



13 years of helping people in need



We share a compassion for our neighbors in crisis

“To be homeless is to lack roots, ties to place, and a sense of belonging. Extending hospitality re-establishes this connection.”

Richard Hopkins

PACEM Overview

History and Philosophy of PACEM

In 2003, Charlottesville clergy and homeless advocates created PACEM after members of the Downtown Ministerial Alliance shared the experience of showing up for work in the morning and regularly finding homeless neighbors sleeping in the doorways.

The 2004 Homeless Census – conducted by the Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless (TJACH) – supported the experience of the downtown clergy. Dozens of individuals were living in the streets, in the woods, in their cars, in abandoned buildings, behind garbage dumpsters, or around churches in the middle of winter. With a pressing need for shelter, the Downtown Ministerial Alliance and TJACH joined together. They gave their grassroots initiative the name PACEM – an acronym for People and Congregations Engaged in Ministry, a word that also comes from the phrase for peace: *Dona Nobis PACEM*.

Based on a rotating shelter model from Richmond, PACEM opened during the winter of 2004. As we prepare for our 14th season this upcoming winter, PACEM has provided more than 80,000 total nights of shelter for people who are homeless in our community. Along the way, we have learned that homelessness is not simply “house”-lessness. To be homeless is to lack roots, ties to place, and a sense of belonging. Extending hospitality re-establishes this connection.* (Source: Richard Hopkins)

PACEM believes that a welcoming, safe place to shelter is the first step to addressing the crisis of homelessness. Sharing a compassion for our neighbors in crisis, we bring the members of nearly 80 congregations and groups together each winter to address the need for shelter in our community.

Our Mission

PACEM’s mission is “to bring together the faith community of the greater Charlottesville area to provide temporary shelter, compassionate support, and access to services to homeless individuals, *so they can move to a stable housing solution. This work can only be achieved by forging partnerships in the larger community.*”

Shelter of Last Resort

Because PACEM is a shelter of last resort, we are sometimes required to help individuals recognize that they have other choices. There are a variety of reasons why a guest may be referred elsewhere, encouraged to move forward, or assigned a limited length of stay. The most common reasons are housing or supportive resources in the Charlottesville community or another community.

Broader Community Safety Net

The annual Point in Time Count* in 2017 identified 160 adults in the Charlottesville area who are homeless. Of these, 23 (less than 14%) were unsheltered during the winter months. During the Point in Time Count in 2004, 23% were unsheltered during the winter months.

We would like this number to be zero, but an unsheltered count of less than 10% is a reflection of a community with a strong safety net. The decrease in the number of neighbors who are unsheltered since PACEM opened in 2004 is one way to evaluate our work. We thank our more than 3,000 volunteers for their work over the last thirteen years in strengthening our community!

*TJACH’s annual Point in Time Counts (January, 2004 and January, 2017)

During the day, PACEM guests return to The Haven at 7:00 a.m. where there is a hot breakfast served. There are showers, computers, storage bins, and laundry facilities. Guests may also use The Haven's address to receive mail.

Soup kitchens in churches around the downtown area provide lunches each day.