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**Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square Homelessness Initiative**

**Purpose**

The [**Faith Forward Dallas**](http://www.thanksgiving.org/faith-forward-dallas/) **at Thanks-Giving Square Homelessness Initiative** will operate under the Civic Engagement Committee. It will seek to transform how FFD@TGS engages homelessness, and enable FFD@TGS to help make homelessness in Dallas and Collin Counties rare, brief and nonrecurring. It will maintain a specific focus on the issue of racial equity in homelessness.

**Motivation**

The ongoing existence of the modern homelessness crisis, as well as the overrepresentation of persons of color in the homeless population, are moral issues, and they call for a moral response. Clergy, by virtue of their positions and their ability to mobilize their congregations, are uniquely positioned to affect the discourse around homelessness in our community, and empower decision makers to make the right decisions, based on evidence and rooted in equity.

**Current State**

The knowledge of the systems that created homelessness, as well as the overrepresentation of persons of color in homelessness, is weak, tolerance for homelessness and this overrepresentation is high, and resistance to these social ills is siloed and toothless.

**Transformed State**

The knowledge of the systems that created homelessness, as well as the overrepresentation of persons of color in homelessness, is strong, tolerance for homelessness and this overrepresentation is low, and resistance to these social ills is widespread, coordinated and driving systems change.

**Action Plan for 2018-2019**

The FFD@TGS **Homelessness Initiative** will include these components:

[**Room in the Inn**](https://www.roomintheinn.org/winter-shelter) – Currently, [Wilshire Baptist Church](http://www.wilshirebc.org/) has been running this program in the winter and summer. In order to demonstrate one way of doing RITI and motivating others to bring this program into their faith communities, any FFD@TGS clergy interested in helping staff August’s RITI at Wilshire are welcome (August 24-25). Our goal is to have, at least, as many participating sites, as there are in Fort Worth (20).

**Preaching** – We will ask FFD@TGS members, as well as other clergy to use their sermons during [Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](https://hhweek.org/), November 10-18, 2018, to educate their congregations on how they can help advance the goals of this initiative, and help end homelessness.

[**Homeless Count**](http://mdhadallas.org/homeless-pit-count/) – We will, once again, ask FFD@TGS members to volunteer for the annual Homeless Count on January 24, 2019, 7pm-12am, as well as help recruit volunteers from their communities. We will seek to utilize the Count experience to educate as many people as possible about homelessness, and our moral obligations to end this social ill in our community.

**Advocacy** – We will seek to educate and inform FFD@TGS members about specific policy actions, on the local level, that can help alleviate the homelessness crisis, as well as those that can exacerbate it. Through periodic alerts, we will ask members to take action, and ask their congregations to do the same.

**Cold Weather Shelter** – We will seek to support the efforts of [Oak Lawn UMC](http://olumc.org/) clergy and other partners they brought together in May, towards establishing and following a city wide shared policy regarding the provision of cold weather shelter.

**Leadership and Coordination**

The FFD@TGS **Homelessness Initiative** will operate under the leadership of the **Civic Engagement Committee**, chaired by Rev. Heather Mustain, [Wilshire Baptist Church](http://www.wilshirebc.org/), and will be coordinated by David S. Gruber, [Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance](http://www.mdhadallas.org). We envision that the point person for the Room in the Inn effort will be Heather, while we will follow the lead of OLUMC clergy on the cold weather shelter effort. David will be the point person for the three other actions outlined above.