

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church will host SHARE Interim Housing

Seattle, WA - May 10, 2009 – The SHARE (Seattle Housing and Resource Effort) Calvary Lutheran community helps people turn their lives around. Stephen, a current resident offered his appreciation saying, “The way that I have been enriched and helped by Calvary Lutheran is first and foremost a safe, comfortable, and welcoming place; a place to use as a base as I searched for work; and then as a place to be able to stay and save more as I move toward my goal of my own place. It's helped me knowing that our hosts are behind us and support us. What a difference it makes to one's self-esteem. Truly, my stay here has given me the mortar needed to make a foundation strong.”

Josh, another resident, recently said, “Since staying at SHARE Calvary Lutheran, I have been able to get my life together. I have been able to get my paperwork turned in for school and have been able to get onto medications to help me control my blood pressure. Without the SHARE program, I do not know where I would be or how the future of my life would be.”

On May 30, Stephen and Josh will be two of 20 men moving from their current home in West Seattle Church of the Nazarene to their new home at the Calvary campus of Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church in Ballard. Like other homes in the neighborhood, this new home comes with responsibilities, chores, and accountability; and provides protection, supportive relationships, and a place of sanctuary. The men look forward to being a part of their new neighborhood.

Members of Our Redeemer's, including neighbors of the Calvary campus, met Thursday evening, May 7, and voted to invite the men of this SHARE group to the Our Redeemer's facility for one year. The meeting included substantial discussion and input gathered over a three-month process of talking with and listening to neighbors, shelter residents, and other churches who have hosted SHARE groups. The final proposal evolved as a result of this process and the congregation feels the questions and concerns raised are adequately addressed.

SHARE Interim Housing at Our Redeemer's Calvary campus will operate from 7pm to 7am each day. Limited to a group of 20 pre-selected and screened men, residents will arrive together between 7pm and 10pm. No one may enter the shelter after 10pm. SHARE strictly prohibits residents from being in the neighborhood surrounding the Calvary campus at any other time.

A self-managed community, SHARE residents support and are accountable to each other. Everyone must do chores and be drug-free, sober, and non-violent. Many residents have jobs. Screening of new members is done downtown by experienced residents at three set times each week. Less than one-third of those who apply are accepted. New members are monitored closely to make sure they understand the rules, meet their responsibilities, and can be good members of the community. SHARE wants to keep their hard-earned reputation, so they are strict about their code of conduct. Shelter security addresses rule violations and reports illegal activity anywhere in the neighborhood to 911.

This SHARE group has a 13-year history of successfully providing a safe place and a community for men who are homeless, while at the same time being a good neighbor wherever they have moved. They commit to “treat the property and neighborhood respectfully”, to “participate in community events and meetings when invited” and to “leave the place better than they found it”.

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A current neighbor of the shelter in West Settle vouches for the group saying, “when we first learned of the shelter moving into the neighborhood, we were concerned... over these months we have watched how the shelter has conducted itself as neighbors, behaving considerately and respectfully. It has been good for the neighborhood. I hope that your neighborhood can benefit, as we have, from the presence of the shelter.” Other neighbors say, “As long as there is a need, we look forward to their return.”

According to the Committee to End Homelessness in King County, every night 8,000 people in the county are homeless; 2,800 of those sleep outside where their safety is at risk. In Seattle a person would need to work 95 hours a week at minimum wage to be able to afford a two-bedroom apartment. Wait lists for low-income housing are years long. Domestic violence, job loss, or a medical crisis each account for a significant portion of the homeless people in Seattle.

Our Redeemer’s has a long history of living their faith by offering food and a safe place to sleep for the hungry and homeless in the community. The congregation housed a shelter in the church for more than eight years and hosted Tent City 3 for two months in 2008. Neighbors, elementary schools, churches, and local businesses thanked Our Redeemer’s for the opportunity to get to know and help the residents of Tent City 3. “Neighborhood support for Tent City 3 was tremendous” reported Rebecca Butler, church spokesperson. “Our awareness has grown and we at Our Redeemer’s feel we are called to use our resources to care for homeless neighbors, as Jesus did”, said Pastor Kathy Hawks after the May 7 meeting.

A community meeting will be held by Our Redeemer’s Lutheran Church on Wednesday, May 20, 7pm, at their Calvary campus (7002 NW 23rd Ave., Seattle) to answer questions.

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