



NEW JERSEY ADVOCACY NETWORK TO END HOMELESSNESS

Dear friend in faith,

The New Jersey Advocacy Network to End Homelessness is a partner in observing "Homeless Memorial Day" on December 21. This date has been chosen as a time to remember all homeless people who died in the past year as a result of their lack of shelter or care. December 21 is the day with the least amount of light and has the longest night.

Many of us in the Christian and Jewish traditions recognize that meaningful Torah readings, the commemoration of Chanukah, and the celebration of Christmas fall in close proximity of this day. Religious symbolism in this time in both traditions focuses on light shining in darkness, and in God's regard of those who are counted as poor, lowly, or easily vanquished. We therefore have assembled resources that can be used in public worship over the sabbath weekend preceding December 21. The material found on this site is original and can be used as is or adapted to your own setting, tradition, or community. Permission is given for you to duplicate any of the materials we have prepared here.

We have included the following items:

1. An "insert" that can be included in with other printed sabbath worship material you may distribute at services. The inserts are identical, except that one includes a prayer that is appropriate in Christian settings and the other includes a prayer that might fit Jewish tradition.
2. A collection of Christian prayers, petitions and a litany that can be included in an order of worship.
3. Homeless Awareness Shabbat - which offers reflections on Jewish texts that bear on how we relate to poor and vulnerable neighbors, and also on the specific texts used in Shabbat services on December 18-19. This resource includes questions for reflection on the readings.
4. An Inter-Faith order of worship that can be used as part of a gathering of Christians and Jews commemorating Homeless Memorial Sabbath or on the Memorial Day itself. This resource can also be adapted for use as part of a worship service in either Jewish or Christian tradition.
5. A Lectionary Guide for those churches in the christian tradition that follow the specific texts in the Common Lectionary. this resource may be helpful in preaching or as part of a study/reflection group focusing on homelessness in this season.
6. "Voices of Hope", the personal true story of a client in a "Housing First" program in Mercer County. More information on the Housing First" model is available by contacting the Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness www.merceralliance.org

Also, several Counties have planned Homeless Memorial Observances to remember those who have died in the past year. Information on locations, times and contact people can be accessed at the web page of the New Jersey Advocacy Network to End Homelessness. <http://www.njaneh.org/memorial-day/locations/>

It is our hope that many Houses of Worship will take time on the weekend before December 21 to remember those who are homeless in some way, at least, perhaps, in the prayers of that day.

We express appreciation to those who prepared these resources:

- Ms. Lindsay Barrett, Seminarian, Princeton Theological Seminary;
- Ms. Mary Ellen Blackwell, Reduce Poverty Initiative, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton;
- Mr. Richard Brown, Executive Director, Monarch Housing Associates;
- The Rev. Bruce Davidson, Director, Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry in New Jersey,
- Mr. Herb Levine, Executive Director, Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness;
- Ms. Tina Reyes, Seminarian, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia,
- Mr. Adrian Vaagenes, Seminarian, Princeton Theological Seminary,
- Ms. Lee Zandstra, Director of Community Partnering, Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey.