



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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Contact: Mayor's Office of Communications, [mayorspressoffice@sfgov.org](mailto:mayorspressoffice@sfgov.org)

**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**SAN FRANCISCO ANNOUNCES 2020-2021 INTERFAITH  
WINTER SHELTER PROGRAM OPENING**

*The Interfaith Winter Shelter Program opened today, November 30, increasing shelter capacity for people experiencing homelessness during the winter season*

**San Francisco, CA** — Mayor London N. Breed, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH), the San Francisco Interfaith Council (SFIC), and Episcopal Community Services (ECS) today announced the opening of the Interfaith Winter Shelter Program. Now in its 32nd year, the Interfaith Winter Shelter Program opened today, Monday, November 30, 2020, increasing shelter capacity for people experiencing homelessness during the winter season.

“Our Homelessness Recovery Plan will create thousands of new placements for homeless residents in order to bring them off the streets and into housing, but there continues to be an immediate need for more places for people to go. That is why the Interfaith Winter Shelter Program is so important,” said Mayor Breed. “The winter season can be particularly difficult for people experiencing homelessness and it is our responsibility as a city to make sure that everyone has a safe place to sleep at night. We are grateful to our local faith organizations for opening their doors and making this program possible.”

The Interfaith Winter Shelter Program will serve 67 individuals experiencing homelessness at St. Mary's Cathedral beginning November 30, 2020 – January 31, 2021. At present, the end date of the program is January 31, 2021 as the site's availability is contingent upon the status of the pandemic. HSH and Interfaith Winter Shelter Program Partners will continue to closely monitor the landscape of the pandemic while exploring other options to support winter shelter resources being available through the winter months. The program will provide guests with two hot meals and takeaway lunches and mobile showers will be provided.

“For over three decades the San Francisco Interfaith Council has hosted the San Francisco Interfaith Winter Shelter, in collaboration with the City and County of San Francisco and Episcopal Community Services,” said Michael Pappas, Executive Director, San Francisco Interfaith Council. “Traditionally, the shelter has transitioned among four religious facilities with meals prepared and served by over 50 congregations. COVID-19 health precautions require a very different model for the 2020-2021 season. We are grateful to the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption for generously offering their site as an extended stay location. This location and the ongoing leadership of the City and ECS means that the Interfaith Winter Shelter may continue to operate at this critical time.”



The Interfaith Winter Shelter Program will adhere to COVID-19 public health guidance for congregate-style shelters that includes but is not limited to:

- Physical distancing of ideally 6 feet between individuals during sleep and while moving throughout the designated areas of shelter space.
- Face coverings will be provided and are required to be worn by guests and staff.
- Enhanced cleaning processes.
- Access to handwashing and sanitation stations.
- Minimizing the introduction of new risk by maintaining a stable cohort whenever possible.
- Based on the DPH environmental health assessment, new enhanced filters (MERV 13) will be installed in the HVAC and settings to the system will be adjusted to maximize air filtration.
- Enhanced food safety practices.

ECS has been providing the services for the Interfaith Winter Shelter for the last 32 years and is funded by HSH to provide services at the 2020-2021 Interfaith Winter Shelter Program.

“The shelter capacity expansion that the Interfaith Winter Shelter Program will bring to our homelessness emergency response system is critical,” said Beth Stokes, Executive Director, Episcopal Community Services. “ECS is proud to partner for our 32nd year with the City and the San Francisco Interfaith Council on this initiative. It is of the utmost importance that vulnerable members of our community are not only able to seek respite from the elements, but Shelter-In-Place in a safe and dignified manner.”

Based on COVID-19 public health guidance for congregate-style shelters, the 2020-2021 Interfaith Winter Shelter Program will not accept walk-ins. All referrals to the Interfaith Winter Shelter Program will be made through the centralized referral process managed by the COVID-19 Command Center.

“My deepest gratitude to the San Francisco Interfaith Council, Episcopal Community Services, St. Mary’s Cathedral and the faith community for meeting the challenges of this difficult year, to provide expanded congregate shelter capacity and warm meals this winter,” said Abigail Stewart-Kahn, Interim Director of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. “COVID has impacted everything, including this longstanding program. With our partners, and in a COVID informed manner, this winter we will continue to offer each guest dignity, meals and connection to the City’s larger Homelessness Response System.”

For more information about the 2020-2021 Interfaith Winter Shelter Program, please visit:

<https://hsh.sfgov.org/services/shelter/emergencyshester/>.

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