

Doing nothing is not an option.

The responsibility of those who claim to follow Jesus is to, “*love your neighbor as yourself*” (Mark 12:31). Who is our neighbor? Jesus taught that anyone and everyone is our neighbor (Luke 10:25-37), including those who are experiencing homelessness.

Doing nothing is not an option. In fact, in the words of Jesus, the difference between being a genuine follower, or a follower in name only, is the difference between doing nothing or doing something. Jesus said, “*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me*” (Matthew 25:35-36). If those words do not include the homeless, I don’t know what does!

Doing nothing is not an option. Doing something is our responsibility.

Recently, Open Table Nashville, and Glencliff United Methodist Church, have stepped forward with a creative plan to do something. They have prayed, strategized, raised funds, and gained approval from the city to develop, “The Village at Glencliff,” a planned community of 22 micro-homes on church property. The homes would serve as bridge housing for people currently experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are the most vulnerable.

The Village at Glencliff is a brilliant approach to a complex problem! Providing housing first, and then providing social and medical services necessary to move a person from homelessness to permanent housing, takes away the stress of, “Where will I sleep tonight?” With that stress gone, a person can better focus on what they need to heal and become contributing members of society. Is this plan perfect? No! But it’s something. In fact, it is more than something. It is a huge first step in the right direction in addressing a growing crisis in our community.

Objections to these types of communities are usually focused in two areas. First is the attitude, “*If we build it they will come.*” In reality, the need for bridge housing is already vast. Open Table Nashville, and Glencliff United Methodist Church, did not create an issue that was not already present. Many of our neighbors are presently live on the streets. In a city with more than 2,500 people experiencing homelessness [on a single night], these 22 homes are just a drop in the bucket.

The second objection is the attitude, “*Not in my back yard*” (NIMBY). Two main concerns associated with NIMBY are an increase in crime and a decrease in property values. However, studies consistently show that any increase in crimes around this type of community are “statistically insignificant” to the increase in crime in any neighborhood. Furthermore, studies show that a homeless person is more likely to be a victim of a crime than a perpetrator of a crime. (See <http://citylimits.org/2015/02/25/after-the-shouting-do-shelters-and-supportive-housing-harm-neighborhoods/>). Also, a study by NYU’s Furman Center found that after five years, property values around “supportive housing,” not only increases property value, but

increases property value at a higher rate than in areas without supportive housing. (See, <https://shnny.org/research/supportive-housing-and-property-values-the-landmark-study/> and <http://citylimits.org/2015/02/25/after-the-shouting-do-shelters-and-supportive-housing-harm-neighborhoods/>, and http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/writers/pat_schneider/study-says-homeless-facilities-may-increase-the-value-of-nearby/article_659eeca5-5b7b-11e2-9585-001a4bcf887a.html). The Village at Glencliff is a win-win for both the neighborhood and the homeless residents already living in that area.

You may be asking yourself why I am writing since I live and pastor in Franklin. The answer is simple. I was born and raised in Nashville. I went to high school in the area where this community is planned. I have family and friends and church members living in this area. Plus, according to the teachings of Jesus, even though I live in Franklin, and this is in Nashville, we are still neighbors, and neighbors look out for each other.

Open Table Nashville, and Glencliff United Methodist Church, are to be commended for what they are doing. They are living out the teachings of Jesus. I want them to know that myself, and my church, stand in solidarity with them. I dream of one day having a Tiny Village in my city. I am inspired by their willingness to do something. Doing nothing is not an option.

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