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Memphis Union Mission to Purchase 3.1 Acres in Downtown Memphis to Expand Services

MEMPHIS, Tenn., January 12, 2012—Through its emergency shelter located at 383 Poplar Ave., Memphis Union Mission has provided emergency services and spiritual care to hundreds of homeless, needy people every day since the early 1960's.

This facility not only provides homeless guests with food, clothing, shelter, and hygiene; it is also the gateway for clients to enter the Mission's long-term recovery programs.

"That building is only one of several facilities that we operate," says Scott Bjork, president & CEO of Memphis Union Mission. "But it's the most visible of our facilities, and it's the introductory point for most of our clients to our ministry."

Demand for the Mission's services has grown steadily over the past four years. In response to the demand, Memphis Union Mission has initiated purchase of property behind its emergency shelter, subject to customary due diligence and obtaining required zoning.

The property is bordered by Danny Thomas Boulevard to the west, Washington Street to the south, High Street to the east, and Poplar Avenue to the north. It would give the Mission a total of 3.1 acres of land at that location.

The purchase does not include the law office or the auto shop on the southeast portion of the block, nor does it include the Exxon station on the northwest portion.

The Mission has already raised the finances needed to pay for the property. The purchase will allow the ministry to renovate and expand its emergency shelter in order to serve more people and provide new services, including a dedicated medical clinic, education classes, and employment services.

"We're so pleased to be in a position to purchase this property," says Bjork. "For some time now, we've been looking at ways to increase our services to meet the demands that have been placed on us."

Demand for the Mission's services has certainly steadily increased since 2007. On most nights, all 120 beds at the current emergency shelter are filled to capacity, and clients are required to sleep in overflow areas. Winter nights place an even greater demand on sleeping space.

The opening last summer of the Mission's Opportunity Center, located at 600 Poplar Ave., helped alleviate some of the crowding issues. However, it has not eliminated the problem.

Furthermore, by renovated and expanded the facility, Memphis Union Mission would be in a position to provide new services that have previously been impossible to provide because of space limitations.

Assuming that the purchase is finalized, the Mission will draw up plans and will begin assembling a team to launch a capital campaign to raise the funds needed for the project. However, a timetable has not yet been set.

"This ministry has a proud history, and it has touched so many lives over the years," says Bjork. "Our prayer is that, with the new property, Memphis Union Mission will be in a position to minister to many more people in Christ's name for decades to come."

For more information, visit www.MemphisUnionMission.org or call (901) 526-8403.

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