

"Thousands of people may live in a community but it is not one of real fellowship until they know each other mutually and have sympathy for one another. A true community has faith and wisdom that illuminate it. It is a place where the people know and trust one another and where there is social harmony."

- Mahaparinirvana-Sutra



San Francisco Interfaith Council

"And certainly, We shall test you with a bit of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits. But give glad tidings to the patient ones who, when afflicted with a calamity, say: "Truly! To Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return." They are those upon whom are the blessings, descend from their Lord, and they receive His Mercy, and it is they who are guided."

-Surah Al-Baqarah 2:155-157

Discussing Homelessness in Your Faith Community

Homelessness is an issue that affects all of us across social, religious, and physical lines. However, sometimes, it is hard to present this topic to a particular faith community that is genuine and honest. Though all faith traditions teach compassion and care for the neighbor, each religion has its own unique and special way of seeing these truths manifested throughout life. We at the San Francisco Interfaith Council understand and celebrate this diversity among our faith communities. However, it can become challenging to know how to talk about supporting the San Francisco Interfaith Winter Night Shelter in an effective and meaningful way within the assorted perspectives of congregations. We hope we can help you in giving suggestions for questions to ask that can spur fruitful conversations and action in your own faith tradition.

1. How is the concept of "shelter" talked about in your tradition?
2. What does it mean to "help the poor" in your tradition?
3. What things are said (either directly or indirectly) about homelessness and poverty in the holy texts or stories of your faith tradition?
4. Is there a well known figure in your tradition who talked/talks about homelessness and helping the poor? What kinds of things did/do they say?
5. Is your faith community either directly affected by the presence of homeless people nearby and/or has witnessed partner communities affected by homelessness? What is that like for your community?
6. Does anyone in your faith community have any firsthand experience with homelessness or had contact with someone who does? What things have they taught the community?
7. Has your faith community volunteered resources or time to a homeless shelter? Why?
8. Are there any organizations from your faith tradition who are on the streets with the homeless who could also be highlighted with the San Francisco Interfaith Winter Night Shelter?

"If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you.

Leviticus 25:35-36

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him

-Luke 10:30-37

A Prayer for the Homeless

*Bless the homeless, this day and everyday,
keep them from physical and emotional harm,
fill their hearts with hope for the future and for today,
comfort the homeless as they walk their difficult paths.
May I know that anyone, even me, can be homeless.*

*Bless the homeless with enough food to sustain them,
with enough warmth to shield them from the elements,
with the power to wrestle personal demons and win,
with the will to go on, and build their lives again.*

*May hope touch each homeless heart, spirit and life,
let the kindness of others bring lasting benefits,
bring freedom from addiction, illness and misery,
open their humanity to include & embrace themselves.*

*Bless the homeless with self acceptance and love,
spark their imaginations with belief in the future,
bringing the possibility of a better life,
a safer life and a more secure life.*

- Abby Willowroot

Introductory Statement spoken before each meeting of the San Francisco Interfaith Council

“This is an interfaith community.
Whatever our individual belief, it can be
freely expressed here with no apologies.
If we are invited to offer a prayer in this
setting, it should be offered according to
the tradition with which we identify. If we
are invited to speak on a subject from the
perspective of our tradition, we are free to
do so without fear of offending those who
come from another tradition. We come
together as people of faith to learn
from each other that we might better
understand the multiplicity of faith
traditions in our city and in our world.”