas

for Homelessness and Affordable Housing Sunday

Call to Worship

(based on Isaiah 58; as found in Global Food Crisis, October Fast Materials, see www.pcusa.org/resource/october-fast-materials/)

Is not this the fast that God chooses:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

**Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?**

Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will spring up quickly;
your liberator shall go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be all around you.
**Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and God will say, here I am.**

Prayer of Confession

(based on Matthew 25; as found in Global Food Crisis, October Fast Materials, see www.pcusa.org/resource/october-fast-materials/)

**Christ, our suffering Savior, have mercy on us.
We have failed to see your face in the faces of the poor.
You were hungry and we gave you no food,
you were thirsty and we gave you nothing to drink,
you were a stranger and we did not welcome you,
naked and we did not give you clothing,
sick and in prison and we did not visit you.
Forgive us, we pray.
Empty us of our sin, our selfishness and fear,
and fill us with your love and compassion for the world.**

A Psalm on behalf of the Poor

(published in *Woman Word: A Feminist Lectionary and Psalter on Women of the New Testament*, by Miriam Therese Winter, 1990 (Medical Mission Centers, Crossroad Publishing Co, New York.)

Helpless are the poor, Shaddai,
for the poor do not have access to the bounty of the earth.

**Homeless are the poor, Shaddai;
they lack the opportunity for shelter and security in time of dire need.**

Hungry are the poor, Shaddai;
they dream at night of lavish feasts, at dawn of daily bread.

**Without hope are the poor, Shaddai,
when promises all trickle down to nothing but despair.**

How long must the poor cry out to You,
and wait to receive an answer?

**How long can we keep faith in You,
so silent to our need?**

Forgive our doubts and addictions,
our escape from desperation.

**Give us the strength and fortitude,
to wait upon Your word**

May the morning star bring hope,
to all in the midst of destitution.

**May evening find the poor at rest,
in your everlasting arms.**

On that Day there will be no trace
of inequality.

**Blessed are You, God of the Poor,
Mother of all Your children.**

We cling to Your breast of abundance,
and gratefully drink our fill.

Worship Ideas (continued)

More worship ideas:

Call to Worship (based on Isaiah 1)

Leader: God demands that we pray on behalf of the oppressed.

People: How will we pray on their behalf?

Leader: We will raise our voices to the Lord that God may revive the “cause of the poor.”

People: How will we ask the Lord to relieve the suffering of the oppressed?

All: **We shall petition God with our constant prayers to raise the fortunes of the oppressed so they may be acceptable in the eyes of all, as they are in God’s eyes. Amen.**

Call to Worship: (based on 1 Col 4.11: “... we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless...”)

One: The Lord Almighty has set the path of the Savior’s apostles before us!

Many: **May their strength be our strength in suffering.**

One: Jesus gives the apostles His Word of support ...

Many: **Even when their clothes were tattered....**

One: Even when they had no place to lay their head

Many: **Even when Jesus’ word, through them, returns rejection and beating as their reward.**

One: Because God poured the blessings of His Son on the apostles

Many: **We know that God’s blessings will fall as grace itself to lift the shoulders of the poor and downtrodden.**

Prayer of Invocation

Our Holy God, fill us with wonder at your earth
And fill us with compassion for what society deems ‘the least of these’
If we see those whose strangeness is off-putting,
May we overcome our fear to embrace them as Christ!
For those who walk naked down the street
May we offer prayer and clothes and hope
To those languishing in cold, unhappy prison,
May we pray for repentance and forgiveness.
As we see those hungry or thirsty on the street
May our response be not rejection but as they were the king!
Open us to see clearly how we can finally live out the wonder of your creation earth
In our relationship with those most unlike us, and yet
Most like You in the margins of life

Confession and Assurance of Pardon (based on Matthew 19: 21 and Matthew 6:33)

Unison: Creator God we confess that too many times our voices sound like that of the rich young man in Matthew. We want to follow you but we don’t want to do the things to which you have called us. We do not want to sell all of our belongings and give the money to the poor. We do not want to reach out to the marginalized, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and visit the imprisoned. Forgive us for not loving our brothers and sisters as you love us. Forgive us for taking what we want and not sharing our gifts that come from you. Forgive us for hiding behind our walls of money, greed, and fear. Forgive us for thinking of ourselves first and not our neighbor. Forgive us and help us turn from our errant ways and to strive first and always for the kingdom of God.

The Great News is this: God will fight along with us and stand beside us in our struggle for righteousness, to overcome the poverty in our soul so we can overcome the poverty in the world, to bring justice to our world, justice that roars like a mighty river. A mighty river that pours over us like the incredible grace of God. God’s promise is forever! Amen.

Scriptures/Sermon Ideas

"The Bible is full of wanderers and homeless people. God evicted Adam and Eve from Paradise. Cain lived the curse of wandering the earth, finally ending up in a place called Nod, which itself means "wandering." Abraham, by faith, left his homeland. The Israelites refused their new home in the Promised Land (Numbers 14) only to know exile at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. David lived in the desert for years to preserve his life from the despotism of Saul. Daniel knew life without a true home, though God blessed him in his faithfulness. Jesus himself, along with his disciples, was a wanderer. Jesus spoke of his dispossession, saying, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). Jesus' disciples left family, friends, spouses, and homes, to follow him. Upon his ascension, these same disciples wandered to the far reaches of the known world to share the Good News of salvation."

~ Mark Kramer, "A Charity of Grace: Making a Place for the Wanderer," in *Prism*, May-June 2002, Evangelicals for Social Action.

Additional Scripture/Sermon Ideas for Preaching about Homelessness

Old Testament:

Genesis 15: 13-16 - God promised to end homelessness for Israel and give them a new home.

Exodus 2:23-25 - God hears the cry of the destitute homeless.

Exodus 3: 1-12 (and other excerpts from chapters 1, 2 and 3) -- God hears, sees and knows human suffering, especially that caused by economic exploitation. God's will is for slavery and oppression to end and for Creation's gifts to be shared by all.

Leviticus 19:9-18 (or Deut. 24:10-21) -- In grateful response to the God who frees from slavery and oppression, the community sets rules to provide for the needs of the lowest wage workers, widows, orphans and aliens.

2 Samuel 7 – What are the different definitions of "house"? What does God promise us? Can we provide homes for one another?

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a – God desires that all, including those who govern, foremost take as a starting place the care for the weakest. What happens when a king or government claims absolute power, or only seeks to serve the needs or desires of the class of rich or most powerful? What is the word from the prophets?

Ruth 1, 4 – Here is the story of two homeless women. Hard economic times hit. The social structure that provides for their care, i.e. marriage, fails, when the husbands dies. Ruth proclaims her intent to stick by Naomi. How long will they be able to "lodge" in any shelter that they find? Is she (gasp) choosing to be homeless? Or is she accepting that her death must be near? Or is she forming and deepening a relationship, which may be the means to end homelessness for many homeless people? In Ruth 1, what do Naomi and Ruth lack? How did this develop? In Ruth 4, how has the story ended? What makes a "home"? How can we choose to side with and alongside other people?

Psalms 126-128 – God desires for us homes, and more than homes.

Isaiah 1:17 - Be action people; the hands and feet and voice of Jesus Christ in this place. We are called to make things right for people in need.

Isaiah 58: 6-12 - The Lord promises favor on those who care for others, who build up what has been torn down, who do His work.

Isaiah 65: 17-25 - In God's realm, work brings life's necessities in ample supply, and our children and elders dwell in health and security.

Jeremiah 29: 1-9 - As people exiled from our true home, we are to seek the welfare of the city within which we find ourselves.

Amos 5: 21-25 - Our worship offends God if not accompanied by righteousness and justice within society.

Micah 6: 6-8 - What does God require us to do? Love/produce/encourage mercy, kindness and justice

Scriptures/Sermon Ideas (continued)

New Testament:

Mark 1:29-34; 2:1-12 – Two stories that involve houses. What are our housing needs? What does it look like to have them met? What happens when we don't have a house? Who needs a house?

Luke 8:26-39 – A homeless man, who struggled with mental illness, once sat in a Bible Study of this passage, and remarked, both off hand and with joy, that wow, it appears that Jesus loves and cares for and welcomes the mentally ill. In what ways is the demon-possessed man healed and restored to the community?

John 6:24-35 – Jesus provides for the people bread and more than bread.

John 14:1-14 – While read at funerals a great deal, this passage has a lot more to say to the people who are left behind, whom the Spirit comes and makes a home with. Where is the house with the many rooms for all? How can all of our needs be met?

Matthew 25:31-46 -- Our love of Christ is demonstrated through our regard for "the least of these," those despised and forsaken in our communities.

Acts 2:43-47 and 4:32-35 - The Pentecostal blessing of the Holy Spirit leads to sharing by all so that none experience scarcity.

Ephesians 2:11-22 - Christ is our peace, breaking down the walls that divide us and building one united household in God.

James 2: 14-26 - Ending poverty and homelessness takes action and cannot be done by confession alone.

Hymns for worship:

From Sing the Faith

2187 Now it is Evening
2183 Unsettled World
2181 We Need a Faith
2171 Make Me a Channel of Your Peace
2172 We Are Called
2174 What Does the Lord Require of You?
2175 Together We Serve
2176 Make Me a Servant
2177 Wounded World that Cries for Healing
2178 Here Am I
2179 Live in Charity

From the Presbyterian Hymnal

343 Called as Partners in Christ's Service
433 There's a Spirit in The Air
435 We are All One in Mission
436 We Are Your People
507 I Come With Joy
525 Here I am Lord



WHAT A CONGREGATION **Can** DO

*He has showed you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
~ Micah 6:8*

Within your Congregation

- Encourage your church to pray faithfully on the issue of ending homelessness
- Preach and teach about homelessness and ending it; involve professionals in the community at your church
- Encourage your church to hold a Mission Fair Sunday and invite guest speakers to address the issue
- Encourage your church to include homeless issues in “minutes for mission” during the worship service
- Promote the PC USA Homeless and Affordable Housing Sunday on the first Sunday each August
- Build a resource library at your church on the issues of poverty, homelessness, and housing justice
- Encourage your presbytery to provide a seminar on Homelessness and what churches can do to help
- Work with neighboring churches on local homeless issues and actions
- Invite your neighbors living in a homeless shelter to an activity at your church; befriend them.
- Encourage your church to open a room to be a shelter or daycare facility in partnership with local homeless programs
- **Share what you are doing to help end homelessness or create more affordable housing with PNTEH (email pat@sanjosephy.org). Your work can inspire others to act!**

With Other Churches

- Work with other congregations to create homeless programs, education, housing
- Identify landlords in your and other congregations and convince them to rent units to homeless people in partnership with local shelters or transitional housing programs for ongoing support services
- Identify those who own “mother-in-law” apartments and encourage them to share it with homeless people in partnership with local shelter or transitional housing programs for ongoing support services

With Community Civic Groups

- Encourage your church to endorse and support your local Plan to End Homelessness; if no plan exists, start one with community leaders
- Encourage your church to adopt a homeless family and mentor them in partnership with local homeless programs
- Attend meetings/homeless conferences of local church/ civic organizations that work toward ending homelessness.
- Participate in and support local groups that develop housing for the homeless
- Advocate for local and/or national public policy advocacy
- Make a house-warming package for a new tenant in partnership with a local agency for the homeless
- Cook meals for local shelters or for local meal programs or cook community dinner for the homeless
- Encourage members to make financial contributions and volunteer for local homeless programs
- **Encourage your church join the national Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness** (details at www.pnteh.org)
- Help to start a local **Presbytery Network to End Homelessness**; encourage other churches and organizations to join your network

Working to Add **Low-Income Housing** in your Community



Individual, Congregational and Community Actions

“For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.”
~ Hebrews 3:4

Individual

- Learn everything you can about homelessness and extremely low-income housing issues
- Find out about your community’s amount and quality of affordable housing and extremely low-income housing. What are neighboring cities doing?
- Volunteer for your city’s Housing or Planning Commission where housing decisions are made
- Attend public discussions about housing, zoning, possible funding sources
- Network with people who know about building affordable housing.

Congregational

- Join a faith-based community organizing group to gather support for building low-income housing (e.g. www.piconetwork.org)
- Educate the community about possibilities: have a speaker or speaker series, show films (“Holding Ground: the Rebirth of Dudley Street” is one ([Newday Films: /www.newday.com](http://www.newday.com)); excite people about housing justice
- Research land availability, funding sources (there are many non-profit housing developers who know how to put funding together for housing projects... e.g., Charities Housing, www.charitieshousing.org), laws regarding building housing
- Participate with local *Habitat for Humanity* house-building and building-rehab projects
- Become an active member of a low-income housing development organization in your community, e.g., Bethel New Life (<http://www.bethelnewlife.org>)
- Provide funding or a no/low interest loan to support a non-profit housing development organization to create or build affordable housing.
- Acquire, rehab, and sell/rent an affordable housing unit, e.g., transitional housing, shelter for homeless

Community

- Create a “Community Care” consortium with other churches, community, and neighborhood groups and then lobby, raise money for, and raise awareness about the need for low-income housing in your community
- Join with other congregations and/or neighborhood organizations to form a non-profit housing development corporation
- Research Federal “Community Development Block Grant” (CDBG) funding in your community (call your Housing Authority or City Housing office.) CDBG funds can be used to build low-income housing (or repair or renovate existing housing).

Actions Leading to **Hope**

This is my chosen fast: to loosen all the bonds that bind humans unfairly, to let the oppressed go free, to break every yoke. Share your bread with the hungry, take the homeless into your homes, clothe the naked when you see him/her, do not turn away from people in need. Then cleansing life shall break forth like the dawn, and your wounds shall soon be healed. Your triumph shall go before you and your Lord's glory shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call and the Lord will answer. "
~ Isaiah 57

“One-Stop” Centers that Help the Homeless

- A trend in support for the homeless is “**one-stop**” service, from counseling to intake evaluation, medical referrals and finding transitional housing. This new way of attacking the issue of homelessness is seeing “regional homeless centers” appearing around the country.
- The first such center may have been the “**PATH Mall**” (<http://www.epath.org/>), erected in Los Angeles in 2002 through a support organization started by a Presbyterian couple, the Rev. Charles Orr, pastor of Westwood Presbyterian Church, and his wife Claire West Orr.
- In Seattle there is **YWCAWorks** (<http://www.ywcaworks.org/>), with programs to end homelessness, create jobs, care for children and youth and prevent violence.
- **EHC Lifebuilders** in San Jose, CA has a medical respite facility for homeless people who've been recently released from the hospital after surgery or serious illness. The respite center allows these vulnerable people to recover in a supervised, clean, supportive center rather than being “released to the street” as sometimes happens. When they are ready, clients are counseled into transitional housing using the “Housing First” model, giving clients counseling, health and financial support until they are on their feet. (www.ehclifebuilders.org/brc-medical-respite-program/)
- Key to all these projects is a push for affordable housing, which ties into the **National Housing Trust Fund Act** . It would provide local communities with federal funds to match local funding for low-income and extremely-low-income housing. Church members could urge elected officials to fully fund the Trust Fund.



- **Project Homeless Connect** events happen around the county. These are an effort to offer a wide variety of services to homeless people in one place. Services that are often bundled together include: housing, health care, dental care, employment services, legal aid, hair cuts, new shoes and socks, foot-care clinic, etc. (www.projecthomelessconnect.com/mission, www.homelessconnectminneapolis.org/, www.sjhousing.org/homeless/phc.html, www.thekeyalliance.org/phc, www.anchoragehomeless.org/project-homeless-connect/, www.the-chapel.org/get-help/project-homeless-connect, www.lanecounty.org/departments/hhs/hsc/pages/projecthomelessconnect.aspx and many more places using the Google search engine).

Plans to End Homelessness:

- What is a 10 year plan? (www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1786)
- United States Interagency Council to End Homelessness: www.usich.gov/
- White House Office of Interfaith and Neighborhood Partnerships (www.usich.gov/member_agency/white_house_office_of_faith-based_and_neighborhood_partnerships)
- Community Plans to End Homelessness (www.endhomelessness.org/section/solutions/community_plans)
- Chicago's 10 year plan: www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/fss/supp_info/10_year_plan_to_endhomelessness.html
- Denver's Road Home (<http://participate.denversroadhome.org/>)
- Southern Collaborative to End Homelessness (<http://southerncollaborative.blogspot.com/2012/06/inspiring-hope-through-wrap-around.html>)
- Ending Homelessness in Oregon (www.ehac.oregon.gov/)
- Community Plans to End Homelessness in Minnesota (www.mnhousing.gov/initiatives/housing-assistance/community/index.htm)
- Hope for the Homeless Plan to End Homelessness in Northwest Louisiana (<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=19328&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>)
- Many more can be found by using Google to find “Plans to End Homelessness”

Living Wage Key To Lifting People From Poverty (<http://www.letjusticeroll.org>)

The issue of a living wage is at the heart of concerns over homelessness and affordable housing. When individuals and families' incomes are too low, these households are at a greater risk of homelessness than families whose incomes are sufficient to secure stable, permanent housing. Therefore, the issue of a **living wage** is of vital importance to those who wish to prevent and address homelessness. A living wage is what it takes to live (housing, food, expenses) in a particular area (in Santa Clara, CA the living wage is \$18 per hour. Sadly, one quarter of all residents of that county make much less than this, many of them depending on minimum wage jobs to survive.)

By extension, the question of the minimum wage is at stake, for a minimum wage that functions as a poverty wage, keeping people in poverty, ensures that wages stay artificially low. Low-income workers, then, are forced to make difficult decisions in order to make ends meet - choices among food, housing, medicine, utilities, child care, transportation, etc. The question of an adequate minimum wage, one that will set the wage floor high enough to ensure that all workers can afford a basic human-needs budget, must come in to all conversations meant to address homelessness, especially homelessness prevention.

Currently, the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 is inadequate, having stagnated for a number of years. Advocates, therefore, are turning to states and local municipalities to raise the minimum wage. State, regional and local minimum and living wage campaigns have met with many successes in recent years.

Work for raising the Minimum wage and moving towards a living wage

For more information on minimum and living wage campaigns across the country, as well as advocacy for an adequate federal minimum wage, please visit the Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign at <http://www.letjusticeroll.org>. The Presbyterian Church (USA) has been a member of the Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign since its inception, under the auspices of the National Council of Churches Anti-Poverty Mobilization Initiative.

Good News Stories:

- The **Welcome Church** is a "street church," which was founded by Rev. Violet Little, a Lutheran pastor, growing out an initial commitment to a drop-in center for homeless people at a Center City, Philadelphia Lutheran Church (www.lc-hc.org/drupal/). There were people seeking spiritual care and attention, too, so the Welcome Center drop-in center continues, as its own 501(c)(3), and the Welcome Church continues in a number of other appropriate places, with other partners, in addition! There are Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Seventh Day Adventist pastors involved. Rev. Little ("Pastor Violet") facilitates a weekly tea time for homeless and other regulars, at another Center City church (Methodist); a week-day Bible Study; a (homeless) women's group; and other aspects of "church": See the Welcome Church website (www.thewelcomechurch.org); my picture is there, too (www.thewelcomechurch.org/What-s-New-.html). Violet also keeps a blog (www.thewelcomechurch.blogspot.com/). Suburban and other church groups are invited to bring "Coffee Hour" to the Sunday services, so that over cookies and coffee, people can be able to talk and begin to make a connection, and churches and others are also given the opportunity at a variety of times to collect items for "Welcome Home Kits"—basically a "wedding shower" or "housewarming gift" list of items (plates, pots, bedding, etc.), for people who are moving from street to housing, a time when they often have the apartment but none of these household basics, and also, all of a sudden, less of a connection to other people than they had when they were on the streets, so receiving a Welcome Home Kit helps individuals to know that there are indeed people who care about them. (In addition to other support that I am able to provide this ministry, I have become the keeper of the schedule of coffee hour hosts and of the list of churches who have provided Welcome Home Kits.)
- As part of **Broad Street Ministry** (multi-faceted ministry, begun by a Presbyterian Teaching Elder and a partnership of several congregations of the Presbytery, located in the prominent, downtown church building of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, where there was no longer a Presbyterian congregation), there is a hot lunch combined with social services being offered, every Thursday ("Breaking Bread"; see www.broadstreetministry.org/programs/breaking_bread.php), and a winter drop-in shelter, available to some of the neediest Philadelphians who might otherwise be reluctant to enter a shelter ("315 South Café"; see <http://www.broadstreetministry.org/programs/shelter315.php>).
- **The Pennsylvania Council of Churches** is one of over 100 organizations forming the **PA Cares for All Coalition**, organized to save the General Assistance Program in Pennsylvania, a state welfare program that provides \$205 per month (less than 25% of the federal poverty level) to Pennsylvanians living in periods of extreme vulnerability in their lives (e.g. women leaving situations of domestic violence; people in drug and alcohol treatment programs; disabled people who are waiting to receive SSI), which allows people to pay something for housing or other basic needs: but the program is threatened to be 100% eliminated in this year's state budget! Over 700 people came to Harrisburg for a recent Rally and Lobby Day to Save General Assistance (see pacaresforall.org/?p=351)!

A Story about a Homeless Day Shelter and the Religious Land Use Act (RLUIPA)

by [Rev. Carl Mazza](#)

(Reprinted from the May, 2012 PNTEH e-newsletter)



In August, 2007, **Meeting Ground** (www.meetingground.org/) purchased a large centrally located building in Elkton, Maryland, to serve as a center of its daytime services for homeless persons and families. The town of Elkton, and Cecil County, have a large number of homeless persons who live in camps in the woods and under highway bridges. The building was zoned C-1, permitting commercial uses by right including restaurants, nightclubs, Laundromats, funeral parlors, etc. Churches or religious houses, of course, are permitted anywhere in the C-1 zone. Since we were not operating an overnight shelter (a use which would require a zoning special exception), we assumed that our location was ideal and in conformity with the code.

We applied for an occupancy permit based on the fact that we were a religious organization (Meeting Ground is incorporated as a religious organization/church). We noted that all our intended uses of the building, including food service, were permitted in the zone, and our neighbors included a funeral home, the National Guard Armory, the county health department, a bowling alley, the Social Services domestic violence shelter, a hospital, and a closed Amtrak railroad station. Unfortunately and unknown to us, the town of Elkton had been eyeing our neighborhood as a potential area of redevelopment as an "arts district."

"We were flatly denied an occupancy permit based on their assertion that the zone did not include a provision for "philanthropic" activities. We noted that our activities were not philanthropic but religious (feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, counseling the afflicted, including spiritually-based discussions and workshops). We also noted that Meeting Ground is, in fact, an incorporated religious organization. Further, we argued that every planned activity was already permitted in the zone by right. Even nightclubs were welcome in the C-1 zone. We asserted that we had every right to practice our religion and that we thoughtfully chose a location which would be appropriate for our use and not intrusive to a residential area. Further, because it was central to downtown, it was ideal for accessing nearby services.

We were forced to endure two zoning hearings which were heavily weighted against us, and in which none of our arguments were taken seriously. Our identity as a church was dismissed completely and we were given no option to use the house for any purpose other than a single-family dwelling, despite the fact that we were in a commercial zone. We were even denied the right to occupy the building as an office (another use permitted by right in a commercial zone). There was strong bias against homeless persons openly stated by members of the appeals board, and it was clear this was the major, if not the sole reason for the denial of an occupancy permit. They clearly did not want homeless persons walking around that part of town.

At these hearings we asserted uncompromisingly that feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, relieving human suffering, and providing the means of the restoration of broken human life were for us not philanthropic functions but works of justice and redemption demanded of our religion as people of faith. We maintained that these activities are an integral part of being church – as much as a worship service or Bible study. To label our activities as merely charitable or philanthropic was to demean our sincere faith-based motive and the core of our religious belief.

It all fell on deaf ears. One member of the zoning board went so far as to say that the building "didn't look like a church." He mumbled something to the effect that it didn't even have a steeple. Another instructed us that "real churches do not have showers." We strongly replied that many, in fact, do and that perhaps all churches should.

After we exhausted all local appeals to no avail, we contacted our friends at the Maryland American Civil Liberties Union and they eagerly took up our case. The process from the time we bought the house until we finally got our day in federal court took almost 2 years. The ACLU attorneys argued passionately that the town had not considered our religious identity seriously and denied our rights to use the property in flagrant violation of the Religious Land Use Act.

The judge ruled immediately in our favor. She ordered the town to re-open their consideration of our request for an occupancy permit and strongly suggested that if she were forced to make a final ruling on the matter it would be in our favor. The town understood and immediately approved every use for which we had originally applied, and their attorneys moved quickly to settle the case with us. They finally agreed on a settlement of \$140,000 to compensate our financial losses from being prohibited to use the building for two years, and they issued a permanent, full occupancy permit for everything we wanted.

Today, The Mary Randall Center is occupied daily by as many as 50 to 75 persons seeking help or desperately seeking shelter. It offers a full program from light meals to showers, lockers, and a myriad of workshops, meetings, and personal services designed to alleviate suffering and homelessness in Elkton, Maryland. And we work in peace and harmony with our neighbors and the town.

Showered with praise

COUPLE HONORED FOR PROVIDING 2,500 FREE SHOWERS TO THOSE IN NEED

by **Julie Muhlstein**, from the *The (Everett, Wash.) Herald*
Reprinted with permission from the PC USA News Room, June 7, 2012



Outside, there's a chill in the evening air. Inside the trailer, it's warm and steamy. Clean scents of soap and shampoo fill the cramped space. "When we get here, there are usually three or four people waiting — an hour early," said Frank Fargo, whose custom trailer makes his ministry possible.

Fargo, 59, and his wife, Louise, were honored recently at Everett's First Presbyterian Church. In a presentation during the church's "Dinner at the Bell," they were recognized for providing 2,500 showers to people in need. "Tonight is special," said Shirley Morrow, a church member and organizer of the free Wednesday night community meals, where all are welcome. "Frank and Louise have been coming to this church for four years to give showers. Tonight they start on the next 2,500," she said. A plaque given to the Clearview-area couple thanked them for what they call "Shower to the People."

During the dinners, Frank Fargo hands out reusable tickets for showers. Each Wednesday evening, he parks his trailer in the alley behind the church, which is on Rockefeller Avenue near the Snohomish County Courthouse. He offers as many as 15 showers after the evening meal. Some people take 10 minutes or longer in the trailer, which is customized with a regular-size stall shower, a curtained-off dressing area and a skylight. Patient and easygoing, the Fargos wait — sometimes until 9 p.m. — while people with nowhere else to shower take their turns. Frank Fargo stands outside. His wife sits inside the trailer handing out towels and other items. Along with showers, they give away new socks and underwear. "It's easier to find meals than showers," said 20-year-old Eli Calderon, adding that he lives on the streets.

"We appreciate what he does out here. He's a good man," Russ Roderick, 42, said as he waited and chatted in the group outside. Also in line was Elaine Wolf, 42, who said she lost a home after separating from her husband. "Bless their hearts," Wolf said of the Fargos. "It's amazing — endless hot water. Just knowing people care is enough. It's God's work for sure," she said.

Frank and Louise Fargo attend Cascade View Presbyterian Church in south Everett. But twice each week they haul their rig — a Ford F-250 Super Duty diesel pickup pulling a 1990s Cobra Salem travel trailer — to two churches where free meals are served. Along with First Presbyterian at 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays, the shower trailer stops weekly at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lynnwood. A Neighbors in Need breakfast is served there at 8:30 a.m. Saturdays.

Frank Fargo was inspired by a book he read. ***Under the Overpass: A Journey of Faith on the Streets of America***, by Mike Yankoski, is the true story of a man who followed his Christian faith by living like a homeless person for five months. Fargo was struck by the author's descriptions of going without showers.

Deciding to make a mission of it, Fargo looked for a used trailer with room to install the full-size shower, and clearance underneath for water tanks. He carries 150 gallons, but there's no danger of running out. The trailer has an instant water heater, and Fargo hooks up a hose from the church. Fargo juggles charity efforts with his day job. In addition to providing showers, he helps a youth group at Cascade View Presbyterian. He commutes to King County, where he works for the Port of Seattle. The Fargos get some donations at their church, but mostly buy the new socks and underwear. They estimate that each shower costs them about \$5, with fuel costs and clothing they provide.

Inside the trailer, one wall has stacks of folded towels. There are travel-size shampoos and other toiletries. They also gather used coats and other clothes, which they give freely to people waiting outside. "When he wanted to do this, I told him they can't put the same old clothes back on," Louise Fargo said.

"Frank meets all of these people exactly where they are," said Lois Sugars, who attends Cascade View Presbyterian with the Fargos. "This is a blessing. Frank and Louise are wonderful," said the Rev. Alan Dorway, pastor of Everett's First Presbyterian Church. Hours after the trailer arrived, a few people still waited to shower before walking off into the night. Frank Fargo stood by, still chatting, still smiling. "You have to give back if you've got it," he said.



to more information on Ending Homelessness and Advocating for and Building Affordable Housing

“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me... I tell you whenever you do these things for the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me.”
~ Matthew 25:35-40

Affordable Housing

- **Housing 100,000**, a campaign to house the homeless : <http://100khomes.org/>
Santa Clara County, CA version: **Housing 1000**: <http://housing1000sv.org/>
- **Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**: www.hud.gov/homeless/index.cfm
- **Affordable Housing Online**, commonly asked questions about: www.affordablehousingonline.com/whatis.htm
- **National Low Income Housing Coalition**: www.nlihc.org
- **Low Income Housing Institute**: www.lihi.org/aboutUs.html
- **Jubilee Housing, Washington D.C.**: [/www.jubileehousing.org](http://www.jubileehousing.org)
- **Charities Housing, Santa Clara County, CA**: <http://www.charitieshousing.org/>
- **Mercy Housing**: www.mercyhousing.org/
- **Saving Affordable Housing; What Communities Can Do**: [/www.nhi.org/online/issues/sf90.html](http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/sf90.html)
- **Affordable Housing Institute**: www.affordablehousinginstitute.org
- **The Campaign for Affordable Housing**: www.tcuh.org
- **Good Books to READ:**
 - ▶ **Making Housing Happen: Faith-Based Housing Models**, by Jill Shook
 - ▶ **A Right to Housing: Foundation for a New Social Agenda** by Rachel Bratt, Michael Stone and Chester Hartman

Ending Homelessness

- **National Alliance to End Homelessness**: www.naeh.org
- **The National Coalition for the Homeless** : www.nationalhomeless.org
- **Ten Essentials for Ending Homelessness**: www.endhomelessness.org/section/solutions/ten_essentials
- **Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness**: www.pnteh.org
- **The Partnership To End Chronic Homelessness**: www.endlongtermhomelessness.org
- **Coalition to End Homelessness**: www.help4homeless.org
- **National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty**: nlchp.org
- **Urban Institute study: What will it take to end homelessness?**: www.urban.org/publications/310305.html
- **Every state and many cities have ongoing efforts to reduce or end homelessness... here are just a few:**
 - ▶ **Interfaith Assembly for Homelessness and Housing**: www.iahh.org
 - ▶ **Providence House (Shreveport, LA)**: www.theprovidencehouse.com
 - ▶ **Interfaith Council for the Homeless (Chicago)**: www.ichchicago.org
 - ▶ **InnVision, the Way Home (SF Bay Area, CA)**: www.innvision.org
 - ▶ **Shelter Network, San Mateo County**: www.shelternetwork.org/
- **Good Books to READ:**
 - ▶ **Under the Overpass: A Journey of Faith on the Streets of America** by Mike Yankowski
 - ▶ **Homelessness, Housing, and Mental Illness** by Russell K. Schutt and Stephen M. Goldfinger
 - ▶ **Voices from the Street: Truths about Homelessness from Sisters of the Road** by Jessica Page Morrell
 - ▶ **A Kids' Guide to Hunger & Homelessness: How to Take Action!** By Cathryn Berger Kaye

Advocacy

- **National Alliance to End Homelessness – Tips on Advocacy**: www.endhomelessness.org/section/policy/advocacy/advocacytips
- Order: **“How to Be an Effective Advocate...Let your Voices Be Heard”** PC USA, Washington Office; #PDS #7282206001 from the Presbyterian Distribution Service- Free
- Order: **“Living Faithfully in the Public Square”** PDS# 1-57153-073-8 - \$3 ea.
- Sign up for the **Washington Office Action e-serve newsletter on information and action alerts**: http://capwiz.com/pcusa/mlm/signup/?ignore_cookie=1



“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. “ ~ James 2:14-17

The Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness

www.pnteh.us

Join us in making the hope of ending homelessness a reality!

Our Mission: to affirm, challenge, educate and empower local churches, and the Church as a whole, in the struggle to end homelessness.

Our slogan: Building Housing, Building Justice

Our work is to help empower Presbyterians to demonstrate compassionate responses to immediate human needs, creative empowerment of homeless individuals, and courageous advocacy for effective and systemic policy changes (such as housing production, homelessness prevention, service provision, and economic justice.)

JOIN US! Together we can work together to end homelessness!

PNTEH's Board of Directors are all veterans of the battle to eliminate homelessness, through their actions in the church community or through homeless-support or homeless-advocate agencies. We are willing to advise others on questions about homelessness and housing.

Board members are:

- **Marc Greenberg**, Acting President; Executive Director, *Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing*, NYC
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