



"No one should live hungry and homeless."
Matthew 25:35-40

COVID-19 Critical Care Fund

Serving the Most Vulnerable Among Us

While the coronavirus has shut down almost every aspect of society, Central Union Mission has continued to serve the most vulnerable in the community.

We are front-line responders providing a refuge for people experiencing homelessness. Without us, they would be on the street, without food and shelter.

We are serving food insecure women, men and children. Without us, they would be hungry, their pantries bare and refrigerators empty.

We are serving the most vulnerable, our elderly and ill neighbors. Without us, hundreds of 60+ year-old women and men—seniors living alone and grandparent caretakers of young

children—would not be able to put food on the table or have a place to live. Most have underlying health conditions that put them at high risk.

Every day we work hard to keep everyone in our care healthy and safe. And despite the odds, we are succeeding. We are called by a higher purpose. We trust in God for the outcome of this situation, and our faith is strong.



Restoration & Transformation Program applicant Jose takes a break to pray

"If anything positive has come out of this, it's that this past month has helped me reflect on who I am as a person and my faith."

Emergency Shelter, Meals and Care

The Mission's Emergency Shelter typically houses and cares for a vulnerable population of up to 170 homeless men.

We are so grateful that we have so far succeeded in keeping everyone healthy and maintaining a virus-free environment. This is in sharp contrast to the rest of the city, which has tragically seen **349 homeless people test positive for COVID-19 and 21 who have died from the disease (October 2020).**

As we open up more and more, we will continue to take extraordinary precautions to prevent the virus from entering the building—but we know that as more people come and go, there is also increased risk. Throughout this period, the Mission is caring for those homeless guests by providing the following:

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- **Sheltering in Place** to minimize interaction among those in the Mission and those outside the shelter
- **Respiratory masks** to keep guests safe and minimize the chance of the spread of the disease
- **Three hot meals** per day to in-house guests and sandwiches to-go for 100+ people each day who come knocking on the doors
- **A sanitized environment**—all trafficked areas are sanitized multiple times per day
- **Clean bedding** and towels nightly
- **Sun and exercise**—time outside on the Mission property to get some fresh air and exercise



Homeless guest and essential worker Richard helps the Mission safely prepare up to 500 meals per day



A Family Ministry guest collects groceries to feed her growing family

- **Indoor entertainment** with ping pong, air hockey, exercise equipment, special guest webinars, movies and more
- **Counseling and social services** to help people cope with the challenge of the situation
- **Group and one-on-one mentoring** to support recovery and educational development— provided virtually and, when possible, in-person
- **Educational classes** for personal development—both online and in-person—from internet use and MS Office skills to tax filing, financial literacy and census completion
- **Workforce Development** classes in job preparation, resume creation, cover letter writing and interview skills

Providing Emergency Groceries for Those in Need

COVID-19 is impacting the community we serve in devastating ways. Two times the number of people are seeking emergency groceries from the Mission today than before the crisis—and most of them are from the Hispanic community.

It is clear that many in the Hispanic community do not have a safety net that they can fall back on when they are out of work. They, like the African American community we serve, are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

While many are currently out of work, the African American and Hispanic communities are disproportionately employed in what are now considered essential jobs. Many live in multigenerational or crowded households, and they have a high incidence of underlying health issues, which puts their households at a particularly high risk of succumbing to the coronavirus. Tragically, African Americans are dying of COVID-19 at three times the rate of Caucasians.

“I thank God for this. I don’t know what would have happened to me without the Mission.”



Many seniors depend on the Mission for essential groceries

*“ I just want to say ‘thank you.’...
This is saving our lives.”*

To meet a 50% increase in the number of emergency referrals for food, the Mission has expanded its service and is now providing groceries for 5,750 people every month. To do this, the Mission is operating two refrigerator trucks that daily collect food from grocery stores, restaurants and businesses; safely storing perishables and dried goods; packaging groceries; maintaining a 20,000-square-foot warehouse; and employing the staff that is keeping the operation going throughout this crisis.

To keep clients and staff safe, all food is prepared and packed into grocery carts in advance and distributed outdoors. Staff wear masks and gloves whenever they engage with the public. And we are also providing difficult-to-find masks and sanitizing products to clients so they can best protect themselves.

This month, we signed up with the USDA’s Farmer to Families Food Box program to receive regular shipments of hundreds of boxes of food from local farmers that would otherwise go to waste. Thus we will be able to reach even more people in need.

Extraordinary Measures for Critical Staff

Much of our staff are working remotely during this crisis. Only critical operational staff remain on site, and they are working double-time. Additionally, we are housing some essential workers at our transitional housing, some of whom work at the Family Ministry Center and other critical jobs. In this way, they can easily reach their jobs without putting themselves and shelter guests at risk by taking public transportation or, in the case of an outbreak, endangering their families by exposing them to the disease.

Closed to Volunteers

Last year, volunteers dedicated 7,153 hours of service—that’s equivalent to 178 weeks of labor. Now, for their own safety and that of our homeless guests, we have no volunteer support. Volunteers usually help prepare meals, serve food, mentor homeless guests, teach classes, pack groceries, lead prayers and clean dormitories. Without them, some of the non-essential services had to be suspended leaving the remaining staff stretched to maintain basic services.

Minimizing the Risk

We are putting tremendous effort into preventing the virus from entering the shelter and our Family Ministry Center. If it gets in, it could be catastrophic, given the dormitory-style accommodations, limited space for social distancing and the fact that many of those we serve are especially vulnerable due to existing chronic illnesses or weakened immune systems.

Thanks to an extraordinarily generous gift, the Mission has recently installed a Health Cleanse Portal, a state-of-the-art disinfecting walkthrough portal which helps protect guests and employees by deactivating viruses and pathogens including COVID-19.

CENTRAL UNION MISSION



Mission guest Jonathan takes part in deep cleaning the shelter

We continue to urge guests to follow the basic protocols of hand washing, covering their mouths when sneezing or coughing and maintaining some social distance. We are also taking the body temperature of each guest daily; those who have a fever or symptoms are sent out for a health evaluation. The same applies for all staff.

As COVID-19 is transmitted on surfaces and through close contact, special procedures have been instituted to maintain a clean and safe environment. Every part of the shelter is cleaned daily: floors are mopped, kitchens scrubbed, door handles sanitized and bedding laundered. All trafficked areas of the Family Ministry Center and Lambert House are regularly disinfected.

The Mission is using significantly more cleaning products. We are now using more than twice the usual amount in the important effort to maintain a clean environment. And we have a critical shortage of hand sanitizer, isopropyl alcohol, Clorox wipes, Lysol, tissues and N95 masks. All this adds considerably to the Mission's expenses.

A Crisis of Funding

The economic forecast for our region is unknown. Unemployment is at an all-time high. Local businesses are faltering. And we are bracing for the prospect of living with this disease for a long time. To meet this challenge, the Mission needs to shore up its financial health so that it can safely continue to serve our most vulnerable neighbors.

With your help, we will not only meet the immediate need, but together we will overcome the dual challenges of poverty and disease.