

Church taking on difficult issues

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E.A. Seagraves

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Monument of Praise Ministries, 1212 Pearson Place, High Point, has mobilized to meet two goals: setting troubled teens on the right path and solving homelessness.

The Rev. Kevin Williams, pastor of Monument of Praise Ministries and New Jerusalem Cathedral in Greensboro, said the church started Successfully Overcoming The Odds in October. The church works with the Guilford County court system to identify teens who may benefit from the program.

"Youth right now are so troubled in so many areas," Williams said. Sometimes their problems stem from their environment — gang violence, drugs and other pressures. Many pressures kids face are under the radar of adults, Williams said.

The goal is to get the kids back on the right path so they can become productive citizens and role models for their peers and younger children.

The other issue the church is tackling is homelessness.

Williams believes with the proper resources, homelessness can be solved in the United States. "With a country like ours, homelessness shouldn't be a problem," he said.

Two things are needed, he said: "a care to resolve it and the vision to resolve it."

Williams believes he has the vision, which involves tackling the problem one neighborhood at a time until, eventually, homelessness is solved throughout the city, the county and then the state. "If we can do it in the state, then we've created a model for the country."

Every Sunday, the church picks up 40 to 50 people for morning services and then feeds them dinner. "I don't mean a biscuit and soup," Williams said. "To me, that's not dinner. A grown person can't live off that. We give them the best."

Now, the church wants to start finding homes for people. It's starting with a donated home up the street.

A three-bedroom house, it will hold up to six men or women. Those individuals will help bring the house up to minimum housing codes and maintain the house once they're in it.

Those living in the home will participate in the rehabilitation program created by the church — getting them trained and ready for work.

"We'll help you get a job and make sure you get to that job. We'll make sure you're dressed appropriately and that you know the proper way to conduct yourself in an interview," Williams said.

Last fall, the church offered a daylong training program on interviewing and job-seeking skills. The church then provided clothing for the participants to wear on an interview.

Williams said 70 percent of the participants had jobs by the end of the program.

"A lot of people have skills, but they don't have anyone to appropriate their skills in the right place," Williams said. The church worked to help them find jobs that used their skills.

Williams compared the program's approach to renovating a house instead of tearing it down.

"We don't need to tear people down but need to renovate them," he said.

Participants will be allowed to live in the home until they are able to support themselves independently.

Although designed to be a two-year program, Williams said progress will be different for each person.

Williams hopes to hear from individuals and companies willing to donate land, homes or buildings for the church to house people — from empty showrooms to boarded-up houses.

The church will also accept donations of labor and materials from local contractors and residents who might be willing to get some houses ready for the church.

“No one person can do this by themselves. It’s a community problem,” Williams said. “We need everybody to get involved to solve it.”

Contact E.A. Seagraves at 883-4422, Ext. 241, or elizabeth.seagraves@news-record.com

Want to Help?

To volunteer with Monument of Praise Ministries, contact the church at 887-5673 or visit www.mopraise.com.

To donate funds or materials, send checks or money orders to Monument of Praise Ministries, 1212 Pearson Place, High Point, NC 27265.