

Action for Unsheltered During COVID-19 Pandemic

We recognize and commend all the community efforts that have already taken place to support those experiencing homelessness or housing instability among which have been the forestalling of evictions, the creation of a quarantine hotel, and the support for current shelters to create appropriate social distancing by arranging for hotels to provide temporary shelter.

We also recognize, as evidenced by the Emergency Operation Center's recent ask to the faith community, that despite such efforts, there remains a huge need in our community. There are still hundreds without shelter, living outside, in their vehicles, or in other places unfit for human habitation. In the long term, we all strive to be part of reducing and ending unsheltered homelessness in our community. Nevertheless, we recognize that no approach in this moment will end unsheltered homelessness. We further acknowledge that not all people who are unsheltered will avail themselves of traditional homeless resources. Therefore, for now, our current focus is on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among those who are unsheltered.

We engage in this effort not only to serve some of our most vulnerable residents but also in the interest of public health for our whole community. Given that people experiencing homelessness are two to four times more likely to need intensive care if they become infected with COVID-19 and aware of how critical each ICU bed is during this pandemic, this focus on a strategic approach to unsheltered homelessness is critical to the entire community's well-being.

As such, we come together as activists, faith communities, and service providers to ask our public sector partners for their support for the following four strategies to help keep more people alive through this pandemic:

1. Based on CDC recommendations, we ask for a commitment from all law enforcement entities in our county that they will not attempt to break up or disturb existing tent encampments. We will continue to work to educate people living in these camps about safety protocols and to get them the supplies and support they need.
2. Also based on CDC recommendations, we ask that more portable latrines with handwashing facilities be placed and regularly cleaned in areas

frequented by people who are unsheltered. In addition, where feasible, we ask that public restrooms remain open 24 hours per day. We welcome the opportunity to help identify the most needed locations for these additional resources.

3. To reduce the risk of death, we ask for the expansion of 100-120 hotel rooms, targeting those who are unsheltered and living with one of the CDC's high-risk factors for severe disease (older adults, those with asthma or HIV, etc.) Grassroots groups and service providers will develop a community approach to identify and connect these individuals with high risks to available hotel rooms and can provide appropriate staffing and support. This new hotel resource would be for people currently living outside or another place unfit for human habitation. Given that the purpose is to stop the spread of COVID-19, this project would be ended shortly after the end of the stay at home order.
4. To avoid the increase of unsheltered homelessness, we call upon city and county officials to insist that all of those currently residing in hotels as their primary residence not be evicted without following the process of NC landlord/tenant law. All such residents who believe they are being wrongly evicted should be instructed to remain in place and should be referred to Legal Aid (704-376-1600) for support.

We urge our city and county to come together in support of these four strategies.

As faith and community partners, we stand ready to support a public and private partnership to achieve the above outlined efforts.

Time is of the essence.

For further information or conversation, reach out to:

Liz Clasen-Kelly, CEO, Urban Ministry Center – Men’s Shelter of Charlotte
Liz.Clasen-Kelly@mensshelterofcharlotte.org (704) 216-4995

Jasmine Sherman, Greater Charlotte RISE
wecanrise.nc@gmail.com 704.264.6732

Rev. Jay Leach, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte
jay@uuccharlotte.org (704) 807-4868

Rev. LeDayne McLeese Polaski, Executive Director, MeckMIN
ledayne@meckmin.org (704)965-9241

Signatories:

Nathan Arledge, Myers Park United Methodist Church

Rev. Bruce Baker-Rooks, SouthPark Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Cade Barefoot, Dilworth United Methodist Church

Nimish Bhatt, Universal Institute for Successful Aging Carolinas

Ben Boswell, Myers Park Baptist Church

Heath Burchett, Watchmen of the Streets

Lee Canipe, Providence Baptist Church

Rev. Dr. Jerry L. Cannon, C.N. Jenkins Memorial Presbyterian Church

Liz Clasen-Kelly, Urban Ministry Center – Men’s Shelter of Charlotte

Rev. Joseph J. Clifford, Myers Park Presbyterian Church

The Reverend Nancy Cox, All Saints’ Episcopal Church, Concord, NC

Lucy Crain, Director of Mission and Outreach, Covenant Presbyterian Church

Anne Crawford, Caterpillar Ministries

Rev. Ken Curtis, St. Stephen United Methodist Church

Darryl Dayson, Simpson-Gillespie United Methodist Church

Russ and Amy Jacks Dean, Park Road Baptist Church

Pastor Charles Dirico, Soul Food Ministry

Rev. Sarah M. Ellis

The clergy of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter

Rev. Dennis W. Foust, PhD, St. John's Baptist Church of Charlotte

The Rev. Carmen Germino, St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Davidson

President Ladd Hall, Charlotte NC South Stake, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Carol Hardison, Crisis Assistance Ministry

Rev. Katie Harrington, Sardis Presbyterian Church

Rev. Bob Henderson, Covenant Presbyterian Church

The Rt. Rev. Anne E. Hodges-Copple, Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina

James Howell, Myers Park United Methodist Church

Ann Huskey, First United Methodist Church

Intersectional Justice Team, Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte

Rev. Greg Jarrell and Rev. Helms Jarrell, QC Family Tree

Bill Jeffries, Providence United Methodist Church

Lauren Kestner, Center for Prevention Services

Chuck and Susan Kewin, Raise You Up Ministries

The Rev. Joan Kilian, Christ Episcopal Church

Rabbi Dusty Klass, Temple Beth El

Rabbi Asher Knight, Temple Beth El

Georgia Krueger, Ada Jenkins Center

Laura Konitzer, Christ Episcopal Church

Rev Melissa Lamm, St Stephen United Methodist Church

Rev. Jay Leach, Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte

The Rev. Canon Rhonda M. Lee, PhD, The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina

Rev. Sonja Lee, Lionel Lee Jr. Center for Wellness

Kristina and Michelle Linkswiler, Do Kind

Dr. Joe B. Martin, Sardis Presbyterian Church

Rev. Wendy Merrill, Episcopal clergy

Elaine Millen, Havurat Tikvah

Reverend A.R. Muwwakkil, Pastor, Life Baptist Church

Mike O'Sullivan, OneMECK Affordable Housing Committee and Homeless Services Network

The Rev. Jacob Pierce, St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Rev. Lori Archer Raible, Selwyn Avenue Presbyterian Church

Rev. Glencie S. Rhedrick Co-Chair Charlotte Clergy Coalition for Justice and Social Justice Chair, United Missionary Baptist Association

Samuel S Rodman, Episcopal Bishop of North Carolina

Rev. Valerie Rosenquist, Ph.D., Charlotte First United Methodist Church

Bill Roth, Myers Park United Methodist Church, Charlotte NC

The Rev. Reggie Payne-Wiens+, The Chapel of Christ the King

Stacy Phillips, Connect Meck with Kindness

Cindy and Greg Platko, Coordinators of the Homeless Support Ministry of St Luke Catholic Church, Mint Hill

Rev. LeDayne McLeese Polaski, MeckMIN (Mecklenburg Metropolitan Interfaith Network)

Charles Robinson, One Time Inc.

Rabbi Judy Schindler, Stan Greenspon Center for Peace and Social Justice

Rev. Russ Settles, St. Martin's Episcopal Church

Jasmine Sherman, Greater Charlotte RISE

Laureen Sherwood, Project Outpour

Jane Shutt, Pineville Neighbors Place

The Reverend Murdock Smith, PhD

The Reverend Marion Sprott-Goldson, St. Martin's Episcopal Church

Rev. Amelia Stinson-Wesley, First United Methodist Church, Charlotte

Rev. Tom Stinson-Wesley, Pineville United Methodist Church

Cantor Mary R. Thomas, Temple Beth El

Jessika Tucker, Angels and Sparrows Soup Kitchen

Richard E. Vosteen, Community Activist

Rev. Julia Watkins, Covenant Presbyterian Church

Rev. Nancy Watson, Myers Park United Methodist Church

Rev. Susan Suarez Webster, Central United Methodist Church

Pastor Tim Webster, Woodlawn Community Fellowship

Deborah Woolard, Block Love Charlotte

Court Young, Myers Park Presbyterian Church