

Dear Friends in Christ in Oklahoma,

I send you warm greetings as we enter into this Advent season, and I invite you to join me in this year's Bishop's Appeal.

You may recall that last year's Bishop's Appeal focused on feeding ministries throughout our diocese at a time of record inflation and increased food insecurity. This year, we are focusing on another desperate human need in Oklahoma: substance abuse and addiction.

In 2022, nearly 49 million Americans aged 12 or older had a substance abuse disorder (more than 1 in 6 people). Over 100,000 Americans died of drug overdoses last year, and the most recent statistics showed Oklahoma ranked 15<sup>th</sup> per capita in overdose deaths. Fentanyl has been a particular scourge, with overdoses rising rapidly.

Substance abuse is one of the reasons why Oklahoma ranks near the bottom nationally for life expectancy. And yet, those who seek treatment for addiction are often unable to access it, because of limited availability and resources.

This year's Bishop's Appeal will focus on three outstanding nonprofits making a real difference in the lives of those facing addiction in our communities.

**Neighbors Building Neighborhoods** in Muskogee improves the quality of life in Eastern Oklahoma through a wide range of programs, including substance abuse prevention and youth programming.

The **HOW Foundation** in Tulsa is a no-cost, residential recovery program for men suffering from alcohol or drug addiction. 280 men per year reside at the foundation, receiving treatment.

**Jesus House** in Oklahoma City serves men and women who are addicted, poor, and often homeless. They offer a residential addiction-recovery program, treating 70 people, in addition to providing a range of other resources for the vulnerable, including a kitchen that serves over 50,000 meals a year.

In addition to supporting these three organizations, smaller grants will be available for substance abuse treatment and prevention programs in other parts of our diocese.

The Bishop's Appeal will receive donations through December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

**TWO WAYS TO GIVE:**

1. Send a check to 924 N. Robinson Oklahoma City, OK 73102
2. Donate online at [epiok.org/donate](http://epiok.org/donate). Select "Bishop's Appeal" under the drop-down tab labeled "I want to support."

My friends, at this holy time of year, we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of our Savior. Part of that spiritual preparation includes reaching out to the vulnerable, as Jesus did. When we give generously, as individuals and congregations, we show our love for those whom Jesus called blessed: our neighbors most in need.

May God bless you and yours this season, and through us, bless others.

Grace and Peace,

Bishop Poulson