



MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Musical, Liturgical, Welcoming

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Joseph Crippen, *Pastor*

February 10, 2025

Senator Lindsay Port
Chair, Committee on Housing and Homelessness Prevention
95 University Avenue W
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3213
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Dedicated Revenue for housing via a constitutional amendment for housing

Dear Senator Port and members of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness Prevention:

Mount Olive is a socially progressive parish that also celebrates the best of traditional faith practices. We expect to meet God in our worship, in our Midtown Minneapolis neighborhood, and in our service to those around us. In our faith community, all are welcome. And we mean it. All are not only welcome to participate in our worship and in our programs, but all are welcome to serve in significant leadership roles in our organization. Members of various ethnic backgrounds, immigrants from various countries, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and BIPOC community members have and do serve on our Vestry (our term for Board of Directors) fill staff positions, lead worship, preach, teach classes, and more.

In terms of our history, Mount Olive was founded in 1909 as an English-language congregation by German-Americans. And since then, we have been a fixture on Chicago Avenue. Waves of immigrants from northern and central Europe, and now East Africa and Latin America, have been and are our close neighbors. Even though members of our faith community are scattered throughout the Twin Cities, we have never been able to separate ourselves from the needs and gifts of our south Minneapolis neighborhood, nor would we want to do so.

Our vision is that we both embody God in our service and meet God in our neighbor. In worship and on the street, we are always in the presence of God, being the presence of God.

Our current community programs seek to reduce economic disparities and help families of all backgrounds obtain the tools they need to thrive in our community. We have an active diaper distribution program, we partner with MetroTransit to provide discount ride cards for families who utilize public transit, we work with our neighbors to help them secure birth certificates, state identification cards, and driver's licenses. We partner with other area organizations to offer support for those needing counseling, support navigating the legal system, those working to get out of abusive relationships, and those struggling with food insecurity. And we are an active member of an interfaith coalition seeking to end homelessness through a variety of initiatives, including an emergency rental assistance program.

We currently serve families of many ethnic and religious backgrounds, including those in the indigenous, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and immigrant communities, with recent immigrants from various African, South and Central American countries making up the majority of our program participants.

In terms of our advocacy work, we have intentionally chosen to focus many of our efforts on housing and homelessness prevention because no singular issue is more impactful on individuals and families than having a safe and secure place to call home.

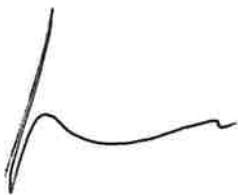
Every day, our staff and volunteers interact with members of our community who desperately want a place to live that isn't a car, a shelter, or a tent. The Household Community Stability Fund that would be established by this proposed constitutional amendment for housing would provide funding for shelters, traditional housing, and supportive housing that is vitally important to these individuals and families.

Every day, our staff and volunteers work with members of our community who are struggling to afford the rental housing they currently have or are dealing with housing that is in disrepair. And on top of that, many of our neighbors living outside, in shelter, or in transitional housing simply have no place to move. The Rental Opportunity Fund that would be established by this proposed constitutional amendment for housing would provide renter and tenant protections and fully fund a rental assistance voucher program. In addition, this fund would create more affordable rental homes, helping to fill a hole in the housing continuum that exists in Minnesota communities throughout the state.

Every day, our staff and volunteers work with neighbors living in rental housing who dream of owning their own home. But too often, our current housing stock is too expensive and saving for a down payment is a significant barrier to this dream. The Home Ownership Opportunity Fund that would be established by this proposed constitutional amendment for housing would provide funding to not only build more affordable homes for these families, but provide vital down payment assistance, helping families throughout the state achieve their dreams of homeownership. Being able to own their own home would ensure they have safe, secure, and affordable places to live along with opportunities to build generational wealth.

And we fully support the fact that this amendment would not only provide the resources to make these things happen, but that each fund would be governed by council made up of people from our communities, our neighbors, an important part of ensuring all our voices are heard.

For all of these reasons, we advocate for this amendment. We ask the members of this committee to vote in favor of this amendment and move it along in the process so that we as Minnesotans might have the chance to vote on adding this vitally important amendment for housing to the Minnesota State Constitution.



James Bargmann

Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry
Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis

On behalf of the members of Mount Olive Lutheran Church and our neighbors