Dear Coalition to End Homelessness Steering Team, July 6, 2021

As has been the case since the beginning, it is apparent that the housing crisis and homelessness emergency will take “all hands on deck” to truly bring about comprehensive change. As such, we need to reach deeper into untouched, but not untroubled by homelessness, groups of people.

One group that SS4A sees that potential in are faith communities. This is not to overlook the many people of faith and faith-based non-profits who are already part of the coalition. But they only represent a small portion of the whole.

Neither is it to claim that it is the role of the Coalition to End Homelessness to organize the Faith Communities. But just as is starting to happen with the grass roots organizations like Food Not Bombs, it is good for us to be intentional in fostering relationships, especially around our mutual overlapping goals. It’ll take time to deepen relationships that go beyond the desire for faith organizations’ land, resources, and volunteers, but will be a worthy investment. Not everyone can join another committee, but everyone can be doing their own unique part.

The work of getting Safe Parking Sites up and running has been a true testament to both the potential and limitations of what working together might look like. The heat wave shows just how critical cross organization communication and work is.

As such we have a proposal for helping to start get the ball rolling. Just as the coalition is planning to come up with an emergency plan for how government jurisdictions should handle weather/air quality emergencies, we propose that we create a modified plan for Faith communities--one that both recommends creating disaster preparedness plans and what those plans may look like.

The Coalition would offer it to them not as a demand, but in response to the question, “how can we help?” that many asked last week. It will be a good will offering of “we know you want to help in a crisis, here’s how you can prepare to best care for your community--your congregants, housed, and unhoused neighbors.”

Associated Ministries and a few others, like Revenue for Housing, can help with a list. Because of the varied, every single one is different, ways that faith communities are organized, a top-down letter campaign may not appear to have much initial impact, but it will start the much-needed conversations. Once the ball starts rolling down the hill, we may witness the greater changes in public will and support towards the homelessness that we need sooner than we’d have reason to hope.

And because saying we should do something shouldn’t come without some help to do it, you’ll find enclosed a rough draft of what we are thinking should be sent out.

Thank you!

Safe Sites for All {SS4A}