



Wrap Up Event

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

Matthew 25:40 (NRSV)

Introduction

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) have been engaged in a full communion partnership since 2001. Since then, our churches have found many ways to live out that partnership together – the National Youth Project is one of those ways!

In 2018, at the Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) Gathering, Threads, in Thunder Bay, the National Youth Project launched *Welcome... Home*. For the last three years, youth groups have been encouraged to learn about the topic through sessions provided on www.claygathering.ca/nyp. We have learned, reflected, and volunteered together on this issue. We have been so proud to hear about everything you have done!

For our Wrap Up activity for *Welcome... Home*, we have chosen to focus on Advocacy. In the last three years we have learned that the places in our country that have made significant and sustainable change in the area of Housing and Homelessness have been where there has been political will to make change. Engaging our political leaders is essential in making lasting change. We work with a generation of young people who are thirsty for change. As their church leaders, we can walk alongside them and support them as they learn to engage with using their voice in our political system.

This activity may be new and different for you. We are here to support you. This guide will give you all the information you need to know in order to prepare your young people and engage with your elected officials.



Background

At the 2013 Joint Assembly, our churches committed to work together to engage issues of homelessness and affordable housing. The commitment includes:

- to learn about the issues that contribute to poverty, homelessness, and substandard housing and to raise awareness within our communities of the challenges and the potential engagement in supporting initiatives to address these challenges;
- to act by nurturing and supporting our own networks of agencies and programs with and for the homeless, the under housed, and refugees;
- to act by exploring new models and working with partners, on innovative approaches to address poverty and homelessness;
- to advocate for renewed Federal funding, an integrated national collaborative strategy, and greater accountability on the part of provinces and municipalities in addressing underlying causes of homelessness and in providing opportunities for affordable housing; and
- to pray for safe, affordable and adequate housing for all.

In light of this ongoing commitment, it felt important and relevant to have our Wrap Up activity engage in advocacy as it is the one piece that *Welcome... Home* hasn't spent much time on. We started with a postcard campaign to the Prime Minister and local Members of Parliament. Now we will finish with talking to our elected officials about our commitment as Christians to this basic right and need.

Here's how you can get involved:

Meet with your Member of Parliament/MLAs or City Councillor

You can make arrangements to meet (in-person where permitted or virtually) anytime between now and the end of September.

Preparation

Before you meet with a public official take some time to prepare:

1. Get clear about the purpose of the meeting. If it is about an issue, what you are asking for, make sure it is concrete, specific, significant and is winnable. **As Youth from the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada we ask that the government create a strategy, timelines, put financial investments in place to end homelessness.**
2. If you have done any of the sessions over the past three years through *Welcome... Home*, share those with your official. This would be a great time to have one of two of your young people share* what they have learned and why they care about this topic.
3. Develop a short, written proposal for what you want to ask them about. 1-2 pages maximum or a few PowerPoint slides that you can print off.
4. Get curious about the official. Most public officials enter public life because they want to make a positive difference. Some questions for your youth group members to ask them would be - What difference do they want to make? What is their story? How can there be a win for them and their government? How does this line up with what you are asking for?
5. Develop an agenda and set time limits for each part of the conversation based on what you need to talk about in the time given.
6. Practice with your group beforehand what each person is planning to say, and how you might respond to what they say.

*Having your young people speak to the elected official is ideal though this whole process. You know your young people best, who would feel comfortable, who would have something good to share. We strongly encourage you to prepare them before the meeting so they can share from their experience

as much as possible. Ideally, they are leading this and the youth leaders are there supporting them.

Setting up the meeting

The best way to set up a meeting is to contact their constituency office (or for city councillors their city office). Most politicians set aside time to meet with their constituents. If you would like to meet with a politician and you are not their constituent, find someone who is. If this isn't possible, still try, but think of who they can't say no to setting up a meeting with. Tell them what you want to speak about. The executive assistant is the gatekeeper who is best to befriend. Ask how long your meeting will be. Send an email, if you don't get a response after a week follow-up with a phone call. Be persistent if needed. You may want to connect with other youth groups in your area to do this activity together. If you don't know if there are other groups in your area participating, please feel free to contact registrar@claygathering.ca to see if there are other groups with whom you might be able to connect.

Contact information can be found at:

1. Your MLA: <https://www.assembly.ab.ca/members/members-of-the-legislative-assembly>
2. Your MP: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en>
3. Your City councillor: Google City Councillor for your area.

A sample script you could use –

Hi my name is _____ and I'm the Youth Leader for _____ Church. The Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran Churches have been engaging in a National Youth Project, looking at the issue of Housing and Homelessness over the past three years. As this project comes to a close we are wanting to meet with our elected officials to have a conversation about this topic and share our concerns and hopes for providing safe and adequate housing for people. Could we arrange a meeting with you and our Youth Group at some point between now and September?

In the meeting

Hopefully you will be able to have this meeting in person. If health restrictions make this impossible, the meeting can happen over Zoom.

1. Relationships are key and should be the priority of any first meeting. Begin with introductions but also go beyond names: share why you care about this issue and ask questions to find out their story and what they care about.
2. Present clearly what you are asking for.

The ACC and the ELCIC call on the Government of Canada to end homelessness by investing in people and infrastructure to ensure that there is a recovery for all from this pandemic. As youth groups we are particularly concerned with how homelessness and precarious housing affect young people in our towns/cities/country.

(From the Joint Churches statement on National Housing Day 2020)

Ask:

As Youth from the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada we ask that the government create a strategy, timelines, put financial investments in place to end homelessness.

In your words, flush out why this is important. Then let them respond. Create some tension for them to respond to. Politicians will often tell you all the things they have done. Feel free to hold them to the future. The current policies haven't solved the issue of homelessness, the future policies and commitment can solve it.

3. Then aim to have a conversation. The focus should be on how you can work with them to address the issue. Too many people come with only complaints that they want the politician to address. Come with possible solutions and a willingness to work together.
4. Focus on the politician's interests. What do they care about? What difference do they want to make? How does your ask connect with their interests?
5. Respect any time limits they have. Before your time is done decide on what the next steps are. Often, they will need to go back and look into what you are bringing them, so propose a follow-up meeting.
6. Thank them for meeting with you and give them your contact information.

After the meeting

1. Follow up after the meeting with a note expressing your thanks for meeting and a summary of what was agreed to. Include any presentation you sent them.
2. Considering sharing on social media that you met with them, that you appreciate your time with them, including any commitments or photos. Be positive. Negative social media can end a relationship or block what you are asking for. Instead, use social media to build a relationship and to make public any commitments.
3. After the meeting comes the next meeting or actions. The policy is usually changed through relationships. Relationships are rarely built over one meeting. Plan on having more than one meeting. What is your follow-up plan?
4. Look or ask who else you can meet with. Often change can come through meetings with deputy ministers or staff.

General principles

1. Focus on building a relationship with the public official.
2. Don't come with a complaint. Identify a specific concrete issue. Identify a solution and offer to work with them to address the issues.
3. Approach this as a long-term process.
4. Focus on mutual respect – you don't want to be either chummy or aggressive with a public official. Neither is helpful.
5. Remember that public officials are people. They have their own interests, struggles, good days, bad days, challenges and joys. They are neither loftier than you, nor are you below them.

Information and Facts about Housing and Homelessness

Both the ACC and the ELCIC has signed on to the Recovery for All Campaign launched by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. They have a six point plan that they are seeking government to implement in order to achieve the goal. You will find helpful information here <https://www.recoveryforall.ca/> if you are looking for more stats and reasoning why we need to push this issue forward.

Over the course of this National Youth Project, infographics were created to share some statistics on how homelessness and precarious housing affects young people. These stats would be helpful to include in your conversation with politicians. You can find them here www.claygathering.ca/nyp.

The Homeless Hub has some good statistics that you may want to use to back up your argument. Visit their website here <https://www.homelesshub.ca/SOHC2016>. Their infographic is attached at the end of this document.

Closing

As people of faith we come to this issue from a different place than many other Canadians. Please take time to pray with your Youth Group about this topic. The prayer below is an adaptation of the prayer offered by both of our churches for National Housing Day is 2020.

God of all,

We remember all those who are experiencing homelessness or who are unable to find affordable housing. We also pray for young people who struggle to be safe in their own home and live in vicarious housing situations.

Grant that each person will have a place to belong, and that all of us will be renewed in our relationships to water, land, home and each other.

*Sustain us with patience, persistence and commitment for doing our part in showing love for your world. **Amen.***

Follow up

Please email Sheilagh McGlynn, Animator for Youth Ministries, smcglynn@national.anglican.ca when you make contact with your government official and after your meeting. We want to track how many meetings happen over the next few months.

This document was prepared with information from Calgary Alliance for the Common Good. Many thanks to the Rev. Ryan Andersen for his help in preparing this activity.

HOMELESSNESS *in* CANADA

BY THE NUMBERS



35,000 CANADIANS
ARE HOMELESS ON A GIVEN NIGHT

at least
235,000
CANADIANS EXPERIENCE
HOMELESSNESS IN A YEAR



27.3%
ARE WOMEN



18.7%
ARE YOUTH

THE NUMBER OF
**OLDER ADULTS (50-64)
AND SENIORS (65+)**
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IS GROWING



making up a combined
24.4% OF SHELTER USERS



28-34% OF THE
SHELTER POPULATION
IS INDIGENOUS

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
ARE OVERREPRESENTED

4.3% OF CANADIANS
ARE INDIGENOUS



FAMILIES
STAY IN SHELTERS
2X AS LONG
AS INDIVIDUALS



approximately
2,950 VETERANS
EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

2.2% OF SHELTER POPULATION

Historically, individuals experiencing homelessness in Canada were older, single men. The homelessness crisis we see today is much more diverse. More women, families and youth are experiencing homelessness than in the past.

WHAT DOES HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA LOOK LIKE?



There has been a steady decline in the number of Canadians using shelters in the last 10 years.

IN 2014 THERE WERE ALMOST
20,000 FEWER PEOPLE USING EMERGENCY SHELTERS
than in 2005



most shelter stays
ARE BRIEF WITH YOUTH AND ADULTS STAYING ON
AVERAGE 10 DAYS

BUT FOR ADULTS (50+) & FAMILIES, THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IS
2X AS LONG

THE NATIONAL OCCUPANCY RATE

- how full shelters are -

INCREASED BY MORE THAN 10% BETWEEN 2005-2014

THE NEXT PHASE: PREVENTING & ENDING HOMELESSNESS

Today, we are facing a critical moment in our efforts to tackle modern mass homelessness in Canada. The experience of the last decade has changed the way we think about the problem and shifted our focus to solutions. A number of important shifts, described in this report, signal that we are poised for a new phase, one that may finally lead to ending homelessness. Some of these shifts include:



return to the
NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY



BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF HOUSING FIRST



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF KEY POPULATIONS



shift to
SYSTEM COORDINATION AND REAL-TIME DATA



ACTIVE & ENGAGED GOVERNMENT

HOW A NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY CAN END HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

Modern mass homelessness in Canada is primarily the product of federal withdrawal from housing investment. For that reason, the National Housing Strategy currently under development, is a critically important initiative.



RECOMMENDATION #1: The Government of Canada should adopt a national goal of ending homelessness with clear and measurable outcomes, milestones and criteria



RECOMMENDATION #2: Renewal of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS)



RECOMMENDATION #3: A new federal/provincial/territorial framework agreement that defines local leadership on homelessness and housing investment



RECOMMENDATION #4: Targeted strategies to address the needs of priority populations



RECOMMENDATION #5: Retain and expand existing affordable housing stock



RECOMMENDATION #6: Implement a National Housing Benefit



RECOMMENDATION #7: Affordable housing tax credit



RECOMMENDATION #8: Review and expand investment in affordable housing for Indigenous Peoples

CAN WE AFFORD THIS?

RAISE THE PER CAPITA INVESTMENT
FROM \$73 TO \$123
PER CANADIAN ANNUALLY

THAT'S AN ADDITIONAL
\$50 ANNUALLY
or **\$1/WEEK**
PER CANADIAN



**WE CAN END
HOMELESSNESS,
IF WE WANT TO.**



To learn more, download the full report at: www.homelesshub.ca/SOHC2016



**Canadian
Observatory on
Homelessness**
homelesshub.ca

CAEH  Canadian Alliance to
End Homelessness