

How we got here...

- King of Kings Lutheran Church has been in discernment about the issue of homelessness in our community for almost three years, spurred by the work of our Social Justice Committee.
- Affordable housing and homelessness came up in a listening season in 2016 as the issue of greatest concern among our faith community members.
- Folks from King of Kings joined other Clackamas County churches and organizations that belong to the Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good (MACG) with similar interest in the issue to form the MACG Clackamas Housing Team.
- The Housing Team started doing research on the issue in Clackamas County, meeting with leaders (County Commissioners, Health Housing and Human Services, Community Service Centers) to learn more about the issue of affordable housing, homelessness, and its relationship to the health and well-being of our neighbor. Leaders in Clackamas County affirmed our explorations, shared data on homelessness in our county, and helped us to grasp the vital role the county plays in helping people move from homelessness to housing. The county also affirmed that partnerships with non-profits and faith communities were an important means of addressing the shortage of emergency housing.
- The Housing Team visited other places in Oregon where faith communities were creatively working to reduce the number of people without shelter in their communities. Found some great models in Lane County (Springfield and Eugene) for overnight shelters. (Cars, Conestogas, and Tiny Houses) in Springfield and Eugene in Lane County.
- We met interested partners at Providence Health's "Better Outcome's Through Bridges" (or B.O.B.) Program who were working to address housing as a health issue. They offered to help us look at creative models to support vulnerable populations and offered to provide expertise in medical case management for an overnight shelter program.
- In the fall of 2018 KOK began a discernment process to see if they wanted to pilot a form of Safe Overnight Shelter (SOS) on their property. After a multi-month process within the congregation, KOK decided to apply for a conditional use permit with Clackamas County to allow up to three cars to remain overnight on their property. Car camping residents would be referred through the county's Coordinated Housing Access (C.H.A.), would undergo a background check, and would need to follow the guidelines set forth by the congregation for temporary residency.
- We (KOK) are in the community information feedback part of the conditional use permit process. Although our initial community outreach information roll-out was not without some missteps, we seem to be back on track. We will be hosting a community fair soon with neighbors helping with the planning.

Why this matter to us (KOK and the Housing Team)?

- In communities all over Oregon, homelessness is deemed to be one of the most pressing issues of our time. We feel called to find a way that our community of faith can help our neighbor, especially the most vulnerable. Though we are a relatively small congregation, we have a parking lot and we are located within a reasonable distance to health care (Providence Milwaukie) and other services. In the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus doesn't just fix the problem of a hungry multitude for the disciples. He begins the process by saying, "You give them something to eat." (Mark 6:37). We feel called to not just talk about the problem of homelessness, but contribute, albeit in a small way, to the solution. By piloting an overnight shelter program, we will know that a handful of folks will have a safe place to be each night without having to worry about being asked to move along. We will know that a handful of folks will have a location where medical case managers and sustainability case managers will be able to find them to help them find more permanent housing. We know that a handful of folks will have a chance to catch their breath. We will know that we have dared to try and to maybe even blaze a trail for other communities of faith and organizations of good will to help as they are able.

How can others help?

- Please pray for the congregation, its leaders, and for our neighbors as we continue to go through the public hearing process together. When a date for our community forums is set, we may ask for allies to show up to support this project we are undertaking.
- Please send letters of support to The Board of County Commissioners, especially if you are a resident of unincorporated Milwaukie or the Oak Grove/Oak Lodge Neighborhood.
- If you are a congregation or a community organization looking to help with the issue of housing and homelessness in your neighborhood, look for collaborative partners in your community and do the research about housing and homelessness in Oregon. Eco Northwest has done some great research on behalf of the Oregon Community Foundation on this most pressing issue. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/597fb96acd39c34098e8d423/t/5cc7219bec212d089b0d3701/1556554216726/JT+-+Oregon+Homelessness.pdf>