

## The Faith Alliance Initiative for Tiny Houses (FAITH)

Responding to continually increasing problems with homelessness, late last year the City of Olympia proposed that if faith communities and other non-profit organizations were willing to support new tiny house and transitional shelter facilities, either on public or private properties, they would get substantial City support to assist their efforts. The City Council budgeted \$100,00 for 2019 to host and provide direct and contracted support for a tiny house pilot program, and contractors began moving ahead to establish 31 tiny houses that has since become known as The Plum Street Village. The Village is scheduled to be completed by January 31<sup>st</sup>.

Meanwhile, in November 2018 The United Churches of Olympia responded by organizing a Tiny House Workshop at the Evergreen Christian Center, which had participants from 10 other churches in attendance. Taking part were representatives from The City of Olympia, the Seattle based Low Income Housing Institute, or LIHI, and several other local organizations. Additionally, many of the presenters at the workshop were from Eugene, Oregon, who spoke about how they created and were successfully managing a tiny house program in their area.

Following the very successful November workshop, The United Church's Peter Cook issued a call to 10 other faith communities to come together and form an alliance, which has subsequently become The Faith Alliance Initiative for Tiny Houses, or FAITH. The express purpose of the alliance is to make an impact on homelessness by creating and supporting between 1 to 15 tiny houses on church properties, as well as generally supporting the development of tiny house enclaves or villages like the Plum Street facility.

An important aspect of the Faith alliance's role is to act as the interface between member churches and the City of Olympia. To this end an Alliance task force was formed to interact with the City. All of the members of the task force share excellent backgrounds for the task. The results to date have shown the City fully committed to working with the Alliance, as well as providing support to individual faith communities.

So far, a good deal of progress has been made. Many provisions of the City code have already been modified so as to insure the program is a success. The City

continues to plan for the provision of infrastructure, such as potable water and portable toilets, to any faith community willing to install 1 to 6 tiny houses on their premises. The City is also working to see that adequate security arrangements are in place, and that case managers will be available to assist all residents with the wrap-around medical and social services they need.

Recognizing that the need for tiny house temporary shelters may last for 3 to 5 years, or conceivably even longer, member churches within the FAITH alliance have been very deliberate in their approach as they consider what type of involvement they want to pursue. Some have decided that they can't host tiny houses on their property, but are willing to provide some labor and financial help where needed. Others, like OUUC, are looking at becoming hosts but are still in the planning stage.

While the FAITH Alliance is still a work in progress, it does appear it will continue to be viable. At this point, what the Alliance needs are a few member churches ready to become actively involved. We're one of the churches that have done the most planning so far, so I'll now turn the mic over to Tim Ransom, who'll provide some details about the possibility of OUUC starting our own tiny house enclave.