White Flag Ministry – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This document is intended to provide clear, factual information about the White Flag ministry at Church of the Good Shepherd (CGS). It reflects prior season operations, adjustments, and areas of ongoing discernment. It is not exhaustive, and some questions may require follow-up beyond this document.

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1. What is the White Flag ministry?

White Flag is a **county-wide emergency shelter response** activated during periods of extreme weather. Its purpose is to prevent immediate harm by providing temporary overnight shelter for people who would otherwise be exposed to dangerous conditions.

White Flag is **time-limited, conditional, and seasonal**. It is not a permanent shelter or a comprehensive solution to homelessness.

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2. When and how is White Flag activated at CGS?

CGS participates only on **formally declared White Flag nights**, based on county criteria. Activation is coordinated through the Continuum of Care and White Flag leadership. CGS does not independently declare or extend White Flag operations.

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3. Who is served through the White Flag ministry?

White Flag serves **people seeking shelter during extreme weather conditions** who are registered through the county system. Eligibility, registration, and screening are handled by White Flag staff in accordance with Continuum of Care policies.

CGS does not independently screen or select participants.

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4. Is this the same as traditional church hospitality?

No. While CGS's participation is grounded in its values, **emergency shelter operations differ from traditional parish hospitality**.

This ministry requires:

- clear rules and boundaries,
- defined authority and enforcement,
- structured oversight,
- and limits based on safety, staffing, and capacity.

For this reason, CGS understands its role as providing **disciplined, accountable care** rather than open-ended hospitality.

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5. What changed in the current season?

Compared to prior seasons, the recent White Flag season has involved:

- more frequent activations,
- longer operational windows,
- a different shelter population,
- and greater impact on volunteers and building use.

These changes increased operational complexity and required additional safeguards, clearer roles, and stronger coordination.

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6. What was put in place to address safety concerns?

Several measures were implemented or strengthened, including:

- defined incident response and escalation procedures,
- paid security coverage during key operational windows,
- an on-site incident commander,
- and clear boundaries that volunteers are **not responsible for enforcement or behavior management**.

Risk cannot be eliminated in an emergency shelter setting, but it is **actively managed and reviewed**.

7. How is the building protected during White Flag operations?

Building use during White Flag operations includes:

- restricting guest access to defined areas,
- locking doors where possible,
- routine security walk throughs overnight,
- completing daily setup checklists,
- supervising transitions such as elevator use and smoking breaks,
- implementing bathroom and cleaning protocols.

The Fire Marshal has reviewed current configurations and confirmed capacity is within regulation, with follow-up items addressed as required.

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8. Has the Parish Life Center or church building been damaged?

Facilities staff monitored the Parish Life Center and other affected areas regularly. There were **two incidents involving damage to a Parish Life Center door** related to anti-social behavior during White Flag operations. In both cases, the door was repaired promptly by Bryant Center staff at **no cost to CGS**.

Beyond these incidents, no structural damage beyond **normal wear associated with short-term intensive use** has been identified.

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9. What happens if damage beyond normal wear occurs?

If damage beyond normal wear were to occur:

- it would be assessed through established facilities and leadership processes,
- funding and responsibility would be evaluated based on the nature of the issue,
- and next steps would be determined on a **case-by-case basis**.

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10. Are volunteers covered by insurance?

CGS insurance coverage has been **reviewed and updated** in light of White Flag operations. Liability concerns have been reviewed with the Bishop and our controls are considered appropriate for this ministry.

Because liability questions can be complex and fact-specific, individual concerns are best addressed **case by case** rather than through blanket assurances.

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11. What are volunteers responsible for—and not responsible for?

Volunteers:

- support hospitality tasks such as setup, meals, and morning transitions,
- follow defined role descriptions for each shift,
- escalate concerns to White Flag staff when issues arise.

Volunteers are **not responsible** for:

- enforcing rules,
- managing behavioral incidents,
- conducting screening,
- or intervening in unsafe situations.

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12. How are incidents handled and documented?

Incidents are handled and documented by White Flag staff in accordance with established procedures. Significant issues are communicated through defined leadership channels.

Incident reports are not routinely distributed publicly due to privacy, complexity, and context-specific factors.

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13. Are drugs or weapons screened for?

Screening, eligibility, and enforcement are handled by White Flag staff under county policies. CGS does not conduct independent screening.

When prohibited behavior occurs, it is addressed by White Flag staff according to established procedures, not by volunteers.

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14. Why do some parishioners choose not to volunteer?

Participation in White Flag is **always voluntary**. Parishioners may have different comfort levels, capacities, or callings.

CGS respects these differences and encourages multiple forms of support beyond onsite volunteering, including behind-the-scenes, logistical, financial, and prayerful support.

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15. What does the ministry cost, and how is it funded?

White Flag expenses include utilities, custodial services, security, meals, operational supplies, and other direct costs associated with hosting the shelter.

To promote transparency, the Finance Committee has tracked all White Flag income and expenses through a dedicated White Flag fund established in December 2025. As of June 18, 2026, all known direct expenses and chargebacks have been recorded, and no significant additional activity is anticipated.

White Flag Fund Summary (Dec. 2025 – June 18, 2026)
Total credits (donations, grants, reimbursements, gifts-in-kind, etc.): **$97,792.75**
Total debits (direct expenses, chargebacks, security, supplies, etc.): **$85,073.15**
Remaining fund balance: $12,719.60

The ministry has therefore operated **within its available funding**, with a remaining balance available to address outstanding needs or future ministry decisions. Additionally, while we were awarded a $50,000 grant to support our Children Ministry and White Flag, none of those funds were required for White Flag.

Financial stewardship remains an ongoing responsibility. Parish leadership will evaluate the ministry's total costs, funding sources, and long-term sustainability before making recommendations regarding future participation. This reflects CGS's commitment to being faithful stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

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16. What questions remain open?

Areas of ongoing discernment include:

- long-term sustainability,
- volunteer participation and comfort,
- financial patterns and funding clarity,
- communication practices with the congregation,
- defining CGS's sustainable hospitality capacity.

These questions are being held intentionally rather than prematurely closed.

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17. How can parishioners raise concerns or ask follow-up questions?

Parishioners may:

- ask questions during information-sharing sessions,
- contact the designated White Flag email,
- speak with a Steering Committee member,
- or request individual follow-up on specific concerns.

CGS is committed to **constructive, respectful dialogue** as this ministry continues to evolve.

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18. How can parishioners participate or support the White Flag ministry?

There are **multiple ways to participate**, and not all involvement requires being onsite during operations.

Ways to support the ministry include:

- **Meal Team participation**, including meal preparation and coordination
- Setup and breakdown assistance
- Morning hospitality and guest transitions
- Behind-the-scenes logistics and supply support
- Prayerful and financial support

Parishioners interested in helping with meals may reach out via the designated **Whiteflag@cgs-raleigh.org email address** to be connected with the appropriate point of contact.

Participation is always voluntary, and parishioners are encouraged to serve in ways that align with their comfort, availability, and gifts.

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19. What does a typical White Flag shelter night look like?

While details vary by activation, a typical White Flag night at CGS follows this general flow:

- **Late afternoon / early evening (6pm):**
  Shelter setup by staff and volunteers; White Flag staff and security arrive.
- **Early evening (7pm):**
  Intake begins for registered individuals and is managed by White Flag staff.
- **Evening (7:30pm):**
  Evening meal is provided; individuals remain in designated areas under staff supervision.
- **Overnight:**
  White Flag staff remain onsite throughout the night. Security coverage is present during defined operational windows. Volunteers are not responsible for overnight supervision or enforcement.
- **Early morning (5:15am):**
  Guests begin waking.
- **Morning dismissal (5:45am):**
  Guests exit the building in an orderly manner under staff supervision; coffee and grab and go breakfast occurs as applicable.

Specific timing and volunteer roles are communicated for each activation based on conditions and staffing.

This FAQ reflects current understanding and practice and may be updated as operations and discernment continue.