



CALIFORNIA-
PACIFIC
CONFERENCE

HUNGER, HOMELESSNESS, & AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE



TOOL KIT FOR CONGREGATIONS TO TAKE ACTION SUMMER 2026

Under the umbrella of Connectional Ministries and the Justice and Compassion Essential Ministry Team, the Hunger, Homelessness, and Affordable Housing Task Force **seeks to amplify the voices of those impacted by hunger, homelessness, and the lack of affordable housing near L.A.'s Skid Row**, and using this step by step guide, or tool kit, **empower congregations to act in the communities where they reside.**

SIX PRINCIPLES



Hunger, Homelessness, & Affordable Housing Task Force of the Cal-Pac Conference

Tom Grode, Chair: manoftheseatom@gmail.com / Rev. Maria Longley: maria@aumctustin.org

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Before taking action to address hunger, homelessness, or affordable housing as a congregation, consider using the tools below, designed to help your team **meet real needs, in unison with others**, and have **lasting impact**.



1. BE IN PRAYER

Scripture is filled with examples of those who prayed before taking action. **Make prayer the foundation of your efforts** to address systemic issues like hunger, homelessness, or affordable housing in your community. It will help to sustain your team and your efforts, and will allow for room to hear from the Holy Spirit as your guide.

“The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.”

Psalm 145:18

2. FORM A TEAM

TOOLS TO USE

Within your congregation, connect with clergy (including deacons), mission and outreach teams, United Methodist circles for women and men, or Youth leaders to get started.

Don't go it alone. Systemic problems take systemic solutions. God designed humanity to live in community with one another, not in solitude. When describing the shared nature of the Trinity, Cuban American theologian Justo González writes, “Life without sharing is a life without God.” We must share the burdens of caring for the least and the lost.

TOOLS TO USE

Consider reading a book or devotion together (even excerpts) to keep your team inspired.



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Local churches are encouraged to create “shared ministries” with ecumenical partners and respond in “creative ways” to the needs of others. ¶207, *Book of Discipline*

TOOLS TO USE

To find service providers in your area, visit sites such as 211.org or foodoasis.la and search for help as though you need it. This will point you directly to organizations in your church’s zip code.

3. FIND PARTNERS

Beyond your own congregation, addressing hunger, homelessness, or affordable housing is likely a concern with fellow churches in your neighborhood.

After prayerfully assembling a team, **reach out to ecumenical partners** who value United Methodist social principles such as Episcopalian, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or similar denominations. Ask what they do for the needy, who they support, and how they already take action. This will guide your efforts. Example: if a nearby church has a food pantry, you may want to partner together to create a program that does not replicate the same offering, including the day and time of distribution.

Finding partners also opens the door to Step 4, Identifying the Need, by connecting you with **experts in the field**. Locate your nearest Feeding America site or a large food bank and sign up for newsletters; do the same with programs that address homelessness. Larger organizations often share statistical data on websites and social media. Make them a partner in your efforts. Don’t go it alone - not even as a team.



EVEN BIGGER TOOLS

Get inspired from stories across the U.S. and beyond by following the denomination at large or boards and agencies such as the **General Board of Church and Society**, whose mission includes supporting economic rights, the environment, and more.

Visit: umc.org / umjustice.org

TOOLS TO USE

When it comes to partnerships, look to your district office and the **Cal-Pac conference** for inspiration. Stay on top of district initiatives like Crop Walks, make sure you receive the weekly Cal-Pac newsletter, and follow your district and Cal-Pac on social media for ideas and connection.

Visit: calpacumc.org

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4. IDENTIFY THE NEED

Humble
yourselves, then
under God's
mighty hand, so
that he will lift
you up in your
own good time.

1 Pet. 5:6-7

Prayer, creating a team, and collaboration will help as you begin to identify needs in your area. The process also requires **humility and patience**.

Does your church want to do a food drive? Great! **Ask what your local food bank needs first.** Your church may *want* to collect canned soup for a "Souper-Bowl" food drive in January, but does the food bank *need* soup? Or do they need SpaghettiOs instead? Identify needs first by **asking questions**. Be humble and patient in service to others. (And remember Step #1).

Using **municipal, county, and state resources** can also help identify needs. In the example of homelessness, a Google search for "Ventura County homeless services" points to the county's "Partners and Providers" page offering statistics, as well as links for help on housing, transportation, legal services, and more (via **211.org** noted in Step 3). Government agencies will often overlap! Again, be patient. Research your area. Learn what issues are most prominent before you make a plan (congregations in wealthier pockets of Southern California may not encounter homelessness, but what about the lack of affordable housing)?

Be armed with information before you act.

TOOLS TO USE

In addition to city, county, and state websites, countless non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the **Los Angeles Food Policy Council** and **Change Well Project** offer valuable insight and stories - and host events!

Let nothing
disturb you. Let
nothing frighten
you. All things
pass away. God is
unchangeable.
Patience gains
everything.

Teresa of Avila



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5. MAKE A PLAN

TOOLS TO USE

Bragging rights!

With permission, plan to take photos during volunteer opportunities and share them on social media. Tag your church and the agencies you support to double the exposure! Decide who on your team will do this in advance, as it's easy to forget.

You have **prayed as a team**, sought out **partnerships**, and **identified needs** in your area. Now it's time to **make a plan**.

Similar to asking what a food bank or homeless shelter *actually* needs, **timing matters** too. Annual fundraising events, the holidays, and even the weather can determine when it is best for an organization to host a donation drive or welcome volunteers (think: the L.A. wildfires). Before getting your team in motion, ask:

- Have we checked what's *needed*?
- Have we checked the best time frame to collect items, deliver them, or volunteer?
- Do we have enough people interested so our plans will succeed? Should we partner with another church? Two churches?
- How will we deliver items?

When planning, also consider the best timing for your congregation! Have you checked with the pastor(s)? Are there other activities taking place that might hurt - or help - participation? Is there an upcoming sermon series on giving back to the community? (Remember: be patient).

Plans need planning. **Make sure stakeholders like your recipients, church staff, and fellow church members are on board** before taking action.

TOOLS TO USE

In the fall of 2025, the UMC launched a new vision statement: **to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously**.

After identifying a need in your area, make plans to address it using this daring vision for the future!

Visit:

resourceumc.org

Love Boldly
Serve Joyfully
Lead Courageously



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6. TAKE ACTION

Help us be
present and
show our love
in **action**.

Bishop Dottie
Escobedo-
Frank

Congratulations! It's time to make a difference in the community where your congregation resides. A few reminders as you proceed:

Prayer is not only your foundation, but fuel to keep going. **Pray continually.** (1 Thess. 5:17)

Be gracious to your team. Compassion fatigue is real. Not everyone can help all the time. Make room for Youth, Young Adults, and parents of young children.

Be on the lookout for new ecumenical and other **partners**. Stay informed. Stay inspired.

Needs change. Stock markets and housing costs climb and fall. Disasters shake us. **Stay humble and stay attuned to the needs around you.**

Make a plan that makes a difference. Sure, you can wing it, but will you get the results your team desires? More importantly, will you get the results the hungry or unhoused so desperately need?

TOOLS TO USE

Learn what it means to become a **delegate to annual conference**, where change happens in the form of resolutions and connections.

You serve the
Lord Christ.

Col. 3:24

FOR QUESTIONS OR TO LEARN ABOUT JOINING US:

The Hunger, Homelessness, & Affordable Housing Task Force

Tom Grode, Chair: manoftheseatom@gmail.com

Rev. Maria Longley: maria@aumctustin.org