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We Are Church Together

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Building More Than a House: The Vision of Jeremiah Community

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For more than 20 years, the churches of downtown Fredericksburg have been learning what it means to walk alongside neighbors experiencing homelessness.

In 2005, local congregations came together to form Micah Ecumenical Ministries. Christ Lutheran is blessed to be one of Micah's nine governing churches. What began as a coordinated effort to feed, clothe, and shelter neighbors grew as relationships deepened and churches listened and learned.



One lesson has become increasingly clear: **homelessness is a catastrophic loss of relationships.**

Providing someone with keys to an apartment is important, but housing alone cannot restore the relationships, belonging, purpose, and community that all people need to flourish. Years of ministry led Micah toward a vision rooted in the biblical understanding of *shalom*—wholeness and peace in our relationships with God, ourselves, one another, and creation.

Out of that learning grew the vision for **Jeremiah Community**, a life-sharing community where neighbors who have experienced homelessness can live affordably, discover purpose, develop meaningful relationships, and know the belonging of home.

This summer, that vision began becoming increasingly tangible.

On August 20, more than 50 pastors from Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Caroline, and King George gathered to consider how the wider Church might work together for the sake of our neighbors. Pastor John Wertz of

the Virginia Synod joined the gathering. After 20 years, Micah's ministry is reminding us that this work belongs not only to nine downtown churches but to the whole Church. Different congregations bring different gifts to the same table.

Then, in September, years of dreaming became something people could walk inside.

With the support of **Atlantic Builders, HomeAid National Capital Region, and the Oberle Academy**, along with more than 50 trade partners, the Jeremiah Community prototype home became a reality. On September 10, community members gathered for the Campaign Kickoff and toured the home. Three days later, on *God's Work Our Hands Sunday* church goers and community members gathered again to bless the finished—and furnished—prototype.

But as Meghann Cotter, the Executive Servant Leader of Micah explains, the most important thing being prototyped is not a house.

It is community.

Jeremiah Community rests on the conviction that home is more than a roof. Home is belonging. Home is relationships. Home is sharing burdens. Home is knowing your gifts matter and that there are people with whom you belong.

The prototype offers a glimpse of what is possible when churches, organizations, businesses, volunteers, donors, and neighbors bring their gifts together. People who have experienced homelessness are not simply recipients of ministry; they are neighbors whose presence and gifts are essential to the community being built.

There is much more work ahead. Yet a vision shaped through years of ministry and relationships is taking physical form—a glimpse, perhaps, of the kingdom we pray for: **"on earth as it is in heaven."**

Click here to learn more and join the journey at Jeremiah Community.