

October 16, 2017

Dear Mayor Biskupski, Mayor McAdams and Governor Herbert:

As people from many different faith traditions and communities, we are writing to express our shared concern for the welfare of homeless people, particularly homeless children. State and local leaders have jointly announced the intention to close the homeless shelter in downtown Salt Lake City when three significantly smaller shelters are opened. These new shelters will collectively have 400 less beds than the shelter that is scheduled to be closed. We fear this will lead to more people sleeping on the street during the winter of 2019 unless state and local government work together to address the housing crisis that is the biggest driver of the recent surge in homelessness. We are specifically recommending that these three things be completed before the shelter is closed:

**1) Construct 800 new units of permanent supportive housing in population centers across the state.** The need for additional permanent supportive housing has grown since Crossroads Urban Center, and others, first made this suggestion in 2015. We strongly recommend that at least 200 of these units be recovery housing designed for the specific needs of people leaving treatment.

**2) Create 200 new housing vouchers for homeless families with children that can be used statewide.** Families with children were removed from the shelter earlier this year and the state is now paying for over 40 families to be housed at motels. At this time, the vacancy rate for apartments is so low that all forms of temporary housing assistance are less successful than in the past. Federal funding for housing vouchers is not increasing and so state and local government need to work together to help families in crisis to have a stable environment. Ideally these new vouchers would be partnered with efforts to help homeless parents receive a GED and/or job training so that homeless families with children can move toward greater self sufficiency.

**3) Produce sufficient new funding streams for low income housing to reverse the steady loss of housing units that are affordable to families earning less than \$25,000 per year.** Market forces have driven rental prices beyond what many families in the rental market can afford. This leaves too many families on the edge of crisis. To reverse this trend our state needs to increase the production of low income housing by at least 1,000 units per year. Reaching this goal will probably require state and local government to issue general obligation and private activity bonds and to come up with other funding options.

If state and local government fails to act on these suggestions we implore you to oppose the closure of the current shelter. It would be unconscionable to close a shelter to adults and children if we have not created an alternative way for those human beings, made in the image of God, to sleep indoors during the winter.

Sincerely,

Rev Tom Abbott  
Cottonwood Presbyterian Church  
Murray

Rev Trace Browning  
All Saints Episcopal Church  
Salt Lake City

Rev. Jodi Bushdiecker  
Bountiful Community Church

Rev. Gage Church  
Congregational United Church of Christ  
Ogden

Rev. Brian Diggs,  
Unite Methodis Committee on Relief, West  
Depot

Rev. William Germundson  
St. Francis of Assisi Christian Church

Rev. Vinnetta Golphin-Wilkerson, Pastor  
Granger Community Christian Church  
West Valley City

Rev. Nancy Groshart  
The Episcopal Church of the Good  
Shepherd, Ogden

Rev. Gary Haddock,  
Community United Methodist Church  
Washington Terrace

Rev. Monica Hall  
Trinity Presbyterian Church  
Ogden

Rev. Olga Hard,  
Mountain Vista United Methodist Church  
West Jordan

The Right. Reverend Scott B. Hayashi  
Episcopal Diocese of Utah

Pastor Charles Hines  
Saint Francis of Assisi Christian Church  
Murray

The Rev. Elizabeth Hunter  
The Cathedral Church of St. Mark  
Salt Lake City

Rev. Kim James  
First United Methodist Church

Marriott-Slaterville

Steve Klemz  
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Salt Lake City

Rev. Bruce Kolasch  
Elim Lutheran  
Ogden

Rev. Fr. Elias Koucos, Priest  
Greek Orthodox Church

Rev Jerrod B. Lowry, pastor  
Community of Grace Presbyterian Church  
(USA), Sandy

Rev Anita Miner  
All Saints Episcopal Church  
Salt Lake City

Rev. Elizabeth McVicker  
First United Methodist Church  
Salt Lake City

Rev. Christine Myeres-Tegeuder  
First Presbyterian Church  
Salt Lake City

Rev. David Nichols  
Mount Tabor Lutheran Church, ELCA  
Salt Lake City

Rev. Dr. Judy DeBres  
Chaplain at Ogden Regional Medical Center

Rev. David Ofahengaue  
Tongan UMC  
West Valley City

Rev. Russell Butler  
Christ United Methodist Church  
Salt Lake City

Rev. Curtis Price, Pastor,  
First Baptist Church of Salt Lake City

Rev. Marijke Rossi  
First Congregational Church  
Salt Lake City

Rabbi Ilana Schwartzman  
Congregation Kol Ami  
Salt Lake City

Rev. Dr. Dennis Shaw  
Hilltop United Methodist Church  
Sandy

Jeff Silliman, Interim Executive Presbyter  
Presbytery of Utah

Rev. Harold Straughn

Rev. Sua Uamuli  
EFKS New Jerusalem United Church of  
Christ;  
Midvale

Dr. Leslie Whited – Retired Clergy  
& Current CEO at Mosaic Inter-Faith  
Ministries

Reverend Patty C. Willis  
South Valley Unitarian Universalist Society  
Holladay

Kathy Bray, President & CEO  
Volunteers of America, Utah