



Dear Oak Lawn friends and community partners,

3 years ago, I remember watching the news as a devastating story was released of unsheltered neighbors in the city of Dallas dying on the streets on the coldest of nights, one of whom died in a bus stop right outside of a church.

As the senior pastor at Oak Lawn United Methodist Church, I believe we have a moral imperative to open our doors and care for the least of these.

We have been working together with shelter directors and the Office of Homelessness Solutions for the last 3 years to provide emergency shelter on the coldest nights of the year. The idea is that these emergency shelters could work in partnership with established shelters to accommodate the overflow population when it is below freezing. Churches have opened their doors to address these needs the past few years. Last year, in addition to those sheltered in our Dallas shelters, we additionally accommodated 85 individuals per night at Oak Lawn, around 200 a night at Our Calling, and around 200 at the Convention Center for 14 freezing nights this past winter. In these locations, individuals were welcomed with a warm facility, hot meals and were cared for by volunteers from the community. It was simply a matter of willingness to open the doors, give a warm place to sleep, and something hot to eat. These acts of service are good for our homeless guests and equally good for our volunteers. At Oak Lawn we understand this as the work of Christ.

This year the work of opening the doors and providing shelter is different, as we continue to navigate how to provide for the unsheltered among us in the midst of a dangerous pandemic. The safest and best way we know how to provide shelter in this time is by providing financial support to accommodate our unsheltered neighbors in hotel rooms on freezing nights. This path will provide for each person to be safely distanced from others as well as give them each the opportunity to have a shower.

Together with the Salvation Army, Austin Street Shelter, The Bridge, Oak Lawn UMC, Our Calling, and the City of Dallas Office of Homeless Solutions, we are planning for the logistics of providing shelter in hotels this winter on nights that drop below 36 degrees. In order to accomplish this, we need the help of faith communities and donors who are willing to help us close the gap financially. Please consider a contribution that will help us ensure the safety of our unsheltered neighbors this winter. Donations can be made at olumc.org/shelter.

Much Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Baughman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Rachel Baughman