

Encompass Ministry

Accompanying the Homeless of Santa Clara County

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<http://www.encompassministry.org/>



Encompass Ministry has much to report as we come to year end. Our Santa Clara County chronically homelessness population continued to grow with an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 people. Cleaning out of the notorious 'Jungle' only displaced people to other locations throughout our cities and highways. The homeless have not gone away.

With increasing rents this last year, many people were tipped over the economic edge and could not hold on to their apartments. There is now an estimated 10 to 20,000 more people considered 'situationally homeless'; That is they are couch surfing, living in their cars, or rough weekly-rate motels. They live precariously knowing that one more financial interruption could put them on the street.



My ministry is about being present with, and witness to, a variety of people living on the fringes of our neighborhoods. Some of the folks I meet struggle with addiction and/or suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and PTSD. Some of the folks I talk to share horrifying stories of childhoods marred by addicted parents, abuse, violence and abandonment.

Others tell stories of unexpected life events: accidents, illnesses, untimely layoffs. The stories are complex, and cover the full emotional spectrum of our humanity from anguish to joy and all the places in between.

I am reminded daily of our human frailty; of our need for God who promises the resurrection of the soul in spite of the darkness that invades it.

Last February, Encompass sponsored a 'Poverty Simulation' so that those safely housed might come to understand how people become homeless. In 60+ minutes, participants lived through a month of low income conditions, trying not to lose their housing. Participants were amazed at how challenging it was to live life on the edge of financial stability, and how easy it was to fall off that edge, lose housing, and land in the complex world of needing public assistance.



On God's Work Our Hands Sunday,

Encompass Ministry, along with three partner congregations, hosted a Hygiene Buffett on Lincoln Ave. underneath highway 280. The concept of a hygiene buffet is that a wide range of toiletry items are collected and sorted into bins by volunteers and low income folks can come by and fill bags with whatever free personal products they need. We plan to continue to work with congregations and individuals to host additional Hygiene Buffets in the future.



Calendar of Events:

2/3/2018 10:00-12:30 PM Poverty Simulation
at Hope Lutheran Church
Call Hope to make your reservation today.
408.248.3668

1/21/2018 Hygiene Buffet
Call Hope Lutheran Church to find out where
this event will take place.

In November we had our second annual Thanksgiving Dinner hosted at Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in San Jose. CGS members cooked, decorated, set up and cleaned up; several other congregations contributed food and helpers as well.

Last year very few homeless folks attended the dinner because they had no safe place to store their carts and possessions. So this year, Encompass Ministry arranged for their possessions to be stored under lock and key at Martha's Kitchen. Encompass provided shuttle service from Martha's to CGS and after the meal back to Martha's. This year nearly 100 people ate together; more than double last year's count. Warm connections with visitors from last year were renewed, and new connections were made. We look forward to more events like this as our growing understanding of those who are economically vulnerable stirs up our empathy and moves us towards thoughtful action.



The point of the dinner was not just serving hungry people, but also building relationships between servers and guests by sitting at the same tables and sharing the meal together.

