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Temporary Women's Shelter Neighborhood Information Session
27 February 2014

Why has University Lutheran decided to host a temporary women's shelter?

Need – There were 7,631 homeless persons in Santa Clara County in 2013, of whom 31% are female. In Palo Alto, there were 157 homeless individuals in 2013, fewer than 8 percent of whom had any shelter. (Source: *2013 Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey*). There are very few shelters that exclusively serve women.

Timing – Why now? Cold weather shelters in our county typically operate from Thanksgiving through the end of March, when our area experiences rainy weather and nighttime temperatures that dip into the 40's, making outdoor living difficult. Specifically, University Lutheran plans to host the Heart & Home rotating shelter from whatever start date the City allows until April 5, a period of up to five weeks.

Resources - Why here? UniLu's building combined with Heart & Home personnel offer a safer shelter than the available alternatives, which might be outside or riding buses all night. We have been asked "Why not host these women somewhere else?" At present, there is no other overnight shelter which could host the guests. As a community of faith, we cannot allow a desire for a more perfect solution to prevent us from responding with the resources we have available.

Faith – This is a Christian church. Jesus calls his followers to care for the most marginalized in society, including those without shelter. As his followers, we recognize the presence of Christ in our brothers and sisters in need. One well-known expression of this is in Matthew 25: 34-40 ("*...for I was hungry and you gave me bread...*").

Additional verses:

Leviticus 25:35-36 ("*If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself...*")

Psalm 82:3 ("*...maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.*")

Luke 10:25-37 ("*...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself*")

Appeal for solutions in Palo Alto - Hosting this temporary women's shelter responds to a need identified in recent discussions on vehicle dwelling and the Cubberly Center car encampment. University Lutheran has heard the appeal to the faith community to help address shelter needs of the homeless population in Palo Alto.

What will be the involvement of University Lutheran Church members and staff in the shelter?

Primary contact – Alan Hebert is the coordinating host for University Lutheran. He organized the dates, the facility inspections, and the preparation of the facility to host the shelter. He is available by email at alanhsails@yahoo.com.

Hospitality – University Lutheran views the clients of Heart and Home as our guests and will treat them accordingly. We have prepared the building to host our guests and plan to serve as volunteers while the shelter is in our sanctuary and fellowship space. As a congregation, this is something we are invested in. Additional volunteers are welcome! <https://www.hhcollab.org/volunteer/>

Sunday Suppers - During Lent (from March 9 – April 13), University Lutheran holds Sunday services from 5:30 – 6:45 pm with a soup supper to follow at 7 pm. This will be a time for the church members to meet and converse with the Heart and Home clients as they arrive for the evening at 7:00 PM. Neighbors are most welcome to join us for soup and fellowship.

Why wasn't the College Terrace neighborhood informed about the planned temporary Heart and Home Shelter at University Lutheran sooner?

The majority of neighbors closest to the church (those adjacent and across the street) were informed of our plan beginning three weeks before the planned shelter opening date. Alan took the lead on this communication and specifically stuck to daylight hours and weekends to make contact. The majority of those we informed were supportive of the plan. We nevertheless acknowledge that our outreach to the nearest neighbors had not reached every neighbor before our first neighborhood meeting and that it would have been better to inform a wider group of neighbors sooner than we did.

How dear to me is your dwelling, O LORD of hosts. My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young, by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts, my king and my God.

Psalm 84:1-4