

Mayor and Members of the City Council  
City of Blaine  
10801 Town Square Dr., NE  
Blaine, MN 55449

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council

We are submitting this letter in support of the Family Promise Guest House Proposal.

Christ Lutheran Church has been a part of the Family Promise network since its inception over ten years ago. We have seen and served the families who are homeless and need support and a place to stay until they are able to get back on their feet and into stable and permanent housing.

While we all wish that the homeless problem would be solved and these services were unnecessary, the reality is that it continues and has spread throughout our county. We see it as part of our Christian mission to serve beyond our four walls and our property those who need help in our community.

Family Promise has been particularly successful in serving the family segment of the homeless population and have demonstrated results in finding permanent housing for the families coming through their door. We support the Guest House model that they are proposing as a more effective way to serve homeless families and keep the volunteer support engaged in their mission.

We feel that we have sufficient space on our site to host the Guest House and to ensure that the clients have access to transportation and the Anoka County Human Services Building. Our location is uniquely suited to help Family Promise to carry out its mission and meets its objectives.

We ask the City Council to favorably consider and support their proposal.

If you have any questions regarding our support, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Nancy Boxrud  
President of the Church Council

Kent Lee  
Senior Pastor

**MOTION FOR FAMILY PROMISE PROJECT AT CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**(This motion passed on 9-20-20 by a Congregational Vote)**

WHEREAS a CLC Family Promise Task Force was formed in December 2019 and has worked diligently to explore a collaborative effort to address homelessness in Anoka County by building a Guest House on CLC property, and

WHEREAS three informational ZOOM meetings were held in July and August of 2020 to introduce the collaborative effort to the congregation, and

WHEREAS all questions from members were responded to at the ZOOM meetings or in written form available on the church website or in written form available at the church, and therefore

I move that CLC accept the Guest House concept and in cooperation with Family Promise be approved to submit an application requesting a zoning change from the City of Blaine. Other requirements are as listed:

Neighborhood meeting of residents within 350' of the church property will be held for their input with results reported to the City.

CLC/Family Promise will continue to work with the City.

If the zoning change is granted, CLC and Family Promise will continue the planning process.

The final design will be brought to the Congregation for approval.

## **Purpose**

To open dialogue between the City of Blaine, Christ Lutheran Church, and Family Promise in Anoka County about building a guest house for families experiencing homelessness.

## **Summary**

Family Promise in Anoka County (FPAC) seeks to construct an 8,000 to 12,000 square foot Family Promise Guest House, a family shelter that will allow 6-9 families to stay on-site while working through our case management process to achieve permanent financial and housing stability.

For the past 10 years, Family Promise, through our Interfaith Hospitality Network, has offered shelter and services to families experiencing homelessness in Anoka County through a network of faith communities. These communities offer their facilities and volunteers for a week at a time to provide meals, hospitality, and overnight shelter. Christ Lutheran Church, the site of the proposed Guest House, is currently a partner in this program. While this rotational shelter system has served the community well, it has several limitations. The new Guest House would allow for improvements in the program delivery, efficiency, and outcomes in the following ways:

- By allowing families to stay in one place, the Guest House will help families stabilize without moving every week. This change will lower the barriers for work, allowing for broader work hours, more sleep, and increased success in school for guest families.
- The Guest House will allow Family Promise to more than double the number of families we serve and to increase impact in the community.
- The facility will be designed using trauma-informed principles to minimize stress and improve outcomes for children and parents alike.

Our vision for the Guest House is one that creates a welcoming, home-like space where guests, staff, and volunteers can feel comfortable and secure as they work to change the trajectory of the lives of children and families experiencing homelessness in our community. For the families, the Guest House will include private sleeping rooms, bathroom facilities, a kitchen and eating area, laundry facilities, children's playroom, and quiet workspace. The Guest House will also include staff offices, storage, and reception areas to allow Family Promise to move all current program operations into one space.

Our intention is for a building that will complement the architecture of the church building already on the site and to fit within the residential neighborhood.

## **Existing Operations**

Family Promise in Anoka County serves families with minor children who are experiencing homelessness work toward permanent housing stability and a sustainable future. Family Promise currently serves 18-24 families per year in our rotational shelter program, with 3-4 families in the program at a time. Due to the nature of the community living, families entering the program may

not have any members who have active, untreated chemical or mental health issues, sex offenses, or recent violent felonies.

Families participate in the Family Promise shelter program for a maximum of 90 days. As part of the agreement they make when they join the program, families are expected to find work or increase their income, children of school age are expected to attend school, and all guests are expected to work diligently toward stable sustainability. Throughout their stay, guests work in concert with the Family Promise case manager on three primary goals – make money, save money, and find sustainable housing. Once a family graduates from the program, we offer continued support to ensure they maintain stable housing and do not return to homelessness.

### **Family Promise Participant Profile**

While transitioning from a rotational shelter program in congregations to a static-site for families will significantly alter the current operations of Family Promise, we will continue to serve the same community – families experiencing homelessness in Anoka County. Families must have minor children, be connected to Anoka County, and pass criminal background checks. The Family Promise program is primarily behavior-based, so families who are not following the guidelines or cause potentially dangerous or illegal situations will be removed from the program.

The average Family Promise guest family consists of four people, at least one of whom is under the age of six years. One parent is working at least one job but not making enough to afford an apartment on their wages. They have previously been evicted from housing, most likely for an inability to pay rent, and as a result are unable to get into housing quickly even once their financial situation has improved. If the family has a car, it is likely not something they can rely on long-term and the family needs to utilize public transportation. The average guest family has exhausted their personal and family resources prior to coming to the program and has no legal, viable place to live if not for the Family Promise program.

### **Closing**

The needs of families experiencing homelessness in our community is great. The Family Promise Guest House will increase the number of families served through the Family Promise shelter program. The guest house will reduce trauma and disruption experienced by those staying in our shelter program and allow guests better access to the guests to public transportation and services. We hope to partner with Christ Lutheran Church and the City of Blaine to make possible the construction of this new facility on the property of Christ Lutheran Church.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



David Frei  
Executive Director  
Family Promise in Anoka County

# **FAMILY PROMISE AT CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**This document prepared by the CLC Family Promise Task Force from questions received by e-mail, telephone and/or heard at our July 12, August 9 and August 12 Zoom Meetings**

**NOTE: SEVERAL OF THE QUESTIONS/ANSWERS BELOW HAVE BEEN GROUPED TOGETHER TO ELIMINATE DUPLICATION.**

**Q1: When did the Task Force start work on this? Why did it take so long to tell the Congregation?**

A: In December of 2019, church council initiated the task force with Richard Johnson and Dick Haluptzok as co-chairs. Several people were added and The Task Force sought to complete the gathering of preliminary information. In April, we agreed that we needed to do significant research just to get to the point that we felt comfortable to more completely inform the Congregation about this very complicated request. Our research included first talking to the City of Blaine to determine the zoning requirements and processes. We also requested building plans from Family Promise for two similar facilities so we could understand the components of such a program and its facility, and whether or not it was compatible with our campus. COVID has certainly complicated communication. In June the task force presented research to the church council and in July the information was shared with the subsequent listening sessions for the congregation.

**Q2: What is the current status of homelessness in the City of Blaine?**

A: In a discussion with the Police Department, they indicated that before the virus came it was very low with very few issues. Since March of this year the virus has caused an 'explosion' of growth in homeless families, mostly because of lost employment of one or both parents. Local assistance agencies are flooded with desperate requests for places to live and help with keeping their children healthy with clinic visits and prescriptions. The department salutes our congregation's consideration of this serious issue which is causing frustration, embarrassment and desperation for many people who have done nothing wrong.

**Q3: What is the success rate of Family Promise Homeless Program?**

A: David Frei, Executive Director of Family Promise in Anoka County reported that it is 75%, which we thought was impressive. He also indicated that some people leave the program for their own reasons, and some are asked to leave.

**Q4: Will it be staffed 24/7 in case of issues?**

A: Family Promise staff include 5 people that work almost full time from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday - Friday. Staff and volunteers cover Saturday and Sunday daytimes. Volunteers from the rotational host churches will cover the evening and overnight hours.

**Q5: Were other locations in our area for the facility studied? Why our site?**

A: Several locations were studied with the main criteria for the best site including:

1. Adequate land. A large site is needed to accommodate an 8,000 to 12,000 square foot building with an exterior play area for children, an exterior 'relax' area for adults, and the required parking area. The two potential sites on our property can fit the building only if it is two stories in height.
2. Near a bus line. Many of the participants do not have cars and must travel daily for required classes/training or employment.
3. Near the Anoka County Human Resources building. Many of the required meetings and classes are held in that building.

Our site was identified to be the best studied with its available land, the bus stop in front of our building, and the Human Resources building walking distance down 89<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

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**Q6: Would it be more prudent to refurbish an existing structure on a bus line?**

A: A current study of a specific site is underway in a location where zoning is not a problem. However, the building is too small, but might work as an initial 'test' site for the program. Family Promise is committed to doing its part to address the needs of families experiencing homelessness in Anoka county, and will continually investigate how to more fully do their work.

**Q7: Are we donating the land for this building? Will we own the building?**

A: We will keep ownership of the land and will own the new building. Currently we are considering the zoning change requirement for the process to move to the next phase. If we are approved for rezoning then development of the specifics of building design can proceed.

**Q8: If we own the building, are we responsible for the insurance, safety of building, repairs, etc.?**

A: Family Promise will pay to construct the building and be responsible for all insurance, maintenance, repairs, etc. for the building and related site areas. If they move out, we will be responsible for these costs.

**Q9: If Family Promise moves out, what will we do with the building?**

A: At this time, we do not know.

**Q10: Is there a concern that we should carefully consider the church's current financial situation in case we lose Family Promise?**

A: Yes! we should consider our church's financial situation relative to an opportunity such as this one. Should we receive a variance on zoning our intention would be to structure this project with no additional expenses incurred by the church for the construction and operation of the building that Family Promise would use. We may incur minor expenses, such as legal advice for example, as we complete lease documents or other legal documents. Family Promise would be responsible for raising the funds to complete the project. CLC would not pay for, or incur, additional debt to complete the project.

While it is possible that Family Promise Anoka County (FPAC) could, at some point, cease to exist, we do not believe this carries a high probability. FPAC has been serving families in transition since 2010 (the national organization of Family Promise began in 1986) and are part of a national network of 200 Family Promise organizations which have been using their operating model successfully for 35 years.

**Q11: If everything goes through, where would the structure be?**

A: This has not been decided yet. Originally the Family Promise Task Force considered four sites. Two sites were proposed on our west border along the row of adjacent houses. In a preliminary meeting the City of Blaine Planning staff indicated that they would be reluctant to approve those locations because they were too close to the adjacent houses. They also indicated that the two remaining sites (northeast corner by the small garage, and southeast corner near the Fellowship Hall area) were more feasible because they were more separated from adjacent houses.

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**Q12: Will the new building affect the Meditation Garden/Labyrinth area? (Some shrubbery and trees for that area and bricks for the Labyrinth were donated after these areas were built)**

A: The building has not been designed yet. That will start only if:

1. We approve the concept of applying for a Zoning Ordinance revision that would allow the new building, and
2. The City of Blaine approves and enacts the Zoning Ordinance revision, and
3. We get basic approval from a Neighborhood meeting, and
4. We approve the start of the building design phase. During the design phase, the congregation will be informed regarding all aspects of the building's location and design, and will have the ability to recommend changes to any location or design.

In a very preliminary study of the Fellowship Hall area, the Task Force thought the building could fit without major impacts to the Meditation Garden or the Labyrinth.

**Q13: Would the volunteer model of providing meals, monitoring visiting time, and overnight supervision continue?**

A: Yes, there are currently 20 churches that are host or partner congregations. They will continue a schedule of covering these activities on a weekly rotation. All who serve find this a most rewarding experience.

**Q14: If the city doesn't approve the rezoning, is there any way to move forward? How certain are we that rezoning would be allowed?**

A: From very brief discussions with City of Blaine Planning staff, the Mayor, and a few City Council members, the concept has merit and would be carefully considered. However, if the Zoning Ordinance Amendment is not enacted by the city, we will not proceed with the Family Promise building.

**Q15: Has a partnership with Lutheran Social Services been considered?**

A: Lutheran Social Services is an amazing "social ministry" of the Lutherans throughout many generations. Today, they like to remind us all that 1 in 50 North Americans are impacted by their work in the world. Certainly there are aspects of LSS and Family Promise that serve those experiencing homelessness, and where cooperation is possible, it is happening.

**Q16: Wouldn't the Zoning Ordinance influence the exact location of the new building at the NE site?**

A: Yes, we must maintain a distance from the existing building to retain the required play area size.

**Q17: If there are preschool aged children in the program would they be able to attend our Early Learning Center?**

A: This would be an excellent opportunity to live into "Embracing Our Neighbor". If families in the Family Promise program had kids younger than grade school that would be able to participate in our Early Learning Center, and enrollment was not at capacity, we certainly can envision a relationship being implemented to benefit the families in the program and our ELC's program.



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**Q18: Many Questions regarding the effect on our Early Learning Center:**

**[How will it affect the Preschool? Should we be concerned about the perceived safety of our preschool children by building a 'transitional housing' building on our property? Is it possible that parents would have this concern and remove their children? Doesn't CLC depend on that revenue stream? What if the enrollment lowers because of the build?]**

A: Daily our campus has experienced outside groups without impact to our ELC enrollment. When our campus more fully integrated the Early Learning Center design requirements, security measures for the center improved as well as how our campus flow more fully adapts to a full range of programs throughout the campus simultaneously. Any design for the inclusion of the Family Promise program would be modeled to continue a campus that allowed for all ministries to be valued and enabled to their fullest extent possible. "Family Promise has not adversely affected our enrollment to our program. Nor has their presence been unwelcomed by those we serve." ~ Nancy Hiemstra

**Q19: How will it affect the Church? What is the status of the 60th anniversary projects which we have pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars for and have yet to be completed? We feel CLC needs to focus on this before adding another big project onto the list that most definitely could disrupt our membership.**

A: Our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mission Fund Appeal is in full swing, with several projects nearing completion...updates to the congregation on the appeal are regularly given. Many of the projects both take time for full development as well as for the funding from the appeal to be in place to enable to projects implementation. As projects become completed the next projects get fuller attention for their completion. There is both close monitoring of funds available and project needs, and planning in order to implement projects. We will certainly keep working on all goals outlined in the Appeal.

**Q20: Describe the screening process and the enforcement of rules/procedures for the Family Promise program. Is there an agreement that each participant signs?**

A: During the screening of potential participants, they are asked about past housing and employment issues. Also, information is recorded regarding any criminal records, and past or current untreated problems with alcohol, drugs or mental health issues.

Regarding enforcement, participants are informed, in writing, that non-compliance with the rules and procedures can result in removal from the program. The success rate of the program speaks to the trust built between the Family Promise program and the families it serves.

**Q21: Will there be a lease type agreement that sets conditions for Family Promise to use our building?**

Before construction begins, CLC and Family Promise will negotiate a lease type of agreement that covers the new building and its related grounds areas. It has been suggested that we require that 100% of the required construction cost monies be secured and in place before construction begins. This would prevent us from 'inheriting' a partially-constructed building if the funding for this project is terminated before construction is completed. If Family Promise does not comply with the lease, or terminates the lease, the use of the building and grounds plus all the related costs of utilities, maintenance, insurance, etc. reverts back to CLC.



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**Q22: How does Family Promise get the money to staff their team and money for the building on our site?**

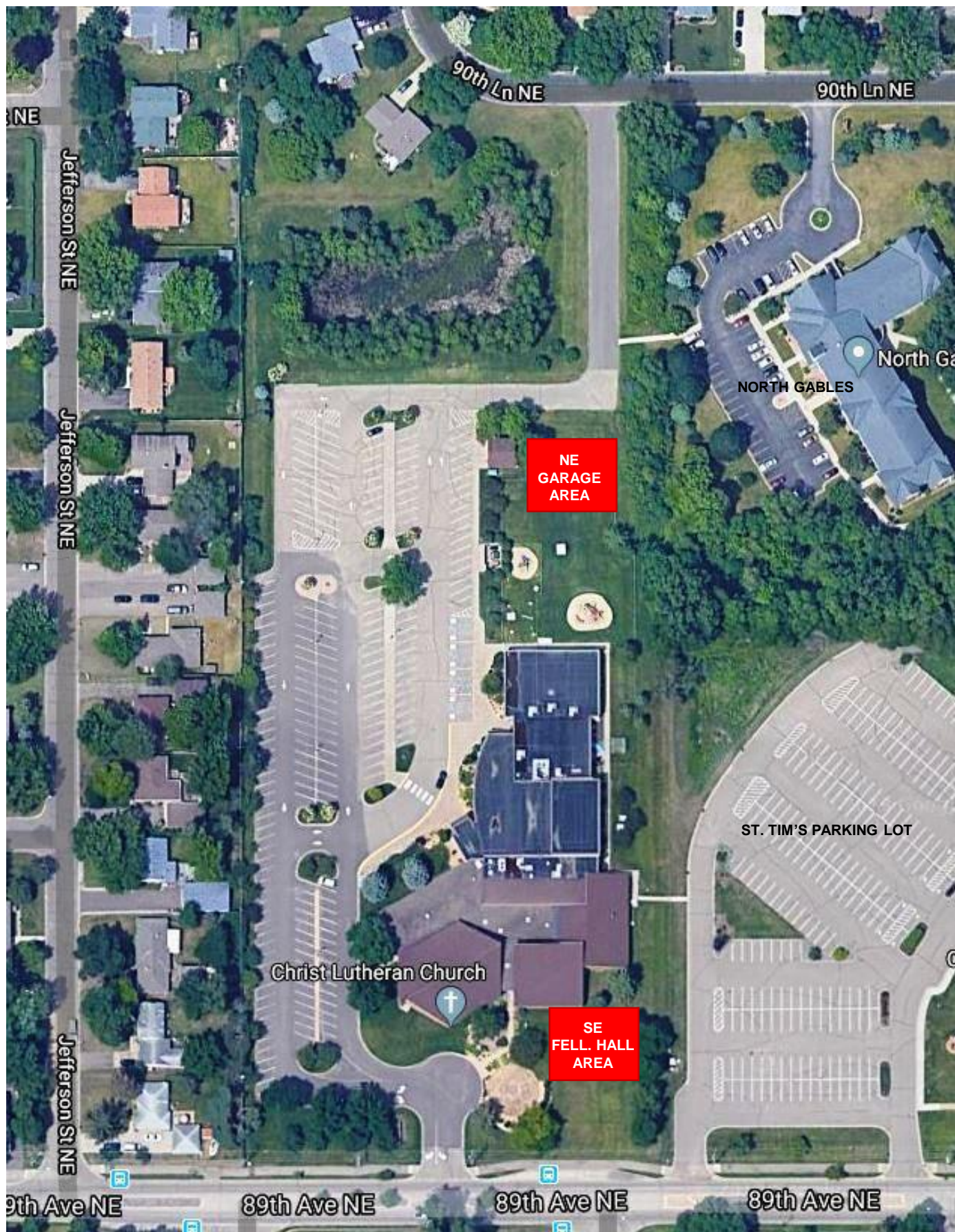
A: Family Promise's annual funding comes from a variety of sources: individual donors-21%, Faith community-6.5%, Community organizations-13%, Private foundations-30%, Special Events-15.5%, and Local governments-14%. To build a building, Family Promise will pursue all of the above sources as well special grants to support a building program.

**Q23: What can we do now?**

A: Pray and trust Jesus!

**COMMENTS HEARD IN OUR LISTENING SESSIONS:**

1. Good information is at [www.CLCBLAINE.org/fpproject](http://www.CLCBLAINE.org/fpproject).
2. You can contact your City of Blaine Council members to let them know you support the project, especially Ward 1.



**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH/FAMILY PROMISE**  
**Site Options 080520**