



The TACO Times

Celebrating Over 40 Years of Bread Day and 20 Years of TACO

Volume 13, Issue 4

December 2016

We LOVE Your Donations!

Our volunteers have been busy collecting donations, organizing our storage space, and handing out needed items. Our most requested items are: new socks, new underwear, razors, deodorant, and men's and women's pants.

Contact byoung@tacosd.org (our volunteer coordinator Brad Young) if your group or church would like to host a donation drive.

Increasing Homelessness Downtown

Last month Lisa Halverstadt of The Voice of San Diego newspaper wrote an article about the increase in street homelessness in 2016. Figures indicate a 68 percent increase since January.

There has been a comparable increase in the number of tents and tent communities.

A possible cause, according to the article, may be the lack of single-room occupancy (SRO) housing. The article can be found at voiceofsandiego.org—search for “homelessness is exploding downtown.”

No Room at the Inn by Jim Lovell

It is dark, cold and you are in unfamiliar territory. You are outside in a city where you aren't sure where to go. With an average daily hotel rate of \$195, you know your money won't last long. So you choose to stay in a rundown hotel, a residential hotel, often called an SRO for Single Room Occupancy. These are cheaper; maybe you get seven nights for \$195, bathroom down the hall. Was this how it was for Mary and Joseph? Newly together, traveling to a town unfamiliar to Mary, searching for safe and affordable housing. But ultimately it is getting late and you have to find a place, any place to stay. In 2015, hotels in Downtown San Diego had an 80.4% occupancy rate. If there is not somewhere to go



soon, there may not be anywhere to stay.

Had they come to San Diego earlier, say 2003, they would have stood a better chance. Since 2003, Downtown San Diego has given up more than 10,000 SRO rooms!! Many of the people who still consider themselves not homeless, are

living in people's garages (modern day Mangers?) often without heat and most often without bathrooms. This is not our picture of how we would like to see Jesus brought into the world. But yet, it is not that different from the story told in Luke. How strange it is that we are so removed from the story. Those who grace us on our patio and in our upstairs Sunday school/clinic rooms would be so much closer to the story of the birth of our Lord.

There is no room in the inn! The past two years has seen an increase of 75% in the number of people living on the street in

Continued on page two

Unrushed Time by Nance Lovell

In this Advent season, we are hearing many Christmas carols and songs of winter. One of my daughters has committed to singing “Baby it's cold outside” routinely Each. And. Every. Day. It is so very cold outside, even in San Diego. Our coastal marine layer adds a dampness and additional level of chill to the cold harsh streets.

Every morning when I leave home, I have to negotiate with my dog, Hallelujah. I call to her to go outside into the cold. She knows the routine, when I call to her she buries her nose deeper into her paws and tightens her curled position in bed. She pretends not to hear me. With each successive plea to her, I see her cringe and tense up. It is really quite a sad show of who's the boss. At some point, we both realize I need to leave the

house and she reluctantly rises. She moves slowly to the door and steps outside into the cold, immediately turning to see if I've changed my mind and will let her return inside to her warm bed. She gazes at me in disbelief and hangs her head. I know I have let her down once again.

I then arrive at work to be greeted by one or more people who are waiting in the cold. I know that the majority of them have had to sleep on the ice-cold pavement and perhaps they have gone hungry as well. I realize that nothing in my life compares with the hardships they must survive each day and night. The brutality on the street is harsh, we have seen and heard from many victims of the violence and hate suffered. The homeless population has sharply grown in the past cou-

ple of years, 75% in the downtown area alone!

I urge you, when you give...give generously. The need is ever growing. When you serve, serve whole-heartedly. We can make change right here in our corner of the world at Third and Ash. We give hope when we spend the time. Regardless of religion, politics, economics, culture or any other status – time spent together honors the other. From my service to those who are most vulnerable, the people who are terminally ill and living on the street, spending unrushed time together is what provides the most healing.

Nance Lovell is a social worker and founder of TACO's "Going Home" ministry, which works with the dying and medically fragile.

No Room at the Inn *continued from page one*

downtown San Diego. Many of them are on fixed incomes. On any given day you can call these residential hotels and be told that there is no space available. In fact, some of these residential hotels have designated all of their units as permanent Section 8 housing. This funding which was designed for people with very low income to afford an apartment or house, is now focused on single rooms with a bathroom and shower down the hall. We cannot cite

personal moral failings as the cause of why people are living on the streets. Not when we know that the number of seniors living on the street has doubled and not when after 11 months only 400 of the 1,000 veterans our Mayor promised, have been moved into housing. The scarcity of affordable housing in our City is to blame.

Into this desperate and dire situation, Jesus was born over 2000 years ago. We know

that God does amazing things in places that can be very dark and foreboding. Those of us who work with and volunteer with people living on the street know of the tremendous grace and compassion that is shown by those who are given so little. Let us look to them to lead us in this Christmas season, that we may bring our gifts.

How Can We Be Helpful? *by Jim Lovell*

For 13 years, TACO has had social workers at the center of services. Through an early grant from the California Endowment, we had the opportunity to expand our services beyond meeting the hunger and nutrition needs of the homeless individuals who came to our patio. Two years later we received a grant from Wheat Ridge Ministries to start Going Home End-of-Life Services and Simon's Walk.

We visited the dying, the imprisoned, spoke at City Hall, washed the feet of homeless individuals on the street. We held funerals and participated in one wedding. We cried with families at the bedsides of their parents even when we didn't speak the language. We have had the opportunity to teach other providers what we have been taught by the homeless people in San Diego – that you rely on the individual you are serving to teach you what they need.

We provide counseling for victims of domestic violence, help them and their children to get safely into hotel rooms for the night, for the week. We have worked with people who are suicidal, homicidal, disturbed by voices telling them all kinds of things that are not true. We have walked along with people in recovery, and those who cannot stay in recovery, those who are not sure that they want to think about recovery, and even those who die in their addictions.

TACO and First Lutheran have spent 41 years creating a safe place in downtown San Diego for those without a home, those who are not documented, those who are in desperate need of healthcare, pain relief, dental services, and legal assis-

tance. For many of these services there is hardly a place to go when you have no resources. Furthermore, figuring out how to navigate a system that is not only complicated, but held together with bits of string and bailing wire, is daunting and frightening.

For the social workers of TACO, we approach everyone who comes to our door in a similar manner. "What can I do to be helpful?" are words that greet those individuals knocking and looking for help. It's a busy place. Eight different clinics, two meals, culminating in an average of 750 people each week coming across the patio. Whether what brings the individual initially is the need for food or diagnosis of cancer, or death of someone close, or painful infection in their mouth: our goal is to ensure that there is no "wrong" door. If we cannot provide services to resolve the issue, we work to find out whom in the community can. If we cannot find out whom in the community can, we work to speak to those in power about the need. If speaking to those in power about the need does not change the situation, we work to see what can be created. When nothing can be created, we sit to commiserate. Through all of these things we aim to "be with" the person who has come seeking help. We may be there next to them when there are no more words to say. Or when we are waiting for the words to come. Or when the prayer goes up with only tears.

When volunteers come to help serve the meal we often talk about how important it is to say "hello" and look the individual in the eyes. This is because for so many on the street, people avert their gaze as they pass them. The same is often true for

those who are suffering in medical anguish, to low-income seniors with chronic pain, for immigrants who are not safely welcomed anywhere. It is such a powerful experience to sit and be listened to. Even more so for those who have become discouraged because there is no one willing to do so.

This month we will say goodbye to our part-time social worker, Margaret Alba. Margaret has been with us since May of 2015. We were fortunate to find an MSW had a long history of working in the homeless community, who was bilingual and comfortable working with immigrants coming for medical care, who felt unsafe in the system (and even more unsafe now). Margaret has been a tremendous asset to our organization seeing more than 800 persons between September 2015 and August of this year alone. That is not unusual for our social workers. The needs are so tremendous.



Volunteer Appreciation: Incarnation Lutheran Church *by Brad Young*

Hello everyone, I hope that the holidays are treating all of you well. If you are like me, this time of year goes by much too quickly. Between shopping, decorating, cooking, socializing.... There is NOT enough time. However, the priceless memories made during this time more than make up for the time spent rushing around. In regards to memories, I would like to share a wonderful TACO tradition that took place November 25th thanks to the amazing, wonderful, (insert compli-



A team of twenty two arrives to set up the breakfast buffet and serve.

mentary adjective here) group of volunteers from Incarnation Lutheran Church.

For many years now the youth of Incarnation Lutheran Church Poway have blessed TACO with the gift of this meal. Since we do not serve on Thanksgiving, this pancake breakfast provides an amazing breakfast to compliment the many Thanksgiving meals served by various organizations. In a sense it lengthens the holiday season for many who have very little else to celebrate. So, as I like to say, from the bottom of our

hearts... THANK YOU INCARNATION LUTHERAN CHURCH.

One other note I would like to make, is to take a minute to recognize Wayne Boss and Loren Harrell. Much of the set up and clean-up was their responsibility, as it is for all meals. Their continued hard work makes much of what TACO does possible, and I know that I speak for all when I say we are extremely grateful for their contributions. Have a blessed holiday season everyone!



A team of ten volunteers, led by Mindy Bugaj arrived to cook an amazing meal of pancakes, sausage, and scrambled eggs.



Over one hundred and twenty guests enjoying a total of two hundred meals, with flawless service AND clean up.

Arms Outstretched 2016

John and Jean Alme
 Dr. Ellen Beck
 Diane Beckman
 Elaine Bertram
 Nancy Berner
 Russell Block
 Linda Bright and Kristin Westerman
 Cabrillo Charitable Fund
 David and Lois Case
 Jean-Claude and Rebecca Chamaa
 Umesh Chatrath, MD
 Jennifer and Brendon Coffey
 Charlotte Collins
 Elizabeth Connolly
 Susan Connors
 Mike and Lori Cook
 Charles Costa
 Toni and Joseph D'Alessandris
 Beatrice Doblado
 Joanne Driskill
 Paul Engel
 Randy Engel
 Pastor Gloria Espeseth
 George and Ethel Falk
 Kerrie Foss
 Jessie Frank
 Kevin Gannon
 Ronn and Dorothy Garton
 Rev. Jim and Jessica Friedrich
 James Grutkowski

Christine Habib
 Kathleen Harrington
 Steve and Carol Hassett
 Rick and Ann Hein
 Robert and Patricia Hendrickson
 John Hoff
 Mary Ann Horton
 Richard Hostin
 Geraldine Jenkins
 Frank Jessie
 Pastor Ted and Marietta Johns
 Brenda Johnson
 Rosemary and Walt Johnston
 Larry and Stephanie Jordan
 Chris Justice
 Robert and Donamay King
 Dan and Rebecca Kjonggaard
 Richard and Mary Krueger
 John Lester
 Laurie Lewis
 Pastor Laurie Line
 Pastor Karen Marohn
 Stephen Mather
 Karen and Thomas McBride
 Pastor Wilbert and Dagmar Miller
 Elizabeth Moss
 Steven Moreen
 Darlene Morrow-Truver
 R.J. Nelson
 Jan Neuhaus

Laverne Neuman
 Debra Novak
 Jeannie Oestreicher
 Las Patronas
 Mike and Susan Pestrak
 Sandra Peters
 John and Suzanne Pew
 Ladonna Piper
 Rev. Bill and Martha Radatz
 Robert and Gretchen Ravenscroft
 Sue and Merv Rettenmund
 Mark and Laure Reynolds
 Peg and Carl Ross
 Bob and Pat Schroeder
 Carol Schultz
 Irvin Silverstein, DDS
 Kathleen and Dan Sorahan
 Anthony Stiezel
 Chuck and Cathie Sundry
 Frances Taranto
 Tom Templeton and Mary Erlenborn
 Pat and Glee Thomson
 Scott Walls
 Yvonne Ward
 Clara and Mark Wentland
 Lee Wesley
 John Wiehe
 John Wilbur

This Month in the
TACO Times:

- **How Can We Be Helpful?** (page one)
- **No Room in the Inn** (page two)
- **Pancake Breakfast with Incarnation Lutheran** (page two)
- **Unrushed Time** (page three)

Like us on Facebook!
facebook.com/TACOSdfb

The TACO Times
First Lutheran Church
1420 Third Avenue
San Diego, CA 92101-3193

Board of Directors (2016)
Jennifer Siverts, President,
First Lutheran Church
Jean-Claude Chamaa, Vice President
Kathryn Kanaan, Secretary, First Lutheran Church
Liaison
Brenda Johnson, Treasurer,
St. Peter's by the Sea
Pr. Larry Koger,
Interim, First Lutheran Church
Stephanie Jordan, Shepherd
of the Valley Lutheran Church
Ladonna Piper, First Lutheran
Church
Rosemary Johnston, Our
Lady of Grace Catholic Church
Peg Ross, Calvary Solana
Beach
Mary Krueger, First Lutheran
Church
Rev. Jim Friedrich, First
Lutheran Church

The TACO Times

Vol. 13 No. 4

Third Ave. Charitable Org. Inc.
1420 Third Ave.
San Diego, Ca. 92101-3193

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Diego, CA
Permit No. 2827



Can You Help Us with "Concrete Christmas?"

For the past eleven years, TACO has solicited donations used to buy sleeping bags, tarps, duffle bags, and other items useful to those living on the street, and wrapped them as Christmas gifts to our homeless neighbors. This year we're raising the money with a crowdfunding campaign through WeRaise. We're calling this campaign "Concrete Christmas." As of now we're 92% of the way to our goal of \$5,000—and we could use your help to reach 100%. Please consider visiting WeRaise's website and contributing.

You can reach the page through a link on our website (tacosd.org) or through our facebook page (facebook.com/tacosdfb). Just search for "Concrete Christmas" on either page and you'll find it.

***"...gathering as a community in service with
the most vulnerable among us..."***