

Bishop's Committee on Affordable Housing: Bring Hope

Support and encourage our neighbors struggling with homelessness and housing problems.

Support circles provide encouragement and practical assistance to move from homelessness to stable housing.

Family Support circles made up of six to ten members assist nonprofit housing service providers that work with families and individuals transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing. Agency staff provide orientation and training along with monthly progress meetings with circle members and clients.

The goal of Family Support Circles is to assist families or individuals as they strive to become self-sufficient in their housing. Family Support Circles work in partnership with agency staff for up to a year or longer as needed with their assigned individual or family. Activities include budgeting, accessing health and support services as needed, employment opportunities, transportation, etc. along with social activities such as monthly get togethers, seasonal events and informal visits to offer encouragement and friendship. Support activities vary depending on the needs of each client being served.

Churches shelter from the cold.

During winter months, churches open their doors at night to provide welcome and beds for people experiencing homelessness. Nonprofit organizations partner with churches, providing staff support and case management to help guests arrange transportation, health care, job search, and other services towards the goal of accessing appropriate rental housing or reunification with family.

Churches partner with rental managers to expand access.

To open doors for people to regain housing and become successful tenants, churches and support organizations listen to landlords' concerns and find ways to reduce the financial risks and frustration. Private funding can pay application fees, security deposits, renter insurance, and damages. Partnerships between rental managers and support organizations can expedite inspections and assist tenants to fulfill their responsibilities, minimizing the need for evictions. Landlords value having someone to call to intervene before the situation becomes untenable and are therefore more likely to allow access for those who have previously lost housing.

Churches build trust with tenants living in seriously substandard housing.

All Saints (Greensboro) first became involved with a Mobile Home Park through a member of the congregation who lived there. She brought to our attention the food insecurity of the children, particularly during the summer months when meals were not available from the schools. What followed was seven years of Summer Lunches, and building a rapport and trust with the community.

During 2024 we noticed there were fewer children participating and more empty units. The children weren't allowed to play outside. The adults were wary of being seen and spoke of retaliation aimed at those who made complaints about the poor living conditions (which included holes in the roofs and/or floors, appliances that didn't work, and common well water that was undrinkable).

The rapport already established between All Saints and the residents has allowed us to assist people in moving to new housing when their situation permits. It has also allowed All Saints to facilitate introduction of local agency staff who have been able to work to have the mobile home units condemned, opening the way for relocation funding from the City.

Churches support partnerships of attorneys and housing organizations to resolve evictions and keep people housed.

Children are most at risk for becoming homeless through eviction, as rising rents, low wages, and childcare expenses stretch family budget. Most tenants do not have legal counsel and do not know their rights.

In Guilford County, volunteers observe eviction court and TEAM (Tenant Education Advocacy Mediation) attorneys meet with families and landlords to negotiate ways to preserve housing. With this direct experience, the volunteers advocated for funding to expand TEAM to be able to help more families.