



March 2020

Dear Friends and Partners with Olive Branch Mission,

During this unprecedented time when the world is battling a pandemic, Olive Branch Mission remain on the frontlines caring for the most vulnerable residents of Chicago. We continue to serve men, women and children that are at the highest risk for contracting Covid19. They are more susceptible because of the close living quarters in tents and shelters, the sharing of utensils and the lack of hand-washing stations on the streets. Once infected the chronically homeless are more likely to get much sicker or die because of underlying medical conditions and a lack of access to reliable health care.

What does "Shelter in Place" mean for someone without a home or a safe place to shelter? It means they show up at The Mission in droves. Literally. Drove. Panic has spread and family and friends are afraid to have them around. Trains, buses and airports are no longer an option. Available shelter beds fill-up within hours of the shutdown order. The Mission's policy to never turn anyone away was stretched to the limit and eventually broke when the social distancing requirement was set in place. Moving beds, dining tables, chairs and other equipment to allow a 6ft distance between clients forced us to scale down the number of people we can safely serve. So The Mission went into crisis mode, with all hands on deck reconfiguring the entire building trying to safely accommodate as many people as we possibly could. We've used every available inch of The Mission.

Our main objective is to keep people sheltered and safe. Schools, daycare centers and agencies that provide support services are closed indefinitely. Our elderly clients with preexisting conditions and our children and moms with respiratory problems became the sole responsibility of The Mission. We created a makeshift isolation space for a mom and her 6 week old baby recovering from upper respiratory infections.

Chores are performed three times a day, but due to the Covid19 virus we added an additional process of deep cleaning and disinfecting procedures. Although additional supplies are necessary to maintain our rigorous schedule we are hard pressed to find any. All regular monthly supplies are backordered. Various staff members started going to stores trying to purchase whatever they could find. 1 bottle of disinfectant, 2 bottles of bleach etc...

The Food Service department serves meals in multiple shifts to ensure client spacing. We moved to using only disposable products for all meals. The security team administers temperature checks for every client and staff member upon entering the building. Books, puzzles and games were provided to each individual to aid in alleviating boredom. These additional measures have strained our limited resources.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my heroic staff. EVERYONE has shown up for their shifts and have gone above and beyond anything imaginable. They counsel with our clients, especially the children to encourage and reassure them. I know we have a very long and arduous road ahead but I am hopeful that God will continue to provide His grace and mercy on all of us. **WE NEED YOUR HELP MORE THAN EVER!**

Please continue to partner with us to serve the wonderful souls God has entrusted to our care!

Sincerely,

La Forice Nealy  
President/CEO

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