

Oct. 15, 2019

Dear Seattle City Councilmembers and Mayor Durkan:

As leaders of faith, we urge the City of Seattle to greatly expand the number of tiny house villages, to provide basic safety and human dignity to people currently living on our streets.

Homelessness is a crisis crying out for a humane, compassionate remedy. Last year, [a record 191 people experiencing homelessness died on Seattle and King County streets](#). This past January, surveyers found [5,228 people sleeping throughout King County without shelter](#).

Tonight in Seattle, more than 3,500 residents will go to sleep under bridges, in tents, on sidewalks, in abandoned buildings, and in cars. That is wrong - and we can fix the problem, now. Tiny house villages have proven to be a lifeline to people without homes.

Currently, nine tiny house villages are thriving in Seattle, providing lifesaving shelter and community to hundreds of women, families with children, LGBTQ people, straight and gay couples, immigrants and refugees, domestic violence survivors, and people with pets – groups of people who often can't access traditional shelters. Many of our faith communities have been involved in building and sponsoring tiny house villages. The tiny houses are eight-by-twelve-foot structures that provide shelter, safety, and human dignity for people without a home. The houses have heat, light, insulation, power outlet, and locking doors, and on average [cost just \\$2,700 to build](#).

In tiny house villages, residents are able to overcome the isolation, trauma, and disempowerment of living on the streets. Their belongings can be safe. They share a common kitchen and dining area, laundry and washrooms, counseling office, and security hut. Residents can get vital services – help finding housing and work,

along with access to education, daycare, transportation, and mental health services.

In the last three years, according to the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI), which operates many tiny house villages in Seattle, [more than 500 people living with homelessness have been able to transition from tiny house villages into permanent, stable, affordable housing.](#) In fact, the City's Human Services Department has found that [tiny house villages are the most effective shelter program](#) at moving people from homelessness into permanent housing.

We are excited that [Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant has brought forward legislation to allow for up to 40 tiny house villages in the city.](#) Collectively, these villages will deliver durable shelter and community to an additional 1,200 people or more.

We support protections added to the existing city ordinance for residents, communities and operators to ensure that all Tiny House Villages and other encampments are operated ethically, fairly and humanely.

Housing is a human right, and the continued crisis of homelessness is a stark reflection of the moral failing of our society. This fall, as the City Council and Mayor take up the city's 2020 budget, we urge political leaders to tackle the humanitarian crisis by funding a large expansion of the number of tiny house villages.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Angela Ying, Bethany United Church of Christ
Rev. Robert L. Jeffrey, Sr., New Hope Missionary Baptist Church
Rev. Lawrence R. Willis, True Vine of Holiness Missionary Baptist Church
Imam Jamal Rahman, Interfaith Community Sanctuary
Imam Mohamed Ileye, Al Noor Islamic Community Center
Associate Rabbi Callie Schulman, Temple De Hirsch Sinai

Rabbi David Basior, Kadima Reconstructionist (Jewish) Community
Michael Ramos, Executive Director, Church Council of Greater Seattle
Rev. Terri Stewart, The Youth Chaplaincy Coalition: A Program of the Church
Council of Greater Seattle and Milton United Methodist Church
Rev. Bianca Davis-Lovelace, Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches
Pastor Arthur Banks, Eastside Baptist
Reverend Gary Southerton, Broadview United Church of Christ
Rev. Jan Bolerjack, Riverton Park United Methodist Church
Rev. Ruth Marston-Bihl, Trinity United Methodist Church, Ballard
Rev. Dr. Rick Russell, Prospect United Church of Christ
Pastor Kelly Wadsworth, Alki United Church of Christ
Rev. Steven Davis, Executive Minister, Plymouth Church UCC, Seattle
Rev. Roberta Rominger, Congregational Church on Mercer Island (United Church
of Christ)
Pastor Leland Seese, Mount Baker Park Presbyterian Church
Reverend Ryan Lambert, Kirkland Congregational United Church of Christ
Rev. Deborah Sunoo, Magnolia Presbyterian Church
Pastor Aaron Monts, United Church Social Justice Ministry Leader
Cinda Stenger, Alki United Church of Christ
Rev. Jamie Kepros, United Church of Christ
Alice Woldt, Trinity United Methodist Church, Ballard and Former Executive
Director, Church Council of Greater Seattle
Mr. Gord'n Perrott, Trinity United Methodist Church
Reverend Sharon Moe, Riverton Park UMC
Kathy Heffernan, Hospital Chaplain, and member, St. Patrick's Catholic Church
Ms. Nancy Miller, St. Patrick Catholic Church
Steve Tucker, Trustee/Financial Secretary, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
Pastor Greg Turk, All Pilgrims Christian Church
The Rev. David Bloom, Founding Director, Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness
Pastor of Community Life Hayden Wartes, Awake Church
Elizabeth Olson, Co-chair Magnolia Ecumenical Group Supporting Interbay Village,
Magnolia United Church of Christ
Mrs. Mary Anne deVry, WIN (Westside Interfaith Network) & Fautleroy UCC

Chaplain Elizabeth Gordon, Plymouth Church UCC
The Rev. Shelly Fayette, Christ Episcopal Church, Seattle
Reverend Trung Pham, SJ, Seattle University
Tara MillerBerry, Master of Arts in Transforming Spirituality, Trinity United
Methodist Church
Rev. Harriett Walden
Dr. Mari Kim, Valley and Mountain Fellowship
Nina Laboy, Crones Buddhist Sangha
The Rev. Bill Kirlin-Hackett, Director, The Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness