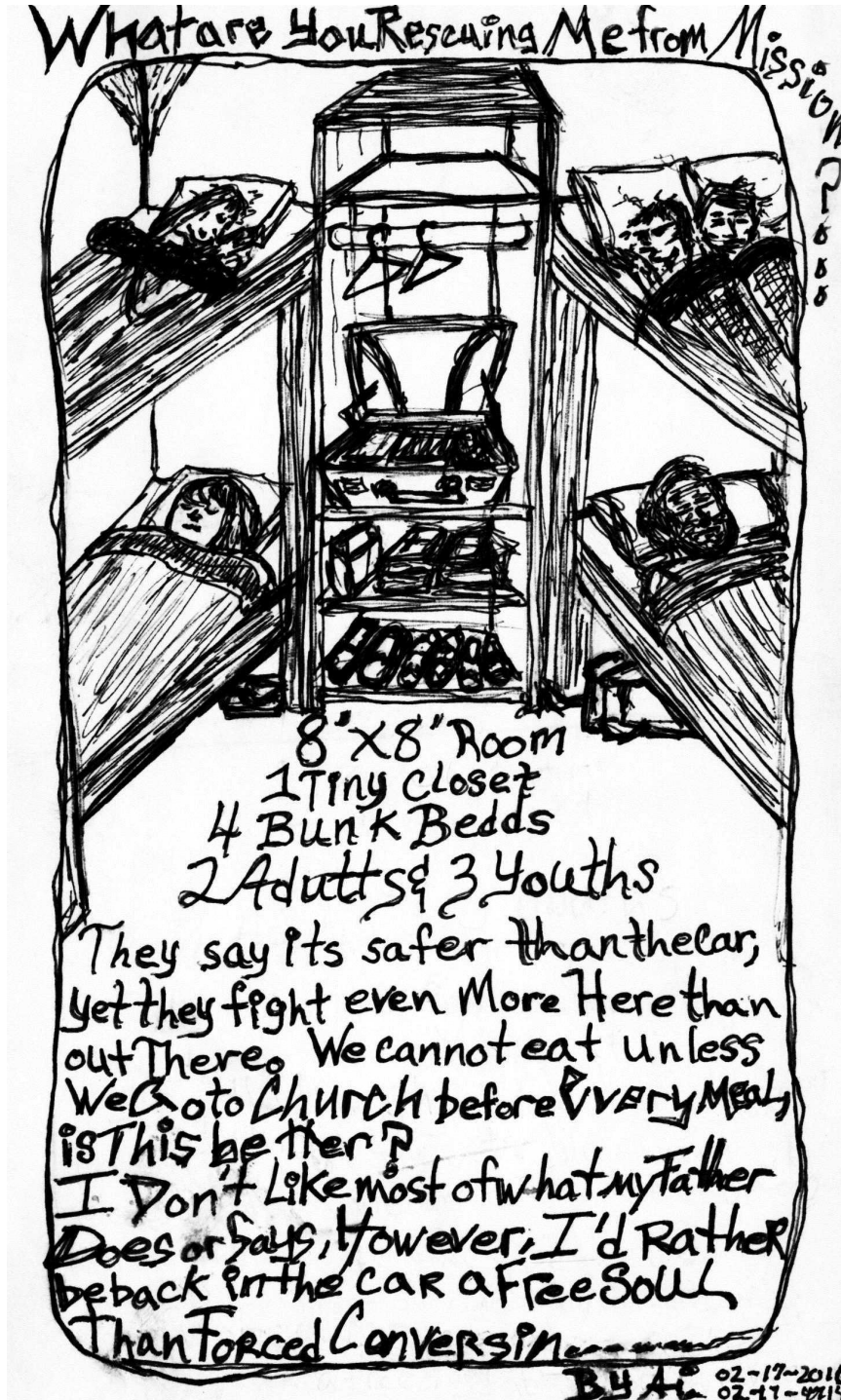


SPEAKING OF JUSTICE

faith in action



Family Room by Aileen McPherson

January 2019

HOUSING & HOUSELESSNESS

Dear Friends,

We are living in a crisis of homelessness. An increasing number of our neighbors are un-housed, or houseless, living in the streets, under bridges, in doorways, parks and roadsides. As Reverend Bill Sinkford said in the [Think Out Loud conversation, Faith Leaders on Homelessness](#), “There are many images of the beloved community and many pieces of language to describe it in many faith traditions, **but there is not one where the beloved community is described as a place where people sleep on the street.**”

Unitarian Universalists principles aspire to justice for all, equity and compassion in human relations, and recognition of the inherent dignity of every person. We are called to address the inhumane inequities in which we live. This issue of *Speaking of Justice* focuses on Housing and Houselessness in Portland, and the many ways that we as a faith community strive to put our faith into action to address the crisis. Thank you for learning with us. Let us live into the beloved community.

The Editorial Team of Speaking of Justice

Nikki Beezley, Program Assistant for Social Justice
Dana Buhl, Director of Social Justice
Mindy Clark
Ethel Gullette
Alisa Joaquin
Jamie Marucha

A TALE FROM THE RAMP

by Bronwyn “Banshee” Carver



Split Apart by Aileen McPherson

I fly a sign
On a freeway ramp I stand
My dignity and pride
Tucked tight in my throat

My eyes greet drivers
Behind vehicle windows of various steel
Hardly a smile passes lips

Stopping sign pause look
Out at me faces of
Compassion, sadness, smugness, glances
Snuck sideways--quick! Look away

It's the pity though
This I just cannot bear
They look at me but
They do not see me

A dollar passes window open
Our moment as human to human
Passes.

Thank you to Street Roots vendors for all art and poetry.

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A SNAPSHOT OF HOMELESSNESS IN PORTLAND

By Jamie Marucha

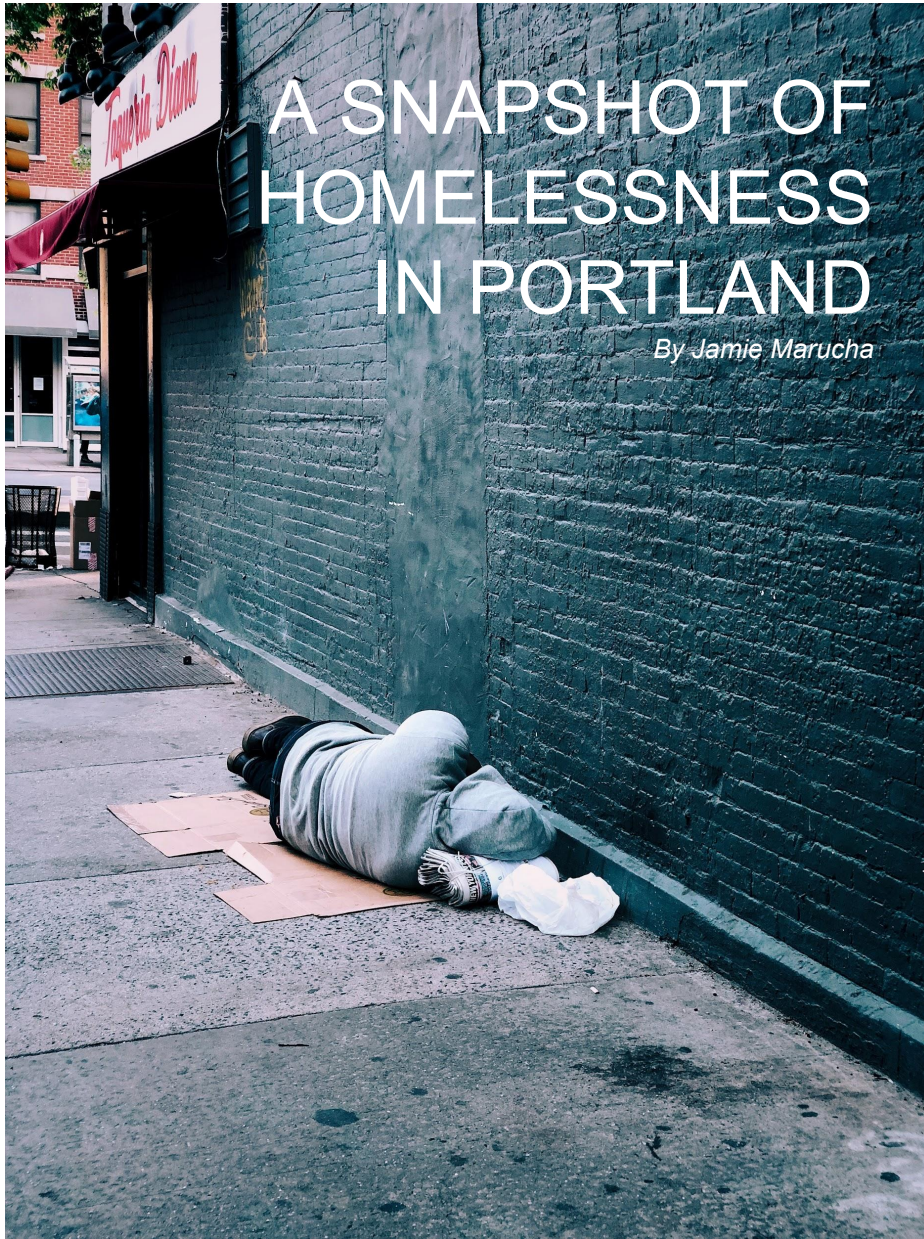


Photo by Jon Tyson

The Greater Portland region has an affordable housing deficit that is larger than either the city of Gresham or Beaverton. There are 39,500 homes in Beaverton, and 41,000 in Gresham. The shortfall of affordable homes in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington Counties is 48,000. That means, in our region, we need to create affordable options to house the equivalent of a city!

Among local families with the lowest incomes -- seniors, preschool teachers, minimum wage earners, disabled, unemployed and underemployed -- some live in the limited available affordable housing options. Others are literally left out in the cold as each of these three counties has about half the affordable homes needed to meet their residents' needs.

The City of Portland lists several factors for the housing crisis. The lack of affordable housing is exacerbated by the pace of people moving into the city and the raising of rents, thus reducing the number of places in which people can afford to live. Portland also has a growing number of homeless people with mental health issues and drug addiction. And third, domestic violence can leave survivors with no choice but to leave their homes, even if they have nowhere to go.

In 2015, the City of Portland declared a housing emergency. However, the problem has been brewing for decades, following economic changes, policies in the 1950s and 1960s to keep those with mental illness out of institutions, and massive cuts to public housing in the 1970s and 1980s.

Most of the statistics cited here came from the last Point in Time Count of homeless people in 2017, which significantly underestimates the number of homeless. Those counted include people in shelters, tents and on the streets, but not included are people doubled-up in the homes of friends, staying in hotels or hospitalized, and those incarcerated.

All too often, people with disabilities and illnesses are homeless. Housing and health are inextricably linked. Often the factor that leads to losing housing is the loss of a job. Illness can force workers out of jobs. In the U.S., medical expenses, especially while unemployed or uninsured, can mean financial devastation; 57.1% of personal bankruptcies in this country are due to medical bills. Health spirals downward for those who lose housing.

Over 60% of homeless people in Multnomah County lived with disabling conditions, either mental illness, chronic physical conditions or substance abuse disorders. Tragically, many of these were unsheltered, that is, not in transitional housing or emergency shelters. Living outside on the day of the Point in Time Count, 38% of the unsheltered population had physical disabilities, 26% had chronic health conditions, and 7.8% were adults with developmental disabilities. If the lack of safety and extreme discomfort of living on the street as a healthy person is hard, imagine how much

more so for a person with disabling health conditions.

Easily visible on the streets of Portland are homeless people suffering from mental illness and substance abuse. The 2017 Point in Time Count for Multnomah County found 4,177 people experiencing homelessness, up from 3,801 in 2015. The count found that more than a quarter of them were adults with serious mental illness, and more than a fifth were listed as adults with substance abuse disorder. Other estimates suggest a third of homeless people nationally live with serious mental illness, most without treatment and many unaware that they are ill. Legal barriers make it easier to arrest homeless mentally ill people than to help them get needed treatment. Also noteworthy is the rate of comorbidity between mental illness and substance abuse. About half of the people experiencing mental illness also experience a substance abuse disorder at some point in their lives. Some genetic conditions may predispose populations to both conditions. For some, drugs and alcohol are unwittingly used to self-medicate mental illnesses, and for others, substance use may also change the brain, increasing the likelihood of an episode of mental illness.

Poverty, domestic violence and homelessness are painfully intertwined. Poor women, those with household incomes under \$7,500 are seven times more likely to experience domestic violence than women in households earning \$75,000 or more. Their abusers often isolate these women from their support networks, giving them little access to friends, family and money if they choose to leave. Not surprisingly, over 40% of domestic violence victims report staying in the relationship because they had no other housing options. Many have nowhere to turn if they leave but to the streets or shelters. Astonishingly, some are forced out of their homes as victims of violence when landlords enforce zero tolerance for crime policies after a violent episode; landlords use the policy to turn out victim and perpetrator alike. One study found that landlords are less likely to rent to domestic violence victims. Across Oregon, on a given day in 2017, there were 13,953 homeless persons. Of those, 2,582 reported that they were victims of domestic violence.



So Cold by Aileen McPherson

The rate of homelessness among youth in Oregon’s public schools. is at an all time high.

More than 22,000 Oregonian public school students experience homelessness. Portland and Beaverton are especially hard hit. This number includes children, sheltered and unsheltered, plus those living with other families and in temporary housing. The shortage of affordable housing and lack of family wage jobs largely contributes to the problem. Other factors include domestic violence, mental illness, sexual abuse, and parental abandonment. In fact, in Multnomah County, only 269 homeless youth were with parents while 1,462 were unaccompanied minors. These children are forced to fend for themselves many years before their peers. There are special challenges faced by LGBTQ youth as they are often rejected by their families. Studies find 30-40% of youth in the streets, in drop-in centers, and served by homeless youth agencies identify as LGBTQ.

Homelessness Disproportionately Affects People of Color. Given systemic and institutional racism, the burden of homelessness falls more heavily on people of color. Of the 4,177 homeless individuals in Multnomah County, nearly 20% were African Americans. Comparatively, that same year, the US Census found only 6% of Multnomah County residents were black.

In the 2015 census, people of color made up 30% of Multnomah County residents, while 61% of homeless students were children of color.

A humanitarian crisis, homelessness speeds death. In 2017, at least 79 homeless people died in Multnomah County, many prematurely. The average age of death for homeless women was 41; for men it was 48. Causes of deaths included hypothermia, drug or alcohol toxicity, suicide and violence. Only 23 souls from this group died of natural causes, and seven of those were related to alcohol abuse.

Call to Action. How can we move toward the beloved community in the face of this crisis of houselessness? Support First Unitarian’s Committee on Hunger and Homelessness (COHHO) by attending meetings and staying informed through their list-serve (see highlight of COHHO for more information). Volunteer in the 13 Salmon Family Shelter (see article). Support your local *Street Roots* vendors and other organizations providing direct service. And please stay tuned as First Unitarian begins an exploration of development of the campus to learn if affordable housing is feasible (*see article by Rev. Bill Sinkford in this issue*). Let’s all do our best to not turn away from this crisis, and seek together just and compassionate solutions.

UU Testimonies

Ellen Vanderslice

First Unitarian Portland Congregant

Sixteen years ago I decided to join First Unitarian Portland. I came for the free and responsible search for truth and meaning, and in this faith community I have found so much more: a welcoming place to explore and try to bind up my own brokenness, and a compassionate circle to hold me through the deaths of first my father and then my mother. For your light on my journey, thank you.

Over a decade ago, we resuscitated First Unitarian's Homeless Action Group, which has grown into the Committee on Hunger and Homelessness – COHHO. I went to that first meeting 11 years ago as a kibitzing bystander, but I found opportunities to serve, and to grow, and to enter into deep fellowship with others who put their hands and their hearts to the cause of ending homelessness.

COHHO led me to one of the most spiritual moments I've known. When my husband Scott and I began volunteering at the Goose Hollow Family Shelter as overnight hosts, the first few times I had trouble falling asleep. But one night I suddenly recalled Marilyn Sewell preaching a sermon on "Radical Hospitality," and when those words said themselves inside my head, "radical hospitality," I felt my heart open, and love flow out to every corner of that echoing gymnasium, and to every kid and every parent in it. If only I could access such loving kindness always! But after that I did sleep better.

Ryan Diebert

First Unitarian Portland Congregant and Member, Board of Trustees

More than 4,000 of our neighbors sleep in Multnomah County's streets or shelters on any given night. Far more crowd in with other households just to get by, but those numbers hide a deeper story: Native Americans are 402% more likely to experience homelessness here than those who identify as white, non-Hispanic and not African American. Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders are 198% more likely.

These racial disparities in homelessness mirror national trends and aren't explained by differences in income alone. Instead, the stories of people of color who experience homelessness point to racist systems and structures dating from America's founding in colonialism, genocide and slavery. That history lives today as disproportionate incarceration, limited access to education and employment, housing discrimination and community-level experience of violence, all of which place communities of color at greater risk of homelessness.

My twenty-year career working to end homelessness spans from street-level Chicago to Portland City Hall. Along the way, I've learned that ending homelessness requires us to address root causes in order to dismantle racist structures driving homelessness. Here at First Unitarian, I'm inspired by our intersectional justice work in partnership with front-line communities. Ending the New Jim Crow, organizing for affordable housing and against gun violence, and fostering Just Transitions, are all critical to ending homelessness, as is our work to dismantle White Supremacy Culture within our congregation and larger UU faith.

More so, I am inspired by *why* we do this work here. The call of love that we share at First Unitarian reshapes me and all of us. It fosters the change described by Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams, Sensei: "Without inner change, there can be no outer change, without collective change, no change matters." It is this faithful change that renews my spirit and keeps me working to end homelessness with love.

Get to Know Our Action Groups

A Highlight on Committee for Hunger & Homelessness & Quilts of Love

The Committee on Hunger and Homelessness (COHHO) maintains the vision “No One Hungry, No One Homeless, Children and Families Thriving.” With our vision to guide us, our committee has come a long way with a lot of help from First Unitarian members.



Toward this vision, COHHO:

- 1) Volunteers and recruits members. In its last annual report Portland Homeless Family Solutions (PHFS), our community partner, noted that our day shelter, Thirteen Salmon Family Center, had served 288 families – 976 adults and children. Although PHFS has moved to a larger location in Lents, COHHO continues to collect food, clothing and gifts during the holiday season as well as volunteer. Thirteen Salmon will continue to serve as a winter shelter through April 2019. We also coordinate breakfast for Clay Street Table three times a year. We maintain a food cupboard for low-income and houseless congregants. We also collaborate with other social justice action groups at First Unitarian.
- 2) Informs. We inform our congregation and ourselves about homelessness, hunger and their effects, including initiatives and opportunities that are related to our goals. COHHO is a member of the Interfaith Alliance on Poverty, a group of congregations that works together to address homelessness and its root causes. We communicate weekly with congregants in the church e-news about ways they can help.
- 3) Advocates. COHHO advocates for social change with community leaders on issues and policies affecting homelessness and hunger.

COHHO has been an important place for members to engage in service and to form friendships. We share responsibilities so no one feels overwhelmed. We welcome others to visit our meetings to see if COHHO is a good fit for you to put your faith into action.



Photo by Alisa Joaquin.

Pillowcases, an auction item made by [Quilts of Love](#) for the 13 Salmon Family Shelter.

Quilts of Love is a service group of First Unitarian congregants. Their quilts serve families at Portland Homeless Family Solutions, as they transition from the shelter to a permanent home. Quilts of Love, seeks those who enjoy quilting or sewing, but welcomes those who want to assist in another way such as ironing or cutting fabrics. Much of the sewing will be done by individuals on their own time.

We meet on the 3rd Thursday of every month from 10am-11:30am, in room B310.

“Sew-In” is on the first Thursday of every month at Modern Domestic,

422 NE Alberta St. from 10:30am-3:30pm.

Contact: Kathleen Vinson (503) 477-6001 || kathleenvinson@gmail.com

13 Salmon Day Shelter

The 13 Salmon Day Center for homeless families has been a central part of First Unitarian's community service since 2009. Former minister Kate Lore worked for a time as Shelter Manager for the Goose Hollow Shelter, an overnight shelter for families who were without shelter. She brought her passion for serving families with her to First Unitarian Portland and was instrumental in forming a relationship between our congregation and Portland Homeless Family Solutions (PHFS) who managed the Goose Hollow Shelter.

When the Buchan Building was designed and built, space was reserved to provide a safe place to stay during the day for families staying overnight at Goose Hollow. Through Multnomah County funding, grants and donations, PHFS managed both Goose Hollow and the new 13 Salmon Day Center, named for its location at the corner of SW 13th and SW Salmon Streets.

Instrumental to the opening and support of 13 Salmon is our church's Committee on Hunger and Homelessness (COHHO), known in the early days as the Homeless Action Group. The group gathered and arranged everything needed to make a comfortable place for the guest families - furniture for the dining room, quiet room, and living room; supplies such as diapers, toys and books; and dishes and cooking equipment for the kitchen.

Since then, hundreds of adults and children have had a temporary home at 13 Salmon Day Center and the Goose Hollow Shelter while PHFS helps them to secure permanent housing. Led by COHHO, First Unitarian continues to provide food, supplies and volunteers for the Day Center.

Portland Homeless Family Solutions has a new permanent home in East County, but we continue to work together as 13 Salmon still serves as their emergency winter day shelter for homeless families through April 1, 2019.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! To help 13 Salmon Winter Family Shelter

Volunteers are needed now through April 30 to make breakfast, lunch, play with children, and make families welcome.

New volunteer? Visit
<http://www.pdxhfs.org/become-a-volunteer/>
or contact PHFS Volunteer Coordinator T.C. Schumacher, tc@pdxhfs.org or 971-865-1351.



Street Roots at Our Door

By Ethel Gullette

For about the last four years, Wayne Moore’s friendly face has greeted all who enter the church at the main door; he sells *Street Roots* before both services, every Sunday. *Street Roots* — published weekly in our city— has been Portland’s premiere publication addressing homelessness and poverty since 1998. Its mission is to “create income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.” The paper is published by the non-profit **Street Roots**.

Wayne and all the other *Street Roots* vendors throughout the city are able to make \$.75 per paper that they sell. Wayne was diagnosed with schizophrenia in the late 70s, which greatly affected his ability to read and to work. Before working for Street Roots, Wayne experienced living on the streets. He lived for some time at a rescue mission, but through Street Roots, he was able to transition from shelter living to permanent housing.

Street Roots provides a community of support and many opportunities; in addition to employment, there are meetings, lobbying efforts, and classes. *Street Roots* has given Wayne the the opportunity for purposeful reading and some creative writing. *Street Roots* enables him to continue learning and his interest is engaged. He does meaningful work, has stable housing and health. His favorite slogan is “house keys, not handcuffs,” because homelessness often leads to arrest. He is appreciative that Street Roots helps him keep out of trouble and focused on taking care of himself.

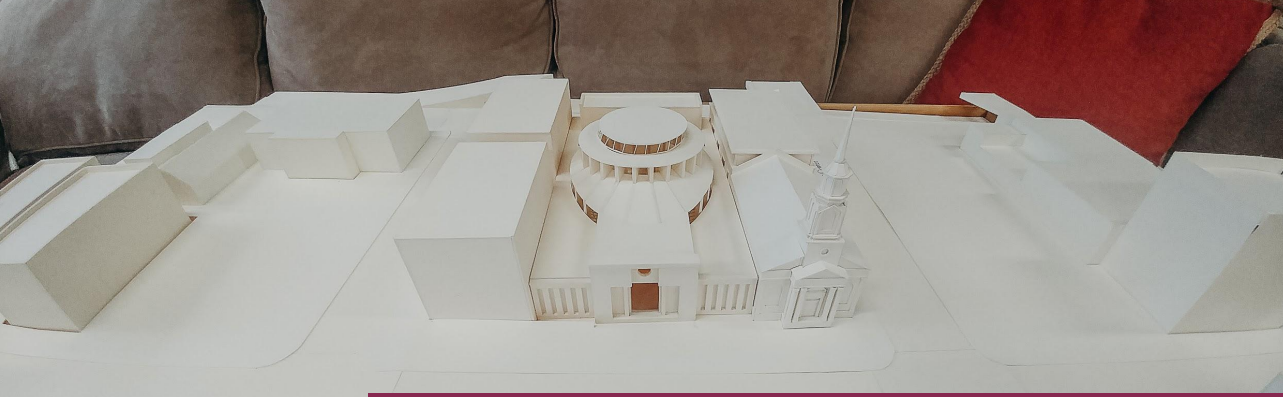
Wayne is 68 years old. He has a few good friends, but lots of friends have passed away recently. Wayne’s most important focuses are connecting and interacting with people, being aware, and staying safe and out of trouble. He is a member of First Unitarian and appreciates the welcome he receives here, where he has nothing but positive relationships.

street roots



Wayne Moore

Photo by Ethel Gullette



Developmental Exploration of the First Unitarian Campus

By Reverend Bill Sinkford, First Unitarian Senior Minister

The Buchan Building, now 12 years old, was the first new construction in Phase 1 of an ambitious development plan for our block-sized campus. That plan, conceived by a group of lay leaders at the request of the Board of Trustees, imagined a new sanctuary in the middle of the block and new development of the south-facing frontage on Main Street where our current sanctuary and offices stand. The dream of many was for affordable housing on the site.

In 2016, the Board of Trustees, recognizing that much has changed over the years, named the creation of a new development plan as one of our 5-year goals:

“Develop a long-term plan for development and sustainability of the church campus given changing dynamics of the West End and downtown Portland.”

We are beginning to develop that plan. At its December meeting, the Board authorized First Unitarian to apply to the City of Portland to become one of 5 religious sites that will receive support to explore the development of affordable housing on campus. This is a one-time opportunity that can fund the planning, architectural and engineering analysis that must be done before we shift into decision-making mode.

I am convening a Development Exploration Task Force whose work is to investigate and present alternatives for development to the Board. There are many wishes: new office space, parking, a new sanctuary and housing development.

By mid-February, we will hear if First Unitarian has been selected by the City to fund the exploration process. Both the possible City support and the ballot initiatives passed in November 2018 mean that this is the time to consider development options, if affordable housing is to be part of the mix.

The Task Force will develop information for the Board and then the congregation to use in the religious discernment which will answer the real question: What approaches to the use of our campus, this incredible asset, will allow us to live out the vision of First Unitarian as a “beacon of hope for us and for our community, a spiritual center in the heart of our city?”

The City process anticipates exploratory work through next fall. Look for additional information and opportunities for input and involvement as we move forward.



THE BUMPY RIDE TO FAIR HOUSING IN PORTLAND

by *Michael Camerella*

Photo by *Anwaar Ali*

On October 9th I rode with the Fair Housing Council of Oregon and First Unitarian members on a visual and auditory tour of Portland’s housing history. It was an informative, four-hour tour of “Portland’s Hidden Discriminatory History.”

Our first stop was where the City of Vanport once stood. We learned about its complicated history, including the disastrous flood of 1948. Vanport was built in 1942 as the nation’s largest public housing development, and Oregon’s second largest city, to accommodate an influx of workers from across the country to the growing wartime shipyards. In less than one year, almost 10,000 housing units were built.

Many of the workers who came to work in the shipyards were African-Americans. At the height of the war, 40% of the 40,000 residents in Vanport were African-American. Due to long-time exclusion of African-Americans from Oregon,

prior to the shipbuilding boom, only 1,800 African Americans lived in Portland. While Vanport was by far the most ethnically diverse city in Oregon, and some aspects of the city were integrated, racial discrimination continued there as well.

Standing on the green grass and rolling hills at the Heron Lakes Golf Course where Vanport once stood, childhood resident, Ed Washington, now the Director of Community Outreach and Engagement at Portland State University, spoke of his years growing up in Vanport. He told us about the grocery stores, churches, the integrated school, and the movie house. A twenty-four hour daycare center at Vanport was available for the workers’ children. Vanport was not without conflict or racial strife. Despite there being no official policy of segregation, in practice, the housing was segregated. Vanport also had several Oregon firsts, including some integrated schools thanks to school superintendent, James Hamilton. The City of Vanport had two African-

American sheriffs, Matt Dishman and Bill Travis. In 1946, after the war, and to attract veterans to the dwindling city, the Housing Authority of Portland opened the Vanport Extension Center which was later renamed Portland State University.

Anyone who lived in Vanport knew where they were when the dike broke and the sirens sounded. The city, built on a floodplain, was washed away on May 30, 1948, in the Vanport Flood. Residents had to gather what they could carry and leave as the water spilled through the dike. They had thirty-five minutes to reach higher ground. Displaced African-Americans had a particularly hard time finding new places to live due to racist housing policies and practices.

At the Expo Center we heard from Marleen Wallingford, a third generation Japanese American who is the president of the Portland Japanese American Citizens League.

In 1942, more than three thousand Japanese people in Portland were ripped from their homes and businesses by Presidential Executive Order 9066. Imagine being forced to leave your home, spending the summer in the enclosed stockyard with plywood placed over the animal feces; a family living in a twelve by twelve-foot space with no privacy. After a long hot summer at the Expo Center, Japanese families were sent to concentration camps in Idaho, Eastern Oregon and elsewhere. Ms. Wallingford told about the toll this took on individuals and families and how after the war ended most people had no reason to return to Portland, their housing and businesses gone. Some found housing in Vanport.

As the bus came to a stop at SE 31st and SE Pine Street, a quiet Portland residential neighborhood, Dr. Randy Blazak spoke about the actions leading to the horrendous hate crime, the murder of Mulugeta Seraw in 1988. Dr. Blazak has been the chair of the Coalition Against Hate Crimes since 2002, and has been studying racist skinhead and white nationalist movements for years. Blazak detailed the night of the crime, the individuals involved, subsequent litigation, and current status of the perpetrators of the crime. It was a stark reminder that hate crimes can happen anywhere. We also visited the recent site of a more recent hate killing. In May 2017, a self-declared white nationalist man fatally stabbed two people and injured a third on the Portland MAX train. The three people stabbed had confronted the attacker for shouting racist and

anti-Muslim slurs at two girls seated on the train. We saw the Hollywood MAX station where there now is a beautiful mural; a memorial to the upstanders who interrupted the hate, a celebration of Portland's diversity, and a reminder to defend and embrace all of our neighbors.

Driving on NE Williams Street, I was struck to learn that the large vacant parcel of land around Legacy Emanuel Hospital was once the center of the vibrant, post-war, African-American community.

Due to housing discrimination, the Albina and Eliot neighborhoods were the parts of Portland where the majority of blacks displaced by the Vanport flood could find homes.

In the 1970's, Emanuel Hospital was granted permission to expand, however, before the federal urban renewal funds were granted, the neighborhood was bulldozed; the

funds were never appropriated and the land still stands vacant. We also drove through both the Columbia Villa and the New Columbia Villa public housing projects. We heard about some lessons learned from these projects. We traveled through Old Chinatown, visited the site where the MAC club now stands that was once an extensive, sustaining community garden for Chinese residents of Portland, and passed through the neighborhood where dozens of Romani citizens were escorted out of Portland in 1944.

From the windows of the bus, with the knowledgeable guides and first-hand accounts, we were treated to a four-hour audio/visual documentary of Portland's discriminatory housing history. Much of what we learned about was painful, but we shared a hope that learning our history can inform how we can create a more equitable, diverse and just city.

VIDEO: A LOOK BACK

A TOUR OF PORTLAND'S HIDDEN DISCRIMINATORY HISTORY



Video by Nikki Beezley

The Interfaith Alliance on Poverty

by John Elizalde

If two heads are better than one... then maybe many heads are even better. First Unitarian's Economic Justice Action Group (EJAG) and the Committee on Hunger and Homelessness (COHHO) have brought their membership in the [Interfaith Alliance on Poverty](#) to our congregation. This 14-congregation interfaith group provides First Unitarian the chance to join with other action-oriented congregations to address the root causes of poverty.

The Interfaith Alliance believes that we don't have the answers, but we do have the energy and enthusiasm to support those who do. We have a long-standing relationship with [Living Cully](#) to work for just transitions in that NE Portland neighborhood. They do innovative work to ensure that as gentrification in Portland expands, it does not displace residents from their communities. Alliance members went to city hall to support Living Cully as it fought to save the Oak Leaf manufactured home park from development and keep 35 families in affordable homes. In this important effort, Living Cully

teamed with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability to propose and pass an overlay zone for all the 62 manufactured home parks in the city. The Alliance was there, in the background, providing logistical and other support to the people with the lived experience telling their stories.

The Interfaith Alliance on Poverty also allows us to amplify our voices in Salem and locally via membership in the [Oregon Housing Alliance](#), collaboration with the Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, Living Cully and other like-minded groups.

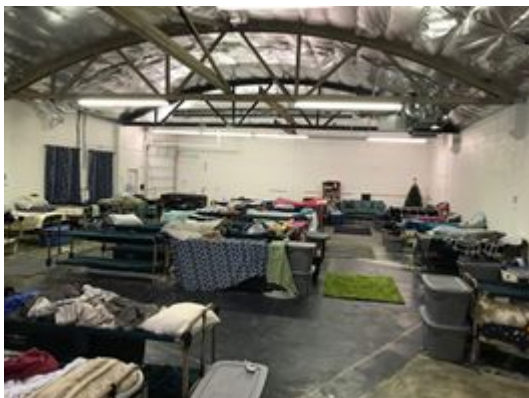
Poverty is a crisis in our state and city. In order to address the systemic issues making the climb out of poverty so much more difficult and tenuous we need to band together with like-minded people. The Interfaith Alliance on Poverty gives us another opportunity to do just that. You can [sign up here](#) to receive the Interfaith Alliance's newsletter.

Important Legislative Advocacy Dates

March 4, 2019 – Interfaith Advocacy Day, Salem (sponsors: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon)

March 14, 2019 – Housing Opportunity Day, Salem (sponsors: Oregon Housing Alliance)

April 18, 2019 – Hunger Free Action Day, Salem (sponsors: Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon)



Youth on the Streets

by Marilynne Eichinger

My learning about youth homelessness began when my partner and I invited a twenty-year-old homeless youth to live with us. Over a four year period, he taught us about his experience of living without a home, and we helped him transition to a more stable lifestyle.

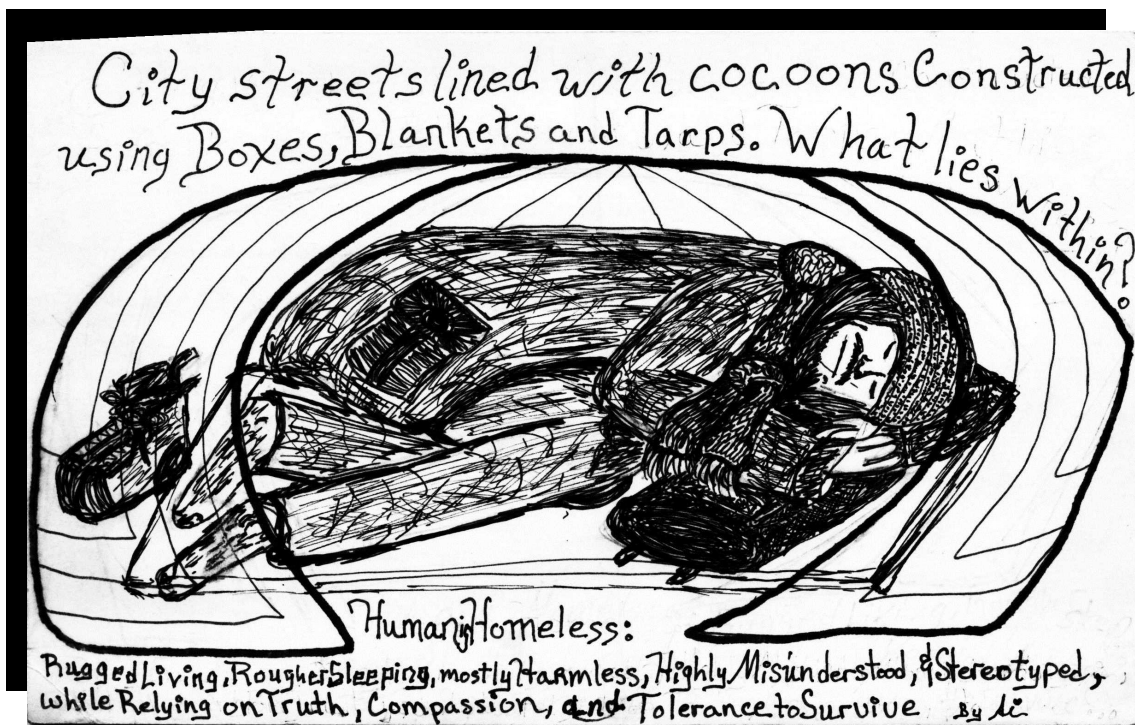
According to Outside In, there are an estimated 1,500-2,000 homeless youth in Portland. Homeless youth need to have strong survival instincts. They run away for many reasons, including poverty, domestic violence, unemployment, neglect, physical and/or mental abuse, and sexual exploitation. Some are pushed out because of gender identity, sexual preference, strict religious beliefs, drugs or alcohol.

Life on the streets is dangerous but we also learned that for some it can be fun at first. Many make strong friendships, abide by loyalty rules, share resources, hang in parks, play games, couch surf and find other ways to be youthful together. Some join gangs to find a sense of safety and family.

There are dangers and challenges as well. Youth are often accosted by pimps, drug pushers, thieves, and the

despondent and may be living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. To survive, some beg, lie, steal or are pressed into prostitution. The fight and flight part of their brains is well developed while critical thinking is less so. Their brains are still developing and, with compassionate, trauma-informed care, they can be guided toward positive decision-making and healthy habits. They may need years of care and treatment.

There are several services and resources that homeless youth can turn to for help. Portland's agencies dedicated to serving 14-25-year-olds are [Outside In](#), [New Avenues for Youth](#), [Janus Youth Services](#), and [Native American American Youth and Family Services](#). They provide occupational and mental health counseling, shelter, health services and even tattoo removal. [DePaul Treatment Centers](#) provides drug and alcohol treatment. [p:ear](#) encourages creativity. Libraries, often used as a day shelter, provide access to computers. Job Corps offers career training, public schools conduct GED classes, and Boys and Girls Aid Society provides health care. However, even all of these invaluable services are woefully inadequate to meet the needs of our youth.



by Aileen McPherson

WHAT IS HOME?

by J. Juno

Home is a house
but home is also a cardboard
box

Home is an apartment
but home is also an alcove

Home is a condo
but home is also a mat on
the floor

Home is a cottage
but home is also a tent

Home can be a choice
but sometimes
A home is not a choice
but a trap

WHERE DO I LIVE?

a haiku by J. Juno

I am cast away
waiting, waiting; watching
waves
for that lifesaver

PERPETUAL HUNGER

by Daniel Cox

Silent hunger befalls me.
My limbs grow weary
And I feel a never-ending
thirst.
Rest eludes me.
I fail to find heaven's retreat.
Days seem never-ending.
Nights are full of terrors
In the dark. Unknown secrets
Never seeing the light of day.

When They Move On

by J. Juno

When a person dies
on the streets
Where do they go?
Do they go to heaven?
Does anyone miss them?
Does their family know?
And if they went to
heaven...
Do they have a home now?
Or are they still sleeping
on a sidewalk,
Outside heaven's gate?

What is shelter?

Is it a house, apartment, motor home, a camper, car, or maybe a tent.

Yes, ALL of these are shelters.

Others will say, but a Rescue Mission is a shelter, And I say, NO it is Not!

When a shelter source forces those it helps to prostrate themselves for a meal, a shower, a bed, or worse a mat on the floor, this is not shelter it's Sacrilege.

My first experience in a Shelter was around 10, where my family was split apart, mom, me, and my two younger brothers, we're taken to a large room full of bunk beds and cots, I wondered, did dad's room look the same, while mom cried herself to sleep.

The second time was in a Rescue Mission, I was thirteen, we stayed in a family room, it had a small closet set between two sets of bunk beds, and a closable door. We arrived in summer, but later in winter after the daily services, which you had to attend before every meal or you could not eat, a couple was signing up for beds.

Later that evening, while I was passing the women's bunk room, it held ten sets of bunk beds, one of the ladies was trying to comfort the woman previously seen downstairs, she was crying buckets, saying He didn't get a bed, that there are no rooms for couples, only families, we should be thankful, here she began to cry harder.

Now this puzzled and confused, since a family room sat open same as ours, ready to use and able to hold two couples, let alone one. Were they not a family, a couple sure, a husband and wife a family of two, definitely true.

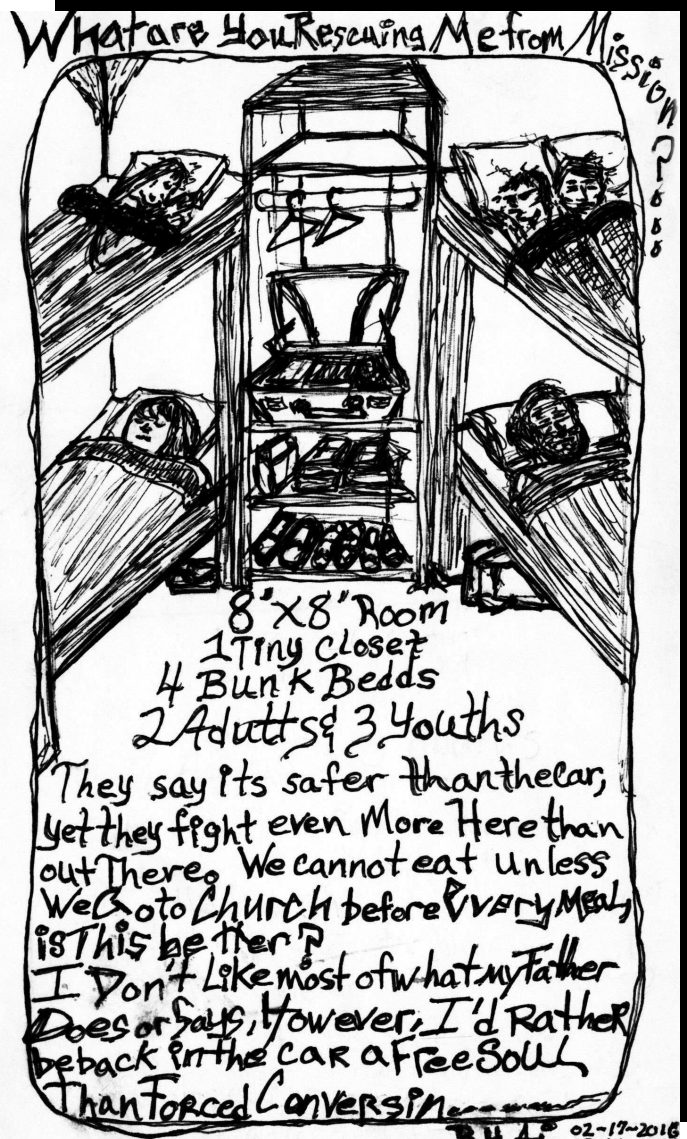
After this and many more scenes, I viewed the world with eyes New and keen, this shelter of Religion is Cold, unfeeling, where hypocritical Lies unfold. I swear upon my life bold, to never set foot upon these darkened thresholds, Nevermore my soul to sell, nor tears to shed for bread, bath, or bed, on streets I'd rather be, I may not be sheltered, but at least I'm FREE.

Despite how hard I worked to stay away from homelessness, it struck anyway,

and one day I found myself saying, "In NO Shelter will I stay, for I know all too well they will RIP my Love away, and this will make me go insane". And so the street was preferred, for a while in a Tent we endured, then into a Village that was disturbed, until a Home which is mobile was procured, bringing shelter, warmth, and safety felt.

Though still on the street we sleep and eat, my family will roam, while seeking a permanent home.

Let all take note shelter can bring Hope or cause a Stroke.



SHELTER

by Aileen McPherson

UPCOMING SOCIAL JUSTICE EVENTS

february

13th, A film screening of the award winning film

Sunday, February 17, 2019 from 1 PM-3 PM in the Daisy Bingham

Directed by Ava Duverney, Director of “Selma”. Hosted by Ending the New Jim Crow.

“Powerful, infuriating and at times overwhelming, Ava DuVernay’s documentary 13th will get your blood boiling and tear ducts leaking.” -*The New York Times*

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march

All Church Dialogue: The Crisis of Mass Incarceration

Sunday, March 10, 1:30-3:30pm Eliot Chapel and Buchan Reception Hall

Why is attention to the crisis of mass incarceration a moral imperative for Unitarian Universalists? Our All Church Dialogue is an opportunity to learn from local justice leaders about the scope of this humanitarian crisis as it functions here in Oregon. The panel, moderated by Bobbin Singh of the Oregon Justice Resource Center, will provide an overview of the crisis, addressing the intersection of race, class, immigration, and profit. Our panelists are Erin Pettigrew, a civil rights attorney with the Innovation Law Lab, David Rogers, Executive Director of the ACLU of Oregon, and Shannon Wight, Deputy Director of the Partnership for Safety and Justice. Following the panel, we'll talk with one another about putting our faith into action and learn about concrete steps we each can take. Please join us for this important faith and justice dialogue. Organized by three of First Unitarian's social justice groups: Ending the New Jim Crow Action Group, The Immigrant Justice Action Group, and the Stop Racist Policing working group.

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april

Black Girl in Suburbia, a film screening

Sunday, April 7, 1-3pm Buchan Reception Hall

After the film, director Melissa Lowery, will lead a lively conversation. We are fortunate that Melissa will also moderate the discussion following the Sewell Lecture on April 16 with Julie Lythcott-Haims.

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Sewell Lecture with Julie Lythcott-Haims

Tuesday, April 16, 7 p.m. Main Sanctuary. Doors open at 6:15 p.m. Tickets \$5–\$20 sliding scale (no one turned away). Drop-ins welcome. Reception and book signing to follow in Fuller Hall.

The author of *Real American: A Memoir* “On learning to love my black self in a country where black lives were never meant to matter.”

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For updated First Unitarian Portland events please subscribe to [Front Steps](#), our weekly e-Newsletter.

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*Sign up to get this directly to your inbox!
Scan the QR code or [click here!](#)*

**Contacts are updated as of 10/11/2018
& are subject to change.*



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