

Re: Urgent Meeting Request Regarding Support for City's Homeless this Winter

January 5, 2023

Dear Mayor Tory and City Councillors,

For many Christians, January 6<sup>th</sup> marks the end of the Christmas season; a time of great joy as we celebrate Christ finding welcome at the inn and in our hearts. It is time when we celebrate God's Good News for all people. Hope breaks into the hurting world during this season, offering a compassionate way of living that sees no outsiders, only one human family. This year, our Holy season was painfully marred by the death of a homeless brother on Christmas Day and the shutting out of many who needed warmth. We fear there will be more deaths if the city does not open the warming centres and prioritize affordable safe housing for the city's more vulnerable.

Mayor Tory, Christians are taught to see Jesus in the poor and vulnerable. A man, known to us only as AR, froze alone in his tent on Christmas. It doesn't get any more vulnerable than that. This year, as the city celebrated Christmas, the guest of honour froze to death in our streets.

The previous night, in temperatures that dropped below -10 degrees, the emergency warming centres were full by 10PM. One of our pastors brought a shivering individual to the centre and was told to try elsewhere because all the emergency warming centres were at capacity. When pressed, the beleaguered staff told the pastor to call Central Intake, but we know that it can take weeks to get a bed through Central Intake. The unhoused individual sat down inside the doors of the warming center and refused to leave. Near tears and hypothermia they said, "see, there's room for me here."

We need more room in our hearts for the poor and unhoused. "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?" (1 John 3:17). Every year winter comes as no surprise, nor are we caught off guard by the numbers needing shelter (at last count, Toronto has over 9,700 homeless). The city prepares plows and salt trucks but, every year, we fail to find room for all. Street to Homes, shelters, and warming centres are not enough to combat the bitter cold. With lives on the line this winter, people are depending on the city to do more.

We, the undersigned Christian community leaders are demanding emergency support for the vulnerable this winter in the form of more emergency shelter space opened throughout the season, not just during cold weather alerts. We need to find ways to expedite long-term solutions to the housing crisis, ones that protect the most economically challenged among us. We are disappointed to see the closing of the shelter hotels and the cruel evictions of encampments and the destruction of people's survival gear. Until the city has safe affordable options for housing every individual, we believe it is unconscionable to evict people from public spaces and trash their tents and winter gear. We are demanding an immediate stop to this practice.

There are many people of faith working directly with our underhoused and homeless siblings. We welcome opportunities to discuss ways the city and the faith communities can work together to help the city meet its obligation to all its residents. To this end, Mayor Tory, we are requesting an emergency meeting with you and a small delegation of faith leaders in January with the hopes of saving lives this winter.

In peace,

1. Reverend Alexa Gilmour, Stone Soup Network
2. Rev. Cameron Watts, Minister, Forest Grove United Church, Co-chair, Faith in the City
3. Reverend Canon Maggie Helwig, Church of St Stephen-in-the-Fields
4. John Ryerson, Co-chair, Faith in the City
5. Fr. Prakash A. Lohale, OP, Office for Interreligious Dialogue, Archdiocese of Toronto
6. Mardi Tindal, Past Moderator, The United Church of Canada
7. Stephen Bede Sharper, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor, Toronto School of Theology
8. Rev. Stephen Milton (he/him), Lawrence Park Community Church
9. The Very Rev. The Hon. Lois M Wilson
10. Rev Jim Keenan, Saint Luke's United Church
11. Rev. Sarah Miller
12. The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, Former General Secretary, The Canadian Council of Churches, Former Co-Chair, The Parliament of the World's Religions, Toronto 2018
13. Rev. Ma. Christina Conlon, Davenport Perth Community Ministry
14. Rev. Don Parsons, Minister of Pastoral Care, Eglinton St. George's United Church
15. David Walsh – Ripples of Kindness @ Sacre Coeur

16. Rev. Dr. Anne Simmonds, Rosedale United Church, Former Adjunct Faculty, Emmanuel College of Victoria University
17. Rev. Angie Hocking, Regent Park Community Ministry (UCC) & Downtown East Deacon (Anglican)
18. Pamela Couture, Jane and Geoffrey Chair in Church and Community, Emmanuel College
19. The Rev. Dr. John Joseph Mastandrea, President, Greater Toronto Area Christian Council of Churches, Minister, Manor Road United Church
20. Rev. Dr. Martha ter Kuile, United Church of Canada
21. Rev. Dr. Michelle Voss Roberts, Professor of Theology, Emmanuel College
22. Simon Appolloni, PhD, author of The Green Bible
23. Rev. Dr. Eric Bacon, Lawrence Park Community Church (UCC)
24. Rev. Dr. Pamela McCarroll, Associate Professor, Emmanuel College, Victoria University, University of Toronto
25. Rev. Dr. Harris Athanasiadis, Minister, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church, Toronto
26. Mary Jo Leddy founding member Romero House
27. Rev. Dr. William S. Kervin, Associate Professor Emeritus of Public Worship, Emmanuel College, Victoria University, U of T
28. Rev. Ruth Noble, Rosedale United Church
29. Rev. Hugh Reid, Kingsway Lambton United Church
30. JOY KOGAWA, author
31. Fr. Jack Costello, Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Service
32. Rev. Anne Hines, Roncesvalles United Church
33. Barbara Sheffield, member, Islington United Church, Volunteer Administrator, Private Refugee Sponsorship Network, and member, ECULINKS Etobicoke
34. Rev. Alana Martin, Minister to The United Church of Canada GO Project
35. Reverend Michael Coren
36. Bp. Robert Kasun, Central Region Auxiliary Bishop, Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto
37. Rev. Dr. Kristin Philipson, Rosedale United Church.
38. Rev. Lee-Ann Ahlstrom, Minister Northlea United Church
39. Rev. Roberta Howey, Lawrence Park Community Church
40. Rev. Dr. Paul Hutchison, Eglinton St. George's United Church
41. Rev Dr Cheri DiNovo CM
42. Rev. Jeff Nowers, St. Aidan's Anglican Church
43. Jenn McIntyre, Ontario Sanctuary Network
44. Rev. Steve Hoffard, Redeemer Lutheran, Toronto
45. The Rev'd Dr. Alison Falby, All Saints Church-Community Centre
46. Romero House (Ecumenical, Interfaith)

47. Rob Schellenberg
48. Nicholas Athanasiadis, Presbyterian Church in Canada
49. Dean Dettloff, Development and Peace
50. The Donald Muir, Deputy Clerks, The Presbyterian Church in Canada
51. Michael Fullan, Executive Director, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto
52. Rev. Daniel Cranley Anglican: Hospital Spiritual Care Provider
53. Peter Merrick, Knox and Emmanuel Colleges
54. Tom Reynolds, Associate Professor, Emmanuel College @ University of Toronto
55. Fr. Frank McDevitt, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish
56. Rev Konnie Vissers, Presbyterian Church in Canada
57. Ian Wilgus, Emmanuel College Student
58. Rev. Miriam Spies, PhD candidate Emmanuel College, Victoria University, U of T
59. Rev. Dr. Natalie Wigg-Stevenson
60. Rev. Katherine McCloskey, Presbyterian.ca
61. Rev. Brian McIntosh
62. Liberty Oliver, Sunday School Leader at Lawrence Park Community Church
63. HyeLim Yoon, Emmanuel College, Victoria University, University of Toronto
64. Amy Panton, Mad and Crip Theology Press
65. The Rev. Janet Allan DeWolfe, Presbyterian
66. The Rev. Dr. Tyler Wigg-Stevenson
67. Evanne Hunter IBVM, Loretto Sisters of Canada (IBVM)
68. Lisa Luciani Turner, Church of the Holy Wisdom
69. Rev. Dr. Jason Byassee, Senior Minister, Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
70. Jeffrey Dale
71. Lyne Webb St. Mary's Anglican Church, Richmond Hill
72. The Rev. Victor Kim, Principal Clerk, The Presbyterian Church in Canada
73. Rev Michael Van Dusen, St. Aidan's Anglican Church
74. Carol A. Wilson, Social Justice Lead, Islington United Church
75. Jo Dullard, Community and Congregation Outreach Co-ordinator for Northlea United
76. Archdeacon Kyn Barker (Anglican)
77. Reverend Dr. Catherine Keating, Deacon, St. John York Mills Anglican Church
78. Cora Dusk, member of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Etobicoke and ECULINKS Etobicoke
79. Rev. Dr. Néstor Medina, Assistant Professor of Religious Ethics, Emmanuel College
80. Elin Goulden, Social Justice & Advocacy Committee Anglican Diocese of Toronto
81. Helen Gill
82. Elayne Lockhart

83. Rev. Virginia Gabriel Church of Christ the King Etobicoke (Deacon)
84. Church of the Redeemer
85. Canon Phyllis Creighton (Anglican)
86. Rev. Dr. Robin Wardlaw, United Church of Canada
87. Rev. Adam Hincks, S.J.
88. Mary Struthers
89. Peggy Needham, St. Peter and St. Simon the Apostle
90. Dr. Bertha Yetman
91. F.G. Colella, Our Lady of Lourdes Church
92. W E Mark Aitchison
93. Paola Barillaro, retired teacher
94. J. Ann Irving
95. Rev. C. Gibbs ,Christ Church Deer Park
96. Valerie Walsh
97. Angela Gauthier, President of Catholic Crosscultural Services Board of Directors
98. Rev Jeanette Lewis at St Barnabas Anglican Church
99. Rev. Dr. Todd McDonald
100. Lynne Bullock Stephen Minister at Islington United Church
101. Mark Hathaway, Executive Director, The Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice
102. Vivian Harrower, Church of the Holy Trinity
103. The Rev. Paula Willis, Minister of Pastoral Care and Discipleship, Yorkminster Park Baptist Church
104. Anastasia Watson, MPS student Emmanuelle College
105. Catherine von Zuben
106. Clarence MacPherson
107. Ann Bisch, Holy Trinity Refugee Committee
108. member, St. James Cathedral, Toronto
109. Rev. Joanna Manning, Church of the Holy Trinity
110. The Reverend Earl Campbell, St. Dunstan of Canterbury Anglican Parish
111. Ursula Witkowska, IBVM
112. Rev. Dag Demandt, St. Andrew's Latvian Lutheran Toronto
113. Fr Peter Turrone PhD, Holy Rosary Parish
114. Sr. Mary-Ellen Francoeur Roman Catholic parishioner of Holy Name Parish, Toronto
115. The Rev. Nico Montalbetti, St. Luke's East York
116. Ralph Carl Wushke
117. Victoria Featherston, Intern Pastor at First Evangelical Lutheran Church
118. Rev. Jordan Smith- Emmanuel Lutheran Church
119. Rev. Jim Houston

120. Gregory Gillis, Pax Christi Toronto
121. Ronald A. Kuipers, President and Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Institute for Christian Studies
122. Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care - Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto
123. Fr. Santo Arrigo C.Ss.R., Ignite Ministry and Winter Street Patrol
124. Anne Marie Marrin
125. Rev. Dr. Elaine Boone, Advent Lutheran Church
126. Anne Marie Marrin Sister of St. Joseph of Toronto
127. Rose Zgodzinski, concerned neighbour
128. The Rev. Dr. Randy Naylor, Windermere United Church
129. Rev. Jennifer Palin, The United Church of Canada
130. Mary Lou Jorgensen-Bacher - R.C.
131. Rev. Lauren Hodgson, St. Matthew's United Church, Toronto
132. Sr. Georgette Gregory, CSJ - Congregational Leader, Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto
133. Lanadee Lampman retired RN
134. Alison Endrizzi, LPA of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church
135. The Rev. Maria Ling, Interim Priest-in-Charge, Grace Church on-the-Hill
136. Rev. Emily Gordon, Minister, Leaside United Church
137. Rev. Jason Meyers
138. Anne Marie Mohler Parish Nurse ICHM Canada
139. The Rev. David Smith
140. Len Desroches, author, war resister, retreat leader
141. Peter Haresnape, pastor serving Toronto United Mennonite Church
142. Rev Peter Hartmans, United Church of Canada
143. Jan O'Hearn, chairperson Kairos Toronto West
144. Sandra Fawcett, Warden, Christ Church St. James Anglican Church
145. Ruth Franks Retiree
146. Divy M. Sallentes Uptegrove of Student Christian Movement of Canada
147. Rev Katherine McCloskey Presbyterian
148. Rhiannon Hill, Student of Emmanuel College Ordination Stream, and Member of Lawrence Park Community Church
149. Rosemary Keenan, Pax Christi Toronto
150. Rev. Maria Nightingale
151. Swee Hong Lim, Emmanuel College, Victoria University, U of T
152. Fr. Santo Arrigo C.Ss.R., Ignite Ministry and Winter Street Patrol
153. Rev. Gerlyn Henry, Priest, Church of the Holy Wisdom
154. Olayinka Babalola, Nurse Practitioner
155. Lorraine Lam, Shelter Housing Justice NEtwork, outreach worker