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## **Urban Ministry Center and Men's Shelter of Charlotte Will Merge to Elevate Homeless Services and Find Permanent Housing Solutions**

*Shelter's Liz Clasen-Kelly to Lead Organization with Push for Affordable Housing*

**CHARLOTTE, N.C., (February 13, 2019)** – Urban Ministry Center and Men's Shelter of Charlotte today announced plans to join forces and become a single organization with an even greater capacity to end homelessness in the Charlotte community.

Plans call for the new organization to provide all of the services the two nonprofits currently offer, and the combined entity will increase its advocacy and effectiveness in finding permanent housing solutions for the most vulnerable members of the Charlotte community.

A merger agreement was approved late Tuesday by both organizations' Boards of Directors and is expected to close in May.

Men's Shelter of Charlotte Executive Director Liz Clasen-Kelly has been selected to lead the new organization with expertise and experience working in both organizations that ensures a smooth transition as well as passionate, visionary leadership.

The move comes as Urban Ministry Founder and Executive Director Dale Mullennix prepares to retire in May after 25 years of tireless advocacy and nationally recognized solutions that help people secure homes.

"The stars have aligned so we can take this bold step toward solving the devastating problem of homelessness with such a compassionate and talented leader as Liz Clasen-Kelly at the helm," said Mullennix. "By combining these two very successful organizations we will elevate our stature as a leading voice in Charlotte's housing and development policy decisions, and this community will continue to be recognized as a national model for its commitment to those who are experiencing homelessness."

Working with Mullennix, Clasen-Kelly served as associate executive director of Urban Ministry Center for almost five years before assuming leadership of Men's Shelter of Charlotte in 2016.

"We are excited about the new opportunities and resources this collaboration will provide," said Clasen-Kelly. "We'll build upon the success of these two organizations and the commitment of their talented and passionate staff, volunteers, partners and donors. And we will keep our clients' best interests at the heart of everything we do."

After years of declining, the number of people experiencing homelessness has ticked up recently alongside Charlotte's rapid growth. Mecklenburg County's 2018 "Point in Time Count" recorded at least 1,668 people during the one-night estimate of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population.

Urban Ministry Center and Men's Shelter of Charlotte will continue their normal operations until customary conditions are satisfied and the merger is finalized. The agencies provide complementary services, and while some structural changes are likely, significant changes in staffing and services are not expected. Facilities operated by both organizations will also remain in their current locations, and leaders are exploring naming options for the new entity.

Men's Shelter of Charlotte operates two shelters with more than 400 beds and offers employment and housing services. Urban Ministry Center provides a day center with basic services for people experiencing homelessness, street outreach, and a substance use recovery program. It also owns and manages Moore Place, a permanent supportive housing apartment complex, and partners with faith-based and other organizations to operate Room in the Inn, a program that provides shelter in facilities across the community.

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