



Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch



Homelessness in the United States

A Position Paper of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch

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The Spiritual Principles and the Creed of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch calls the Church to follow the biblical directive to care for those who are homeless. The prophet Isaiah makes this clear in Isaiah h 58:6-7 where God says "Is not this the fast that I choose . . . to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; [and] when you see the naked, to cover them?"

Those without homes to live in are indeed the people of God who call the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch to action. Theologian Walter Brueggemann says, "The Bible itself is primarily concerned with the issue of being displaced and yearning for a place" What we as the Church must seek for all people is safe, sanitary, and affordable housing. Home as a promise to the homeless must be the ongoing commitment of the church.

The homeless are all around us. They are the lonely who pass their time talking to themselves in every big city and small town in the nation. They are rural families without the economic means to travel long distances to shelters and other public services. The homeless are people who have been displaced and discarded. The numbers grow larger as the economy recedes.

Homelessness is a crisis that strikes at the soul and heart of the Church. The 2009 study by the U.S. Conference of Mayors estimates that on average in major cities "single men comprise 40 percent of the homeless population, families with children 40 percent, single women 14 percent, and unaccompanied minors four percent. The homeless population is estimated to be 50 percent African American, 35 percent white, 12 percent Hispanic, two percent Native American, and one percent Asian. An average of 22 percent of homeless people in the cities is considered mentally ill; 34 percent are substance abusers; 20 percent are employed; and 11 percent are veterans." 1

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Homelessness has many faces and many causes. Homelessness and poverty cannot be separated. Many factors contribute to this crisis including:

- “• Lack of community support for de-institutionalized people with chronic mental illness
- Discontinuance or reduction of public benefits to significant numbers of elderly and disabled people
- A minimum-wage structure that locks the working poor into poverty
- Loss of family farms
- Closure of plants and businesses
- An economy increasingly built on low-paying temporary and seasonal jobs with few or no benefits
- The increasing number of single-parent households with associated low incomes
- The lack of housing for people with AIDS
- Displacement of inner-city residents by urban renewal.” 2

The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch is called to take a public position affirming the right of all persons to live without deprivation in safe, sanitary, and affordable housing. As Church we stand in solidarity with our homeless brothers and sisters as well as with other denominational bodies and assert that inequitable public policies, unfair and discriminatory private-sector practices have deprived many of that right.

The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch also teaches that homelessness is a violation of human dignity and an affront to the biblical mandate to do justice. We are impelled by the Gospel to take a proactive position and to speak on behalf of those who are denied this basic human right. We call for the elimination of the causes of homelessness and we commit ourselves to work collaboratively with other Churches and organizations to eradicate those causes. As Church, we are called through Holy Scripture to commit ourselves to welcoming the stranger into our midst and to seeing all people as belonging to the family of God. The Church must recognize in deed as well as word that homeless people are our neighbors, seek to learn who the homeless are in our communities and speak out on their behalf in our respective Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch ministries as well as in the larger community.

To assist local ministries in addressing the issue of homelessness, the Catholic Church of Antioch commits itself to the following actions:

- The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch will make available to its clergy and laity educational, training resources and opportunities that address the root causes of homelessness and provide models for addressing the problem.

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- The Sophia Divinity School will offer an optional continuing education course in the seminary's curriculum to help prepare clergy for effective leadership around those issues in our society that create poverty and homelessness.
- Local ministries are also encouraged to support and work with regional, and local housing advocacy groups to further promote an end to implement this resolution. A liaison will be appointed by the Presiding Bishop to represent the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch in support of National Homelessness advocacy groups.
- The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch will join with other communions to promote affordable housing for low-income persons through the National Coalition for the Homeless.
- Affirm the work of local churches and service providers who provide needed ministries of compassion to homeless persons through church-based soup kitchens, transitional housing programs, shelters, food pantries, clothes closets, and rent and utility assistance programs. Maintain a visible presence when and where appropriate.
- Identify effective resources and models for local ministries and clergy who wish to undertake Bible study and theological reflection around the root causes of homelessness.
- Inform clergy and laity of the avenues available to churches to become involved in housing development by exposing them to different models used to address the lack of affordable housing.
- Church Central and local ministries are urged to call upon Congress to pass comprehensive national housing legislation.
- Local ministries are encouraged to involve clergy and laity in local church volunteer networks, direct-service programs, ecumenical coalitions for the homeless, directories of local service providers, speaking opportunities for groups such as Habitat for Humanity, and workshops led by local homeless advocates and the homeless themselves.

Guided by Gospel values of compassion, care and concern for all people, but most especially for those whom the world rejects, the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch lends its voice to those who have no voice and commits itself to engaging in the dialogue that will lead to a sustainable solution to the

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problem of homelessness. We stand in solidarity with those who work to foster a more just and equitable society and call upon society's institutions to commit to solving the problem of those who lack housing.

1. National Coalition to End Homelessness
2. National Alliance to End Homelessness

References

- a. National Low-Income Housing Coalition
- b. National Coalition for the Homeless
- c. National Alliance to End Homelessness.
- d. N.C. Coalition on Homelessness
- e. Almanac on Policy Issues
- f. Change.org, economic policy issues
- g. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- h. Moore County , N.C. Coalition for Human Care
- i. United Methodist Church General Conference
- j. House Subcommittee Testimony of Mark Johnston, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs Programs, on How HUD is working to end Family and Youth Homelessness December 15, 2011
- k. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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