



MUC's Homeless Mission by Christine Lindner

We, as members of Morningside United Church, strive not only to love our neighbours living in the adjacent flats and houses of suburban Morningside and Bruntsfield, but all of the denizens of Edinburgh. This includes those who are recognized as homeless or vulnerably housed and are faced with the strain of economic instability.

We have taken on the mission to assist those in need, through a variety of different channels.

The primary medium through which MUC engages with Homelessness is through supporting the activities of the Sisters of Mercy at Saint Catherines Convent. Located on Lauriston Gardens, this is an open space where a number of different organizations meet and support those who are socially and economically vulnerable.

Saint Catherine's is better known however for its role in providing meals and befriending many of Edinburgh's homeless and needy. It is in this capacity that MUC is involved.

Since November, members of our church have regularly donated food and cleaning products to assist the 'Mercy Centre' (the name of this branch of work at Saint Catherines) in providing for the homeless. The sisters have specifically asked for cans of tuna and corned beef, which can be turned into a variety of different meals to be enjoyed by the service users. Cleaning produces are essential in maintaining high standards of healthy and safety.

The recent Christmas offering was taken to assist Saint Catherines Christmas meal.

In addition to our donations of food, cleaning products and money, we regularly pray for the work conducted at Saint Catherines and the work of our spiritual Sisters.

Our work to support the Sisters of Mercy is not the only activity within MUC's Homeless Mission. Some of our members volunteer to cook and serve food at Saint Catherine's convent, as well as at the other shelters and food banks in the city. Others volunteer at charity shops that provide services for the homeless and vulnerably housed, such as Shelter and Bethany Christian Trust. Others have been active in campaigning and fundraising for such organizations, such as running marathons to raise money for the Rock Trust, which is a local charity that focuses upon homeless and socially vulnerable young adults.

As you can see, MUC's Homeless Mission is as diverse as our congregation.

What you can do

- Continue donating items of food and cleaning products for Saint Catherines Convent
- volunteer to bring the donated food to Saint Catherines (contact Christine if you would like to help 07838467967)
- shop and donate unwanted goods to local charity shops that support homeless organizations such as Shelter and Bethany Christian Trust
- spend an hour volunteering at one of these charity shops
- contribute and help put together 'Starter Packs' for Fresh Start
- Learn More about homelessness and the different services that are available
- Campaign and encourage the Edinburgh Council to fulfil their goals to end homelessness by 2012.
- refine your culinary skills, waitressing techniques or dishwashing expertise at the Mercy Centre, Greyfriar's Kirk house, or any of the other soup kitchens in the city
- help drive or serve with the Edinburgh City Mission's 'Care Van'
- it is recommended that you do not give money to people on the street. Rather, ask them if they would like a cup of tea or coffee, and how they take their cuppa.
- participate in the various MUC activities focusing on poverty during the upcoming season of Lent
- Attend a 'Gimme Shelter' or 'Stand Up for Shelter' events and watch your favourite local band or comedian on stage.
- Help support the Winter Night Shelter.

The Facts

In 2006-2007 the city council recognised 5,500 individuals as being 'Homeless' in Edinburgh. 38 individuals were found 'sleeping rough' on Edinburgh's streets during June 2008. This was an increase of 63 %

55 people sought advice from the council on housing and homelessness during the first week of January 2009.

In 2007-2008, 56,609 households made homeless applications to their local council in Scotland, for which 40,299 were recognized as being homeless or potentially homeless.

Edinburgh City Council is actively pursuing the goals targeted in their Homelessness Strategy 2007 -2012, which includes ending non-intentional homelessness by 2012

In 2007-2008, 3, 573 tenants were evicted from their homes as a result of legal action taken from councils and housing associations; the majority of these cases resulted from rent arrears.

Who else is working for the homeless in Edinburgh?

Shelter

Bethany Christian Trust

The Rock Trust

The Advice Shop

Citizens Advice Bureau

Streetwork

The Cowgate Centre

Foursquare

Greyfriars Kirk House

Sister's of Mercy

Homeless Outreach Project

Edinburgh City Mission

Fresh Start