**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Additional Crisis Cold Weather Shelters Open, Additional Volunteers Needed**

**December 21, 2020 (SPRINGFIELD, Mo.) –** Faith-based partners First Unitarian Universalist Church, Hope Church and Salvation Army- Harbor House are opening their doors to host additional Crisis Cold Weather Shelter sites. First Unitarian Universalist opened Dec. 19 and Hope Church and Salvation Army- Harbor House will open January 1. These sites expand the number of overnight shelter beds available for men, which were previously only available at East Sunshine Church of Christ.  Additionally, Grace United Methodist Church, which provides overnight shelter for women, was able to coordinate with the City of Springfield’s Building Development Services to increase their bed capacity from 15 to 20, while still allowing for social distancing. As of Dec. 18, East Sunshine Church of Christ and Grace United Methodist Church had provided over 800 bed nights this winter.

“We are happy to assist with our Overflow Crisis Cold Weather Shelter for men, which we have provided for many years. This year we are especially aware of the extra challenges and we are grateful for our partners who are working together to provide shelter from the cold,” said Jeff Smith, Community Relations Director with Salvation Army.

Host churches have been working diligently with Community Partnership’s Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness to ensure that additional beds are available to meet the need for overnight shelter. Supporting partners Freeway Ministries and Veterans Coming Home have also collaborated to make sure other needs are met, including transportation to shelters and an evening warming center.

“I sat on a Zoom call with community leaders who expressed concern of not having enough buildings available to provide shelter to the homeless during the winter season. I felt the Lord remind me of Isaiah 58 and realized that Hope Church could be a solution for the city. After sharing my heart with our lead pastor, Pastor Josh, we decided that we could open up our building during the month of January as a Crisis Cold Weather Shelter for homeless men in our city,” said Cheree Whaley, Outreach Pastor with Hope Church.

However, in order to keep providing these critical services throughout the winter, host churches need the community’s support, specifically with overnight volunteers. Typically, a shelter needs two volunteers (over the age of 18) who are available from approximately 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. to check in guests and staff the shelter.

“The first UU principle is the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and the second is justice, equity and compassion in human relations. To live our values right now means to use the resources we have to uphold that dignity and offer compassion. In this case, we can offer our space. We’re thankful for our partners at National Avenue Christian Church for shared resources and ongoing support,” said Pastor Michelle Scott-Huffman with First Unitarian Universalist Church.

To learn more about what you can expect when volunteering at a Crisis Cold Weather Shelter and to sign up, visit [www.cpozarks.org/coldweather](http://www.cpozarks.org/coldweather).

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**ABOUT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OF THE OZARKS**

The mission of Community Partnership of the Ozarks is to facilitate and promote the building of resilient children, healthy families, and strong neighborhoods and communities through collaboration, programming, and resource development. For more information on the Partnership’s collaborative efforts and programs, visit [www.cpozarks.org](http://www.cpozarks.org).