



# JESUS CENTER

1297 Park Avenue, Chico, CA 95928

APRIL 2020

Dear < First name >,

It is hard to believe that Butte County, this time in company with the entire world, is facing another monumental crisis. I sense around us both a certain “game face” mentality and an equal amount of exhaustion. How much more can we take?

And yet we soldier on. We listen to the news from the Federal Government, CDC, NIH and the like. We tune into news from the State Office of the Governor, and from our local officials. It all points to this reality: we are hunkering down for a long stint of hand washing and physical distancing.

I wish it were only so simple.

Similar to other front line operations, the Jesus Center is not going to close. We are not going to turn away our participants. Where else will they go? They need to stay close in to keep their personal hygiene up. They have no place to shelter in place. And we can help them maintain physical distancing while in and near our facility.

### Why are the homeless at risk in the time of a pandemic?

We are keenly aware of the risk to those without homes and unsheltered at this time. “Dr. James O’Connell, the founding physician of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program thinks ‘it’s inevitable’ that coronavirus will hit the homeless community.” There are many reasons. Three are mentioned in this article (ABC News, article on March 11, 2020 ) from ABC news.

First, living on the streets results in a **weakened immune system**. This is coupled by lack of sleep, inconsistent nutrition, high stress, and unmet physical and mental health needs. We know that in our current environment, low immune systems are very high risk for COVID-19.

Second, those experiencing homelessness **lack distance from one another**. Encampments, meals, shelters, lines for help all expose them to contamination on a regular basis. If a person experiencing homelessness becomes ill, spread is inevitable.

Third, it is very complicated to **maintain personal hygiene** as a person without a residence. Living outside is a dirty affair. Access to hand sanitizer, especially now that it is sold out, is close to impossible. One must stay close to a public facility or day program to keep hands and body clean. However, this is not always possible.

### Further Concerns

“Epidemics and pandemics can cause enormous economic damage as workers fall sick, fearful people avoid markets and public places, and quarantines and disease control measures reduce travel and clamp down on trade. Acute economic disruption carries particular risks for poor households, whose livelihoods are already precarious.” (Brookings.edu blog, 06/19/2017, “Pandemics and the poor.”) We join our colleagues in many sectors as we weigh



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For more information, please call (530) 345-2640 or visit [jesuscenter.org](http://jesuscenter.org) to make a secure donation online.



JESUS CENTER

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Chico, CA 95928  
[jesuscenter.org](http://jesuscenter.org)

If you would like to receive this monthly newsletter electronically, please give us your e-mail address:

Fill out this side if there are changes to name, phone or address:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

**YES**, I want to support the Jesus Center’s work to help the vulnerable with a financial gift of:

- \$35.00 to help feed and care for 14 people
- \$50.00 to help feed and care for 20 people
- \$75.00 to help feed and care for 30 people
- I am interested in giving regularly through Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT)

For Credit Card Donation:  Visa  MasterCard

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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the potential for the economy to struggle for a prolonged period of time. Will more lose their homes? Their jobs? Their support system? Will we see more fall into homelessness for the first time as we did after the Camp Fire? Will we have the ability to expand our services to meet the need?

Let's face it: the poor do not weather these incidents well. They are already living so close to the edge.

### *What is the Jesus Center doing?*

Since news of the outbreak, our team has been working to study, learn, and adjust our practices at the Jesus Center and to work with our community to insure we all have the support we need to help one another and the most vulnerable among us.

We have moved tables and chairs in our dining room. We've added hand washing stations. We have rounded up gloves, sanitation wipes, and other supplies to ensure our facility and our staff are safe and healthy. For our clothing distribution, we are using a "concierge style" where staff or volunteers (as long as they remain) seek specific clothing items upon request rather than offering a store for distribution. In our shelter and in our houses, we are staggering beds and laying out furniture differently. We are insisting on regular handwashing, and other behavior changes that will keep each individual and the community safe and healthy. We are instituting medical protocol for anyone who is exhibiting symptoms and communicating regularly with those who come to our facility. We are serving up the healthiest food in our history with the collaboration of our Farm and our new cook, Brandon Brooks.

We are all hands (clean hands) on deck.

We are in regular conversation with other shelters, Public Health, and the Department of Employment and Social Services (DESS), and homeless specialists to insure the sharing of best practices and up to date data and changes. I have been sobered by the fact that as a free-standing independent nonprofit, no one is ultimately helping us weather this storm. The government is saying they want to help, but they have limited to no resources to offer. Any expense, any hardship on staff, and any medical outbreak appears to be ours to manage and solve.

To this end: we need your help more than ever!

### *Easter is coming!*

April 12th is Easter. Never before has the resurrection news seemed so good. In a time of Lenten darkness, we seek the cross to unburden our concerns and a place to unload our problems that are bigger than us. We cling to the hope of a resurrected God that takes on our burdens and our problems as his own and promises to be with us. This Psalm offers us hope: "Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the depths swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me. Answer me, O Lord, out of the goodness of your love; in your great mercy turn to me." PSALM 69:15, 16 (NIV)

### *How can you help?*

Our community is in this together. So, here are four ways you can help the Jesus Center, yourself and our community.

1. Take care of yourself: hand washing, good nutrition, physical distancing
2. Watch out for the vulnerable in your circles: offer to run errands, write notes, make calls
3. Pray for all of our front-line workers. Please add Jesus Center staff to your list of people to pray for alongside health care professionals and other hands on staff in our community.
4. Send money to the Jesus Center.

We anticipate our financial needs to be great as we move forward. We have had to increase our purchases of supplies for cleaning including the rental of hand washing stations. We are planning to cover the costs of more food as volunteers and deliveries drop off. We suspect the need to increase staff in places if we are asked to quarantine shelter or housing participants. We recognize that the economic downturn will affect many of our generous supporters. For those of you who can stretch and increase your giving, we ask you to consider a larger gift to us at this time.

We are your outreach to the poorest of the poor in our community. We know we can't ask you to come and help, but please consider a financial gift today!

Thank you,



Laura R. Cootsona  
Executive Director

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#### SOURCES:

Shapiro, Emily. ABC News, article on March 11, 2020 entitled: "Coronavirus and the homeless: Why they're especially at risk, ways to stop a spread 'like wildfire.'"

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2017/06/19/pandemics-and-the-poor/>