



# *Warming Center*

**Church Street UMC**  
in partnership with  
**Knoxville-Knox County Office of  
Housing Stability**



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## *Our Mission*

### *All are welcome at Church Street United Methodist Church*

All are welcome at Church Street! We believe every person is of sacred worth and created in God's image. We welcome and celebrate the gifts God has given to all persons without regard to race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation. We respect diversity of opinion and expressions of Christian faith. We believe God loves everyone unconditionally! As God loves us, so let us love and serve in the name of Christ.

### *Purpose of our Warming Center*

Church Street UMC has partnered with the joint City/County Office of Housing Stability to be an emergency warming station when the temperature is predicted to drop below 25 degrees. We will provide a warm and secure place to sleep, something to eat, kindness and hospitality.

## *Our Guests*

The individuals served by our Warming Center come from diverse backgrounds, including lifelong East Tennessee residents and those from other regions. Many will be familiar with our church, outreach, and ministries - especially our Thursday Soup Kitchen. They encompass a wide spectrum of experiences—some are college graduates, while others have had limited education. Each person has a unique story, hopes, and dreams. While some experience homelessness due to economic circumstances, many face complex challenges, including:

- **Mental and physical health:** Conditions such as severe mental illnesses (e.g., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder), physical disabilities, and chronic health issues.
- **Trauma and abuse:** Histories of abuse, loss, or other traumatic events that profoundly impact their lives.
- **Addiction and dependency:** Struggles with substance use, gambling, and other compulsive behaviors.
- **Family and social challenges:** Dysfunctional family dynamics, lack of support systems, or generational poverty.
- **Educational and occupational barriers:** Limited formal education, learning disabilities, or an absence of employable skills.

- **Legal and institutional histories:** Criminal records or extended stays in institutional settings limit opportunities.
- **Basic life and transportation needs:** Difficulties managing day-to-day tasks, such as hygiene and accessing transportation.

### *Caring for those experiencing trauma*

A trauma-informed approach involves recognizing the pervasive impact of trauma and creating an environment that fosters safety, choice, collaboration, trust, and empowerment. This means being sensitive to triggers, building supportive relationships, and focusing on strengths rather than deficits. By understanding each individual's needs and past experiences, we can better provide care that promotes healing and resilience.

**See the person first:** Look beyond stereotypes and find common ground. Treat each individual with dignity and respect.

**Learn Names and Build Trust:** Taking the time to learn names helps build trust and signals genuine care.

**Restore Dignity:** Recognize that homelessness can strip away self-esteem; offer respect and encouragement.

**Engage with Choice:** Provide opportunities for guests to contribute if they wish, enhancing their sense of worth.

**Respect Boundaries and Privacy:** Give individuals as much privacy as possible and avoid intrusive questions.

**Share Common Interests:** Discuss shared interests, such as sports, books, or hobbies, when appropriate.

**Allow Space:** Let guests lead conversations; some may prefer quiet reflection.

**Practice Active Listening:** It's okay, and even preferred, to not offer solutions. Listening and offering affirming words like "thank you for sharing" can be profoundly supportive.

**Maintain Integrity:** Avoid making promises you can't keep and refrain from unsolicited advice.

**Create a Sense of Home:** Simple gestures can foster comfort and connection.

**Be Present:** Often, your compassionate presence is the most valuable gift.

### *Additional Trauma and Mental Health Resources*

- [Being a Trauma Responsive Faith Community](#)

### *Establishing and Navigating Boundaries with Our Guests*

- **Prioritize relationships:** Be present, listen actively, and avoid attempts to 'fix' or enable. Trust the power of genuine connection.
- **Build trust gradually:** Allow guests the time and space to acclimate at their own pace.
- **Maintain personal boundaries:** Do not share personal or others' contact information or connect with guests on social media.
- **Safety first:** Avoid being alone with guests and do not offer rides. Use a calm voice and obtain permission before any physical contact.
- **Respect and confidentiality:** Protect guest privacy; avoid taking photos or sharing personal information.

- **Resource management:** Provide only what CSUMC offers; do not give out money or other resources independently. Direct guests to local agencies and services to help meet their resource needs.
- **Love without conditions:** Meet guests where they are, without judgment or expectations to change.
- **Self-care is essential:** Take breaks as needed and communicate any concerns with the Night Captain or staff.

### ***Navigating challenging, dangerous, and illegal situations***

As a volunteer, your primary role is to extend Christ's love through warm hospitality, compassion, and dignified service to our guests. When you encounter situations that feel concerning—whether someone appears under the influence, you notice unusual behavior, suspect the presence of weapons or substances, or simply feel uncertain about how to respond—remember that you are not expected to handle these situations alone. Our trained security personnel are specifically equipped and positioned to address safety concerns with professionalism and care. Your response should be to continue offering kindness while discreetly alerting our security team, allowing them to assess and manage the situation appropriately. This approach ensures everyone's safety while preserving the welcoming atmosphere at our ministry's heart. Trust your instincts, lean on your team, and remember that sometimes the most loving response is connecting someone with the right help.

This 10-minute video guides you on how to assist someone who may be experiencing an overdose: [Recognize and Respond to an Opioid Overdose](#).

## ***Warming Center Operating Schedule***

### ***Sample Schedule***

<b>Shift</b>	<b>General Volunteer Responsibilities</b>
5:00 - 10:00 p.m.	<b>Opening shift</b> 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. - set up check-in, assemble and/or arrange cots, stock restrooms, meal prep 6:00 - 10:00 p.m. - welcome and check in guests, serve dinner, provide hospitality, monitor entrances and exits
8:00 p.m. - 6 a.m.	<b>Overnight shift</b> Stock and maintain restrooms, monitor and staff area exits (especially the paths to other areas of the church), offer snacks, communicate lights out (10-10:30 p.m)., offer hospitality and care
5:00 - 9:00 a.m.	<b>Morning shift</b> Wake-up, meal prep & service, take down, clean-up
On- Call Volunteer/On-Call Staff	Serve as a back-up to someone who could not make their shift or if additional help is required.

## ***Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities:***

<b>Role</b>	<b># Per Shift</b>	<b>General Responsibilities</b>
Center Coordinator	1	Be the person “in charge”; secure volunteers, assign roles, coordinate with the Office of Housing Stability, communicate center needs, coordinate with security, coordinate with other centers as needed, answer questions, make decisions, offer kindness and hospitality
Set-up and Check-in	6	Assemble and/or arrange cots, set-up check-in table, welcome guests, check guests in, answer questions, partner with security, communicate boundaries and guidelines; offer kindness and hospitality.
Food Coordinator	1	Coordinate dinner, snacks, and breakfast for 35-40 people; partner with restaurants or volunteers to provide meals; direct food service volunteers; offer kindness and hospitality.
Food Service (evening)	7	Prepare, serve, and clean up evening meal; replenish snacks, offer kindness and hospitality
Food Service (morning)	2	Prepare, serve, clean up morning meal, offer kindness and hospitality
Night Captain	1	Coordinate volunteers; monitor entrances and exits; partner with security; answer questions; offer kindness and hospitality
Overnight Crew	4	Support Night Captain; monitor entrances and exits; partner with security; answer questions; offer kindness and hospitality
Take-down and clean-up (morning)	6	Clean, stack and/or disassemble and store cots; clean spaces, including restrooms; partner with security; assist guests with vacating center; answer questions; offer kindness and hospitality
On-call	1-2	Fill in for scheduled volunteers if they need to miss their shift
Professional security	1	Partner with volunteers to ensure the safety of guests, volunteers, and space occupied during the warming center operation