



seeds of change

lutheran metropolitan ministry

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Responding to Racial Injustice

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry was founded more than 50 years ago as a faith-based response to social injustice and racial inequalities in Cleveland. Specifically, unrest and racism towards the African American community. As an organization, the members of our board and staff are shocked, angry and disappointed that so little has changed in the last 50 years.

We are heartbroken by the pain felt by our staff, board members, clients and neighbors who are coping with racial trauma. Whether in the operation of our shelters for single men and families; the Chopping for Change program that prepares women to return to community from incarceration; or the youth independent living programs that work to prepare young adults as they transition from foster care. We know and see the evidence of racial and ethnic injustice every day.

What is required of us?



LMM is embarking on a journey of introspection of our commitment to social justice, diversity, equity and inclusion for our clients, staff and board. After this self-



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on what we're working on.



LMM @LMMCleveland • Jun 18

Take a look at the list of movies, books and more LMM compiled based around race, equity and inclusion. If you haven't already, we challenge you to check these resources out and to share with others!



LMM Resources for Racial Equity and Inclusion
Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry
lutheranmetro.org

reflection, we will develop a strategic initiative to carve out a unique role for our organization to affect change in this community through our advocacy efforts, programs and services. We recognize that it is not enough to help people who are oppressed, forgotten and hurting. We have to work harder to address the causes of this pain, suffering and injustice.

We invite you to join us as we strengthen our commitment to being a voice for the voiceless. To learn more about our efforts to stand in solidarity with African Americans and others who are oppressed, to review a list of resources for you and your circles of influence, or encourage your place of faith to join us in this journey, visit lutheranmetro.org.

Form a Giving Circle

How would you like to find a way to spend some quality time with friends, chase the COVID blues away by learning about all the good that's going on in Cleveland and make your charitable dollars go further? Forming a giving circle is an exciting and meaningful way to accomplish all three of these things.

A giving circle is a group of people who come together to pool charitable contributions and maximize the impact of their donation. Together, they learn about nonprofit organizations in their community that are making a difference and changing lives. Often, they'll invite representatives from these organizations to their meetings so the circle can hear firsthand about the issues of their community and how the nonprofit is working to address them. After they've heard from a few nonprofits, the giving circle members then decide how and where to give the funds they've pooled.

It's up to the group to decide the amount of money they'd like each member to contribute, how often they'd like to meet, and how many organizations they'd like to consider at one time. In these days of physical distancing, giving circles can be a great reason to gather in a video chat with friends, or, once the COVID crisis eases, in backyards over a barbecue. Eventually, when we establish a new normal and gathering places reopen to the public, members of your group might even take the time to visit the nonprofits you are considering for your giving circle donation.

Researchers say that both getting together with friends and putting the focus of your life on helping others are two great ways to lift your spirits. A giving circle does both of these things for you. It also enhances the capacity of organizations like LMM to lift the spirits of others—helping those who are oppressed, forgotten and hurting find healing and a path forward.

If you'd like more information about forming a giving circle, please contact Kate Maver, Director of Development at kmaver@lutheranmetro.org.

Clothing Donations Needed

LMM's Men's Shelter at 2100 Lakeside is in need of clothing donations. Men's clothing of all types - underwear, socks, pants, shirts, shoes and more are all needed. The shelter will arrange for safe outdoor drop-off to allow for social distancing. Please contact Facility and Operations Director, David Blunt, at dblunt@lutheranmetro.org for more information on donating.



Be a Friend

LMM's Friend-to-Friend program matches volunteers with individuals in local prisons with the intent of creating a friendly bond and support system for those who are incarcerated.



The volunteers write letters to their assigned friend and may do visitation at the prison. Due to changes in regulations that have been brought along by COVID-19, visitors are temporarily prohibited at the prison, but volunteers are still able to stay in touch through mail or email.

Alongside the letter-writing and visitation, there is also a ministry of sending birthday cards.

Halfway through each month, Friend-To-Friend distributes a list of those in our program who have birthdays in the coming month. Volunteers are encouraged to send cards to the men and women in prison celebrating birthdays. The men and women of Friend-to-Friend often comment on how meaningful it is for them to have received so many birthday cards. These days, cards are even more appreciated.

For more information on joining Friend-to-Friend or receiving the monthly list of birthdays, contact the Friend-To-Friend Volunteer Manager, Lynn Schlessman at lschlessman@lutheranmetro.org.

Workforce Development Feeding 10K Homeless Each Week

COVID-19 threw a wrench in all of our lives over the last four months. Although we have all had to adjust, our most vulnerable populations still find themselves challenged with obtaining the most basic human needs, including food and shelter. LMM leaves no one behind. Our Workforce Development team is in Central Kitchen seven days a week making sure enough food has been prepared to meet the high demand for shelter resident meals in Greater Cleveland.

LMM runs multiple shelters, but our Central Kitchen is the resource for meals for many shelters in the area. During COVID, the need has increased and challenges of creating unique assembly and delivery strategies have been met by our dedicated staff. In addition to the traditional shelters we cook for and deliver to, we have spaced out our shelter populations to up to four local hotels at a time in order to allow for social distancing for residents' safety, which means more meal delivery locations. There's no stopping our crew.

Pandemic Shelter Meals

Meals per week:
Up to 10,000

Number of meals delivered to residents staying at hotels:
75,279

Total shelter meals since COVID-19 began:
139,479

Even without the presence of our culinary students since the beginning of the pandemic, we're getting by with a little help from our friends! Despite the City Club of Cleveland having to temporarily cancel in-person forums due to COVID-19, the City Club's kitchen stepped up to assist LMM. Rather than staying home, City Club Chef Adam Crawford asked if he could find a way to help people in need, and reached out to LMM. The hours put in by the City Club kitchen crew are helping LMM keep up with the demand. Chef Adam is now helping Central Kitchen pump out up to 10,000 meals each week for people who are homeless at eight shelter sites. Thanks to LMM's great staff and partners, not one person who sought shelter with our agency has gone without food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another culinary bright spot is that a small handful of our culinary students were able to start class with us on June 22! With our strict social distancing and safety measures in place, about a dozen students are now on their way to a culinary diploma, and while they learn, they're feeding those in need and giving back.



LMM Executive Chef Scott Teaman loads the truck full of meals for local shelters.



Boxed lunches are assembled for shelter residents.



Community Rallies Together

Despite the challenges brought along by COVID-19, LMM has continued to come together to serve the most vulnerable. The #LMMInThisTogether video is a prime display of the strong spirit of our staff and the generosity of the community during these challenging times. Our 'View from the Frontlines' blog series provides an in-depth look at each of LMM's program areas from the perspective of our staff partners who have continued to provide vital services throughout this pandemic.

"The community has rallied together to share in the struggles and the solutions with us, and that's been really powerful," said LMM's Vice President of Housing & Shelter, Michael Sering in an interview with United Way of Greater Cleveland. LMM was one of the many agencies in Greater Cleveland that were graciously provided with masks as part of an initiative by United Way that supplied over 100,000 masks to local service organizations. Visit our website at lutheranmetro.org to learn more about these awesome community efforts.

Browns Partner with LMM for COVID-19 Relief Donations

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, LMM's program areas saw an increased need in basic, everyday items for the individuals we serve, such as clothing, hygiene products and food donations. LMM called to the community for their help with obtaining these essential items during these tough times and our supporters have answered in a big way.

The Cleveland Browns staff partnered with LMM to provide 40 bags of clothing to LMM's Men's Shelter at 2100 Lakeside. The Browns staff also contributed to LMM's COVID-19 Relief Wish List, which provides individuals we serve through our various program areas, including Housing & Shelter, Workforce Development and Guardianship Services, with basic hygiene products and food donations.

"This was an easy and safe way for us to collaborate," said Browns' Community & Alumni Relations Manager, Liz Reyes. These generous donations came as part of the Browns' First and Ten Movement, which is centered around encouraging the community to take at least 10 hours out of each year to volunteer in order to help make a difference.

LMM is grateful for the Cleveland Browns and their ongoing support, especially throughout COVID-19.



Cleveland Browns drop off van full of clothing donations.

Housing is Health Care

In order to follow social distancing guidelines put in place by the state of Ohio and to ensure those in our community who seek shelter are accommodated with safe, adequate services, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry's Men's Shelter at 2100 Lakeside has worked within Cuyahoga County's Continuum of Care to shelter individuals in multiple hotel locations throughout Greater Cleveland.



Men's Shelter hallways reflect need to social distance.

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the homeless population across the country. Temporarily providing our most vulnerable shelter residents (specifically individuals who have pre-existing medical conditions and individuals who are 60 and older) with hotel rooms at multiple sites throughout the Cleveland area removes them from the congregate living setting of the shelter and decreases these individuals' risk of contracting COVID-19.

Since we began to transfer residents out of the shelter in April, LMM has cut down the Men's Shelter daily census by more than 50% as a result of providing individuals with hotel rooms or working to reunite some of them with their families. With the help of MetroHealth and other healthcare providers, both our residents and staff have been provided with on-site screenings and testing at our hotel locations and at the Men's Shelter. We are grateful for the efforts of the County and our community partners in the Continuum of Care who have helped make this happen, as well as the Cleveland Foundation, who has provided LMM with the funding needed to shelter our residents in these hotels through the Greater Cleveland Rapid Response Fund.

LMM CEO Returns from Military Deployment

Dear LMM Community,

I asked for a little space in this edition on my return from Navy deployment to express my gratitude to all of you who have supported Alycia, my family and me since October. Thank you so much. That now seems like several years ago, and a different planet!

With admiration and respect, I also want to take this moment to acknowledge and appreciate you, our steadfast supporters; our committed and thoughtful board; our amazing COO (and acting CEO), Maria Foschia; our talented and dedicated leadership team; and all of our creative, incredible staff partners. They have worked non-stop to develop vital crisis responses for our city and meet increased and severe ongoing need for LMM's services, all in a dangerous and volatile setting. Their work has put LMM in a position to build community with the oppressed, forgotten and hurting with even greater effectiveness and visibility to impact our several public crises.

The joint task force I deployed to as a Navy chaplain was a surprisingly diverse and dynamic setting for ministry and military service. It was my privilege to listen to, provide worship and education for, counsel and connect people from a wide variety of backgrounds: young Latinx "dreamer" first generation Americans, officers from old military families, a recent Liberian émigré, teachers, restauranteurs, first responders, ranchers, suburban mayors, medical professionals and accountants, from small towns, exurbs and urban cores across the country. I hope that among them, I might have served the better purposes and ideals of our country – equality and freedom, second chances, a new diverse community – in that intense military setting and in these charged and troubled times.

I was well-equipped by my LMM experience for the chaplain's role of support, mediation and truth-telling. I also return with some renewed perspective during this time of multiple crises – the pandemic and related economic recession – and the crisis of structural racism and public struggle with our country's history; more visible with the deaths of George Floyd and other people of color at the hands of vigilantes and police, and in need of active listening, radical inclusion, community-building and forthright advocacy for systemic change. This work is LMM's own history. The better purposes and ideals noted above are LMM's own values.

We will prevail through this pandemic and be stronger because of the work of our staff partners.

We will again meet hate and fear with a faith acting in love calling for justice.

We will be essential workers in community-building. I rejoice to be part of our important work.

(And, ask me about my sea stories – I have a few...)

Forward,



Drew Genszler
President & CEO



Drew on deployment



One of Drew's sketches



Near the base



Chaplain's office where Drew worked



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Our Mission:

To promote shalom (peace, well-being) and justice (right relationships) through a Christian ministry of service and advocacy with those who are oppressed, forgotten and hurting.

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