



February 2019

Dear Friends and Partners with Olive Branch Mission,

I initially started this letter to thank you for helping Olive Branch Mission celebrate a wonderful Holiday Season and yearend. As we geared up for the coming year, we saw an influx of new residents in the first few weeks. With shelters closing all over the Chicagoland area we planned ahead with extra sleeping areas, more socks, gloves, scarves and coats to accommodate our guests.

After hearing of the impending record breaking cold weather we were prepared to serve even more residents. Because it would be unbearably cold, people that would never step foot in a shelter would seek our assistance on these frigid days and nights. Particularly chronically homeless men. However, we never expected to set a record of serving more clients than ever before. Olive Branch Mission did not turn anyone away. The doors remained open to all that came. And boy did they come and come and come...

We successfully made it through the cold freeze but due to the extremely cold weather several of The Mission's water pipes froze and eventually burst causing a major flood throughout the building. Because this was happening all over the City, plumbers were in high demand and The Mission was put on an ever-increasing waiting list. To stop the leak, all water to the building had to be temporarily shut off while waiting for the plumbers. Without running water there were no working showers or toilets for clients to use and no way to prepare meals. We reluctantly made the decision to evacuate the building of all residents. We worked closely with the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services to conquer this herculean task. We are grateful that everyone was relocated, no one returned to the cold streets of Chicago.

Walking through the vacant building today was surreal. The empty dining room that's usually abuzz with loud chatter and laughter, sits eerily silent except for the sound of my shoes sloshing through the puddles of water that cover the floors. The silence is almost unbearable. Abandoned toys, books and clothing sitting neatly atop unoccupied beds. The phone ringing off the hook as house managers explained, "No, today isn't the day to return home Honey, maybe tomorrow. We miss you too." Case managers asks in somber tones, "Did the Moore and the Mendez children make it to school today?" I saw smiles of relief when the school staff answered, "Yes they're here." My staff continues to be heroic in their efforts to assist in getting the Mission back up and running. It breaks my heart to think of our residents being upheaved and displaced. God has given us the privilege of serving these precious souls and we take our assignment very seriously. This truly hurts. But God is in control and our faith is in Him.

My thoughts return to the night the residents left. As my staff and I loaded the families and singles on the buses lined up in front of The Mission the only statement we kept hearing amidst sighs and silent sobs was, "when are we going to come back home?" We promised them it would be soon. Very soon.

Now I'm asking, no, I'm pleading with you to help us keep that promise. We are in dire need of funds to have the broken pipes repaired, walls and floors repaired, resources to clean/sanitize the building and launder all the linens and towels. We need to bring our family home. Yes, home. The Mission is the only "home" that most of our residents know. A place where they are loved and cared for. If you are able to give please give, if you are unable to give please stand with us in prayer. Prayers for The Mission, prayers for the staff and special prayers for our beloved residents.

Sincerely,

La Forice Nealy

La Forice Nealy, **President & CEO**

*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction,
and faithful in prayer.*

Romans 12:12

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NEEDED!

Yes, please use this gift to help with repairs at Olive Branch Mission. (Urgent 02/19)

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