



**Emergency Shelters at Wilson County churches
December 1, 2017 – March 15, 2018**

Wilson County churches are working together to serve as emergency shelters for 15 weeks this winter. In a program modeled after Nashville's Room in the Inn, each church will open their building and provide volunteers one night a week.

God has given this ministry safety and blessings since it began in December 2013. In 2015-16, we provided 1,317 beds to 100 guests. Last winter, that number grew to 1,588.

We are praying that with your help, we can do an even better job this winter. We are preparing to host up to 18 men and 12 women at 21 churches (3 per night).

How the program works – typical schedule

- 5:00 Guests picked up by church vehicles
- 6:00 Dinner is served at Cross Style Church
- 6:30 Church vehicles take men to one site, women to another

Overnight

1. Host church volunteers read shelter guidelines.
2. Evening activities – some guests want to talk, play games, or watch television. Others go straight to bed.
3. Guests can shower or wash clothes (if available at site).
4. Lights out at 10:00 pm.

Morning

- 6:00 Rise & shine
 - 6:30 Host church provides a simple breakfast
 - 7:00 Church vehicle leaves to take guests
- Volunteers clean shelter, wash sheets & towels for next week

Each church will open their building and provide volunteers one night a week for 15 weeks, December 1-March 15.

Host church will provide:

- Spiritual resources – be prepared to befriend, pray with and encourage guests and other volunteers. Remember that Jesus might be one of the guests (Matthew 25:40).
- Bathrooms and safe sleeping space (2 rooms – one dark, one with low lighting).
- A first aid kit located in the space where guests stay.
- Pallets (\$75), blankets, sheets, towels, and wash cloths.
- 2-4 adult volunteers – at least 2 people of same gender as guests. (No overnight volunteers under age 16.)
- Liability insurance – this program should not require additional coverage, but it would be good for host churches to consult their agent. Ministry events hosted by church members should already be covered.

Compassionate Hands will provide host churches with:

- Blank registration forms for guest in-take.
- Assistance with setting up and operating site.
- Guidance and advice with policies and volunteer training. (This card is an abbreviated form of the training packet.)
- We will arrange for local law enforcement to be on stand-by to assist. (We do not recommend an officer on site – would be perceived as a threat to guests.)

About safety...

Safety has not been a problem. We welcome guests into our churches, and guests grow to be friends. Several factors help...

- Clear guidelines - no weapons, alcohol, or drugs on site. No fighting is allowed.
- Intoxicated guests are not admitted.
- Failure to observe guidelines results in immediate removal from the site, with possible exclusion from the program.
- Volunteers go in pairs when giving a guest a ride. This is safer for volunteers and for guests.