

## Homeless Sabbath December 15-17, 2017



### 2nd Annual Homeless Sabbath Weekend

As many of you prepare for the upcoming holiday celebration in your home and congregations, please remember the many individuals, families, and children who do not have a

home for the holidays or throughout the year.

Please give them a voice, hear them, and help them.

### How Many of our Neighbors are Homeless in Union County?

On January 26, 2017, NJCounts conducted a “snapshot” of homelessness on that one night.

- 291 households (475 people) were homeless on that night
- 43 households (43) people were unsheltered, on the street
- There was a decrease in family homelessness from 2016, by 11.3%
- Primary factors for cause of homelessness:
  - Asked to leave shared residence 26.2%
  - Eviction 15.9%
  - Loss or reduction of job/income 15.5%

### Homelessness Can Happen to Anyone

“I’m educated. I look just like you. I walk and talk well. But I don’t have a roof. And I don’t have my own key” said one of our homeless neighbors.

She became homeless when her rent became unaffordable. Her story illustrates how one crisis can cause someone’s life to spiral into homelessness.

### What can I do to help my homeless Neighbors?

1. **Donate** – Union County has a full continuum of services for the homeless provided by non-profits. Even a small contribution can help their clients find a place to call home;
2. **Volunteer** – all the non-profits need volunteers to help in their work to end homelessness. Every age, skill and talent is needed;
3. **Participate in Homeless Persons Memorial Day Vigil** – attend the vigil and help remember our neighbors who died due to lack of housing and supportive services;
4. **Engage** – talk to your family, your neighbors, your co-workers and elected officials about homelessness in Union County and how we need to work together to end homelessness. To achieve that goal, we need to change the conversation and focus on the needs of our neighbors; and
5. **Form a homeless ministry** - Begin discussions that focus on what more your congregation can do to end homelessness.

### Homeless Persons’ Vigil

Tragically, some of our most vulnerable neighbors die on the streets each year. On December 21, at First Presbyterian Church 11 Springfield Ave. Cranford, NJ at 7 PM, a vigil will be held for those who have died in the last year.

We remember them on the day with the least amount of daylight and the longest night because it symbolizes the struggle of those who are homeless, and who often live out their lives on cold streets or in dangerous abandoned buildings.

***As people of faith we are all called to serve the poor, the homeless, the sick, the hungry...***

**Remind us, O God, that we cannot rest fully secure in our homes each night until all your children have a place to call home.**