



**BJ's Place Homeless Shelter
The Community Church of New York**

**Providing a safe, quiet night's sleep for
10 homeless senior men.**

In 1983 the Community Church of New York, under the aegis of the Partnership for the Homeless, established an overnight homeless shelter. The need was great and we saw the outreach project as a common endeavor, a church-wide commitment, rooted in our Unitarian Universalist ideals of justice and compassion, and an activity to which each member as well as non-members could contribute.

Unfortunately, today the need for our shelter is greater than ever. The aging homeless population, though less visible, is growing.

Our ability to stay open every night of the year depends on building a base of committed volunteers. The shelter is not a committee program; it is Community's outreach program which unites us and gives us the opportunity to put our beliefs and spirituality into action.

We cannot solve the problem of homelessness, but we can offer hospitality and a good night's rest to ten of our homeless brothers, thus assuring them that *someone does care*. Work in the shelter involves a small sacrifice but is an immensely enriching experience, an opportunity to "grow our souls."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BJ'S PLACE:

Who runs the shelter at Community Church?

The shelter, located at 26 East 35th Street (between Park and Madison Avenues), is run by members and friends of Community under the auspices of the Partnership for the Homeless and Peter's Place, a 24/7 drop-in center for senior homeless men and women. In addition to serving three hot meals a day and providing shower facilities, Peter's Place offers medical and psychiatric care and social work case management.

Who are our shelter guests?

BJ's Place receives 10 men, all over the age of 55, each night from Peter's Place. They are brought to the shelter by bus after careful screening for cleanliness, sobriety, health and behavioral issues. There has never been a serious problem with a guest.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BJ'S PLACE Continued:

Do I have to stay overnight or be a church member?

Everyone is welcome! Our greatest need is for overnigheters, but sometimes we need help with food purchasing, phoning and e-mailing reminders to volunteers, fundraising and recruiting new volunteers.

What are my responsibilities as an overnight volunteer?

Volunteers pick-up the shelter keys at 10 Park Avenue and arrive at the shelter by 7:30 PM. They set out a light snack and greet our guests who arrive around 8:15. Many of our guests go to bed immediately in the "dormitory" – the rest relax in the hospitality room, watching TV and visiting with the volunteers. Volunteers stay overnight in a locked bedroom and have access to a private bathroom and shower. The guests are awakened at 5:30 AM and enjoy a light breakfast set out by the volunteers before the bus picks them up around 6:30. After tidying up, volunteers leave by 7:00 AM.

Will I be staying overnight by myself?

Two volunteers (male or female) work together each night, at least one of whom is experienced. Some highly experienced volunteers prefer to stay alone which is permitted.

Where can I get additional information?

Contact one of the Shelter co-chairs:

Fred Corden: 212-297-1674 or fcorden@nyba.com

Bruce Deal: 212-875-9760 or bdeal@nyc.rr.com

Stop by the shelter table during Fellowship Hour.

VOLUNTEER COMMENTS:

"I really feel like I'm making a difference in a small, but satisfying way."

"This is part of how I try to give back to New York City for the luck I've had in my life."

"The shelter was very well organized and it was clear what my role was."

"Our guests express their gratitude for a peaceful, quiet place to sleep."