

COVID-19 Critical Care Fund

Serving the Most Vulnerable Among Us

While COVID-19 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 safe refuge for people experiencing homelessness. Without us, they would be on the street, without food, shelter or protection. We are serving families and children in need of food. 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 care-takers 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. While we are taking considerable precautions, we are called by a higher purpose. We trust in God for the outcome of this situation, and our faith is strong.

Emergency Shelter, Meals and Care

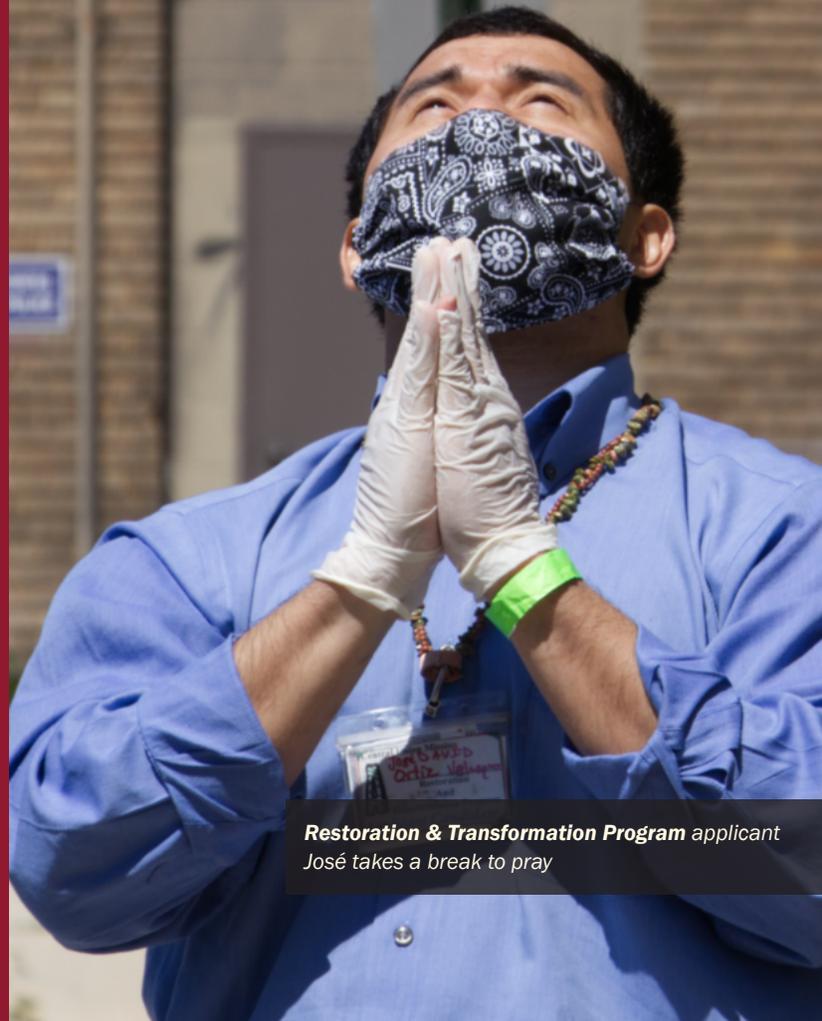
The Mission's Emergency Shelter typically houses and cares for a vulnerable population of 170 men who are experiencing homelessness.

We have not had a single case of COVID-19 in our shelter, all glory to God. 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 more than **350** people in shelters test positive for COVID-19 and over **20** who have died from the disease. Since the start of the pandemic, the Mission has cared for homeless guests by providing the following:

- Sheltering in Place to minimize the threat of infection from outside the shelter
- Respiratory masks to keep guests safe and minimize the chance of the spread of the disease.

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“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.”



Restoration & Transformation Program applicant José takes a break to pray



Rick, a former homeless guest and current Mission employee, helps safely prepare up to 500 meals per day

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- Three hot meals per day to in-house guests and sandwiches to-go for up to 100 people each day who come searching for food.
- A sanitized environment—all trafficked areas are sanitized multiple times per day, and we are using the latest, state-of-the-art technologies to kill any virus.
- Clean bedding and towels nightly.
- Sun and exercise—time outside on the Mission property to get some fresh air and exercise. We are using Camp Bennett in Maryland for getaways.
- Indoor entertainment with ping pong, foosball, special guest webinars, movies and more.
- Counseling and social services to help people cope with the challenge of the situation, as well as AA classes, mentoring, educational development and other resources.
- Spiritual Discipleship to help folks learn more about God and develop their relationship with Christ.
- Educational classes for personal development—both on-line and in-person—from Internet use and MS Office skills to tax filing, financial literacy and census completion.

- Workforce Development classes in job preparation, résumé creation, cover letter writing and interview skills.

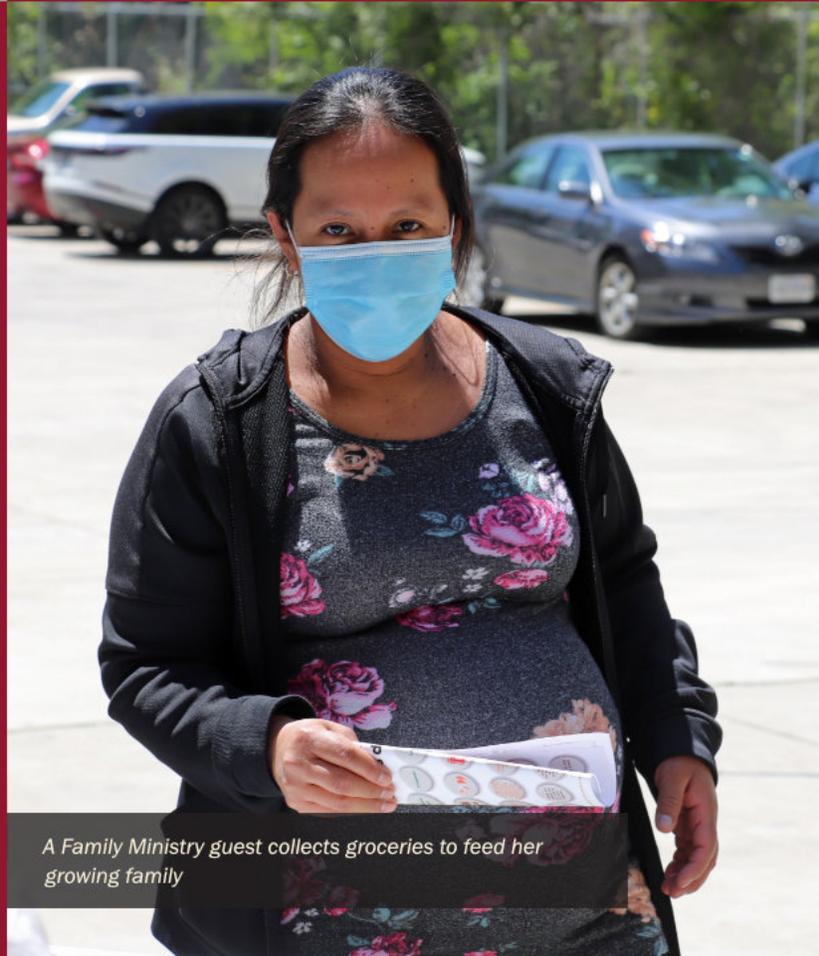
As we open up more and more, we will continue to take extraordinary precautions to prevent the virus from entering the shelter. To manage the risk, we have dedicated a section of the shelter as a quarantine zone—where five men in need of shelter can isolate from the rest of the shelter community to ensure they are healthy.

Emergency Groceries for Those in Need

COVID-19 is impacting the community we serve in devastating ways. In fact, we are experiencing 50 percent more requests for emergency groceries from the Mission today than before the crisis.

The significant increase in demand is primarily from the Hispanic and African American communities. Those that turn to the Mission in these times do not have a safety net to fall back on when they are out of work.

These communities are also particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. While many are now out of work, the African American and Hispanic communities are also disproportio-



A Family Ministry guest collects groceries to feed her growing family



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

Many seniors depend on the Mission for essential groceries

tionally employed in what are now considered essential jobs, and their exposure to the disease is notably high. Tragically, African Americans are dying of COVID-19 at two times the rate of Caucasians. And almost three times the number of Hispanics are being infected.

To meet the significant increase in the number of emergency referrals for food, the Mission has expanded its emergency food distribution to 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 personal protective equipment and sanitizing products to clients so they can best protect themselves.

Extraordinary Measures for Critical Staff

Critical operations staff have been working on-site every day since the start of the pandemic. These include directors, chaplains, social workers, educators, counselors and more. Other staff support them behind the scenes, operating from home as they are able in order to minimize exposure to those we serve.

The Mission has also utilized its transition home for essential workers in our care, some of whom work at the Mission’s Family Ministry Center and others in essential jobs in the community. In this way, they can easily reach their jobs without putting themselves and shelter guests at risk, or, in the case of an outbreak, endangering others by exposing them to the disease.

Closed to Volunteers

Before the pandemic, volunteers dedicated 7,153 hours of service during the year—that’s equivalent to 178 weeks

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of labor. Now, for their own safety and that of our homeless guests, we have no in-house volunteer support. Volunteers usually help prepare meals, serve food, mentor homeless guests, teach classes, pack groceries, lead prayers and clean dormitories. Without them, our staff is stretched to maintain basic services. Adapting to the reality of the pandemic, the Mission has identified many needs that can be fulfilled by remote volunteers.

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.

We continue to urge shelter 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. We also are using far UVC light technology and needle-point bipolar ionization systems to kill viruses. 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 many in our region is dire. Unemployment is at an all-time high. Local businesses are faltering. We expect to see our income decline as the full negative impact of the pandemic hits the economy. At the same time, the Mission is bracing for an expected spike in homelessness among individuals and families in the DC metropolitan area.

To meet this challenge, the Mission needs to shore up its financial health so that it can deepen and expand its services for 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.



Mission guest Jonathan takes part in deep cleaning the shelter

No one should live hungry and homeless

Matthew 25: 35-40

central union
MISSION

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