



Dear < First name >,

We all love choices. As parents we are taught to give our children age-appropriate choices so they can start to feel their own sense of independence:

“would you like to put your shoes on or pack your lunch first?” As friends, we love to plan for an excursion for a friend and get their input: “Are you in the mood for a salad or a burger for lunch?” knowing that they will feel cared for if they have some say in the day’s plan. And of course, we love to get to choose what show to watch when you are hanging out with the family at night and not just watch what your spouse wants to watch EVERY night. It feels good to exercise your agency and it feels good to be in charge of your life, even in the little things.

Our Pathways program here at the Sabbath House is all about choices. Like us, our participants feel good when they get to make their own choices. First, participants make the biggest choice: to come into shelter. This is a courageous and bold step. This choice says they are beginning their journey towards health and housing and want some help to get there.



During the first few days, participants have an opportunity to take several deep breaths, catch up on sleep, eat three meals a day, chat with fellow participants, rest knowing that their belongings are safe in their locked cabinet and get to know staff and how everything works. In this period, they can decide *if* and *when* they want to take a walk, read a book, or smoke a cigarette.

“During the intake we go over the participants rights and responsibilities, we also go over the Sabbath House expectations. I get to inform them of what the Sabbath House has to offer. From a safe place to sleep to our Pathways classes. Then we get a little personal. I ask them, “Is there anything that you want to share with me?” This is my favorite part, they let me know a little about themselves. From how long they have been homeless, what caused them to be in the situation they are in. IF they struggle with addiction. I then look these women and men in their eyes and I ask them, “Are you ready? Are you ready to start making some changes in your life? Are you ready to stay clean and sober, are you ready to have a safe place to come back to every night, are you ready to take a shower every day? Most of the time these men and women are so thankful: they can feel the Holy Spirt come through them and they begin to cry. They are so full of relief that the Lord Jesus Christ runs through them with freedom, excitement, and a little bit peace of mind. It is so beautiful.”

—SOPHIA, SHELTER MANAGER

A meeting with our newest team member, Jenna, comes next. Her role as Case Coordinator is to assess how best to come alongside a participant and help them meet the goals they choose as their way towards health and housing. Jenna asks them questions and makes an assessment and then refers them to one of our volunteer case managers

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to help them break those goals into smaller increments. The case managers say things like, “would you like to work on your first or second goal?” “Is your next step to call Behavioral Health or DESS?” The participant chooses; the case manager supports and encourages.

“Housing is absolutely essential to human flourishing. My goal is to bring a positive environment to each individual during our one-on-one meetings. My approach is use Sociological Imagination, it’s an ability to see the context which shapes our individual decision making. Instead of using my own lenses I open-up to a wider landscape to our society. My aspirations as a Case Coordinator is to see participants flourish, reach their goals and see quality outcomes.”

—JENNA, CASE COORDINATOR

Some of our participants choose to really focus on getting a job. Tiffany, our Vocational Coordinator, is the guide for this pathway, that we call purpose. Tiffany will help the participant volunteer here at the Jesus Center to start testing different options as a pathway to employment. She will ask, “Do you want to work in the kitchen and possibly pursue a food services job or do you want to consider working outside, and pursuing some work experience at our Harvesting Hope Farm?” The choice is theirs to make. Tiffany’s role is to help them obtain the soft skills, and the work skills to find a pathway to success.



Most of our participants choose to build their pathway to permanent housing. We call this pathway Independence. For some this pathway will include clearing up legal or financial challenges from their past. Others want to regain custody of their children and move into one of our transitional houses as a next step on their way to stable housing. They choose their next step with the help of our classes and with their case manager. “Should I work on getting my legal paperwork managed? Or should I make sure I’m on all possible housing lists as I start my journey to getting housing?” The list in this pathway can get overwhelming quickly so our staff—shelter monitors and case management team work to encourage, support, cheerlead, and guide this process. But what steps they take are their choice.

Our Pathways Coordinator, Makayla, schedules classes to support all three pathways: purpose, wellness, and independence. She is the key connector with our community, to individuals with special skills and to organizations with expertise in a given area. She meets with artists, teachers, agency staff, and others to think about how to creatively support the choices being made by our participants on their journey.

“It has always been important to me to make sure that our participants are given the tools and resources they need to have a successful, fulfilling, and independent life when they leave here. It is not an easy task to do, but it is a gratifying one. We offer our participants four distinct areas of focus to help better themselves and to ultimately end their homelessness. I, along with our amazing community, are able to provide our participants with knowledge and life skills that they need to live a life of purpose.”

—MAKAYLA, PATHWAYS PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Our team supports our participants AS THEY CHOOSE their pathway and steps towards health and housing. Today, I hope you will make a couple of choices. Please join us in choosing hope. We are hopeful that if we work together, we can meaningfully encourage people to choose a new life. We believe that if we move towards those who are hurting and cheer them on their pathway to that new life, our lives will change too!

Secondly, please choose to join our team; your financial donation helps make this journey a fruitful one. Your gift today allows us to be creative, motivational, strategic, and helpful for each of our participants.

Thanks for choosing to be on our Pathways team!

Welcome,

Laura R. Cootsona  
Executive Director

