



# URBAN MINISTRIES

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O F W A K E C O U N T Y

## HISTORY OF URBAN MINISTRIES

### **July 12, 1978: The Birth of an Idea**

At this meeting, a subcommittee of the Urban Ministry Task Force presented a tentative proposal for an Urban Ministry Program to Raleigh Area Ministries (RAM). The purpose of this new ecumenical ministry, founded by a core group of inner-city congregations, would be to determine the unmet needs of people in the Raleigh area and to formulate and pursue plans to remedy those needs. It was anticipated that the Ministry would coordinate efforts throughout the city so that human and monetary resources would be utilized most efficiently. Active participation would be sought from area congregations for financial support and volunteers.

A location was identified in a property owned by Edenton Street Methodist Church at 310 W. Edenton Street, and an annual budget was proposed of between \$22,000 and \$30,000.

The goals of the proposed program were threefold:

1. To provide assistance for transients so that the greatest number would be helped and duplication would be avoided.
2. To provide emergency care for the essentials of life: food, clothing, shelter, transportation, utilities, fuel, and medicine.
3. To offer telephone consultation for direct service and for referrals for additional help.

### **September 13, 1980: The Ministry Goes Public**

In a *Raleigh Times* article, RAM announces its plans to open the Urban Ministries Center or The ARK as a center to help transients and the poor. The center is described as interdenominational and as coordinating the various social service programs that downtown churches now operate.

Goals were further specified:

1. To assist persons in need to move toward independence.
2. To combine and coordinate the resources of congregations and religious organizations so they will be utilized most efficiently.
3. To enlist and facilitate the involvement of volunteers in community needs.
4. To provide a religious voice and source of public information about human needs in the Raleigh area.
5. To stimulate public and private agency cooperation in response to emergency and community needs.

### **March 22, 1981: Dedication of Urban Ministry Center**

“Help us to eliminate poverty, prejudice, and oppression, that peace may prevail with righteousness, and justice with order, and that men and women from various cultures and with differing talents may find with one another the fulfillment of their humanity.” Taken from a prayer spoken at the dedication ceremony.

### **July 2, 1981: Urban Ministry Center Opens its Doors**

The center began seeing people on this hot day in July and was off to a running start. Approximately 2,995 clients came through the doors in the first year of operation to receive help with food, financial assistance, medications, transportation and referrals. The actual budget in that first year was \$28,000, with most of the money going toward rent (30%), utilities (26.5%), and food (20.9%).

By February of the first year, plans were already underway to open a shelter: Simple, overnight shelter arrangements for individuals, separate facilities for men and women, is the goal of a Task Force which met January 26 [1982]; the TF is comprised of representatives of the County Dept. of Social Services, Raleigh Housing Authority, local Dept. Of Human Resources, Urban Ministry, Raleigh Rescue Mission, Salvation Army, Police Dept., and the Raleigh City Council. *From February 1982 newsletter, Log of the Ark.*

By December 1982, the need for additional health care for indigent persons was already a point of discussion by Urban Ministry’s supporters and Board of Directors and outlined in the December newsletter.

### **1984: The Ark Shelter Opens**

Because of strong community opposition, it took two full years and the unfortunate deaths of two homeless men (on Christmas day, 1983 and New Years day, 1984) before the Urban Ministry Center could open the Ark Shelter for 25 homeless men on South Blount Street. The shelter, in a converted restaurant without air conditioning or adequate heat, provided emergency shelter for 25 men a night until

its expansion in January 1986. At that time an additional 10 beds became available for homeless women. Volunteers were again recruited from area congregations to staff the shelter every night. Meals were donated, delivered and served by church groups--usually sandwiches, chips, and cookies due to lack of kitchen equipment. The Ark operated on a first-come-first-serve basis for two years.

The opening of the shelter was a leap of faith for the Board. Initially no money had been budgeted for the property, so a plea went forth to the churches for a weeks rent from each supporting congregation. The funds were forthcoming for the first year, and the Board exercised its option to purchase the Blunt Street location in the summer of 1985.

### **October 15, 1985: The Open Door Clinic Opens**

Working with a planning group comprised of health professionals--physicians, nurses, a dentist, a social worker, a nutritionist, a pharmacist, a lawyer, a mental health consultant and a health educator, the Urban Ministry Center launched a free inner-city health clinic in the basement of the Open Door Chapel. It was located on South Person Street, and was owned by the Raleigh Rescue Mission.

### **1985: Base of Support Expands to Other Groups**

Due to greatly expanded services, increased staff and property acquisition, the Board looked to sources in addition to congregations for support. Successful applications were made to United Way, the City of Raleigh, the Presbyterian Urban Council and the Junior League to help support the growing work of the agency.

### **1983-1986: Community Education Forums**

In keeping with one of the original goals of the agency, the Urban Ministry Center held a series of educational forums on different issues related to poverty:

1983 The Effects of Reaganomics on the Poor in North Carolina

1984 Housing and the Lot of the Poor

1985 Poverty: Its Causes and Effects

1986 The Welfare System

Ten beds for women are added to the Ark Shelter. Urban Ministries now houses 35 people, provides medical care to people without insurance, and still helps with basic needs for rent, utilities, transportation and food. Volunteers continue to be the driving force of all programs.

### **June 1986: First Director Resigns and Retires**

Sister Helen Wright, SND, the first director of the Urban Ministry Center, resigned her position to return to Boston to concentrate her work on her religious community's reorganization. Total cash receipts for FY 1986 were \$243,259; expenditures were \$218,475, with \$109,827 going directly for client financial assistance. Congregations donated \$69,264 during 1986.

### **1987: Open Door Clinic Moves**

The problem of flooding in the basement of the chapel forced the move of the Open Door Clinic to a location on Person Street. Assisted by a Wake Medical Staff Foundation grant of \$20,000, a storefront location was renovated for an expanded clinic program. Now open two evenings a week, the clinic doubled its services.

### **1988: The Ark Shelter Moves**

The City of Raleigh offered a property switch with the Urban Ministry Center to relocate the shelter. The Urban Ministry Center also received a substantial HUD grant to renovate the training center to its current use as the Ark Shelter. This improved facility with air-conditioning, dining and kitchen facilities, and improved sleeping and bathing areas, allowed us to provide much more humane housing for homeless men and women.

### **1990: Chronic Disease and Health Education Services**

With grants from the Junior League of Raleigh and the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation, the Open Door Clinic was able to add a night of Chronic Disease care and a Health Education component to its medical services for the low-income community.

### **May 1991: The Move to Semart Drive**

With the relocation to Semart Drive, the Urban Ministry Center could consolidate its Crisis Intervention Program and the Open Door Clinic services in one building. Room was also available for the administrative staff, which had been temporarily housed at Tabernacle Baptist Church. The Clinic could now offer increased dental services and improved medical services. The pharmacy expansion also allowed for better follow-up with patients and a more efficient workspace for volunteers.

### **Summer, 1995: Property Purchase of Semart Drive**

Once again, exercising its option to purchase, the Board of Urban Ministries bought the property at Semart Drive. This investment allowed the agency to grow to continue to meet the basic needs of some of the poorest people in Wake County.

### **August 1996: Incorporation of Community Mental Health Clinic**

In 1996, a group of volunteer mental health professionals approached Urban Ministries to gain program affiliation, and soon the Community Mental Health Clinic became Urban Ministries fourth and newest program. The Community Mental Health Clinic was established by volunteers to provide short-term, family oriented counseling for low-income, uninsured clients and their families. Open on Thursday evenings at Edenton Street Methodist Church in downtown Raleigh. Patients are referred to the clinic from agencies, mental health providers, and churches and by word of mouth. Because of dramatic changes in the mental health delivery system within Wake County Mental Health, many patients were no longer eligible for affordable treatment. Nurtured for four years under Urban Ministries' oversight, the Community Mental Health Clinic became independent in 2000.

**1996: Open Door Clinic Expansion**

The Open Door Clinic expands its hours to 4 nights a week and expands care for chronic illness and specialty clinics (diabetes, podiatry, etc.)

**1999: Opening of Transitional Housing Programs**

Urban Ministries begins operation of two new transitional housing programs for people with special needs: Harrington Place and Aurora House. The warehouse space on Semart Drive is transformed to allow more services at the Open Door Clinic and Crisis Intervention Program. Wake Medical Staff Foundation again provides a grant of \$25,000 for renovation of the clinic and for operating funds.

**2000: Open Door Clinic Increases Services**

The Clinic expands again, now offering day and evening hours and intense diabetic services. Spanish speaking interpreter volunteers are available to better serve a growing need for this population (a 300% increase between 2000-2001)

**2000: Urban Ministries Partners With Wake County Human Services to Operate The South Wilmington Center**

Urban Ministries joins Wake County Human Services to operate the state's largest men's shelter, while renovation of an adjoining building that will become an improved shelter begins. Staff from both organizations conducts a massive cleanup to make the warehouse habitable in the interim, and begin accommodating up to 409 men a night. The Ark Shelter becomes a women's shelter.

**2001: The Newly Renovated South Wilmington Street Center Opens**

The renovated South Wilmington Street Center for men opens in the fall with a full kitchen, laundry facilities, and separate dormitories for men. New programs are designed to encourage employment, obtain permanent housing, and help men reclaim their independence.

**2001: New Name For The Ark and New Hours For The Open Door Clinic**

The Ark Shelter is renamed the Helen Wright Center for Women, both to honor the organization's founder and to respond to the women's desire to replace the building's image as a shelter. The Open Door Clinic begins accepting patients two mornings a month when volunteer physicians become available for daytime hours.

**2002: Transitioning Programs and Focusing on Core Services**

The South Wilmington Street Center's operations are assumed completely by Wake County Human Services; operation of Aurora House reverts to its partner organization.

Over 26,000 people obtain services from Urban Ministries programs that enable them to stay in housing, feed their families, and get medical care for chronic and urgent illnesses.

## **Today**

Consistent with the original mission of the founding members of the Urban Ministry Center, we continue to serve the people in our community who are unserved or under served by our existing health and social service systems. Also consistent with the original goals, Urban Ministries strives to promote and support self-sufficiency among our clients wherever and whenever possible. Our four major programs have changed over time to better meet the needs of the more than 26,000 individuals who received assistance last year. Urban Ministries' intentional volunteer component continues to be our greatest strength. Approximately 800 people volunteer their services, both professionally and para-professionally, providing more than a quarter million dollars worth of assistance. In-kind donations of food, prepared meals, medicines, equipment, and miscellaneous items add more than \$2 million-dollars worth of goods to be dispensed or used for client needs.

Our fundraising strategies have become more sophisticated and successful with the enhancement of the development program with qualified staff. Among the community of human service providers, Urban Ministries is a leader in the private, nonprofit sector and an active participant on collaborative efforts to address poverty, homelessness and indigent health care. The quality of our services and commitment to the people we serve is recognized and acknowledged by our supporters, our peers, and, most importantly, by the people we serve.

## **Tomorrow – AGENCY VISION beyond 2005**

1. Integrate programs under one roof
2. Achieve sustainable funding to support adequate staffing and resources
3. Double the number of patients and clients through increased service hours
4. Strengthen self-sufficiency services
  - a. Focus on Education and Job Training
  - b. Add Preventive Health and Wellness programs
  - c. Improve Collaboration with other Agencies
  - d. Explore Need for Community Outreach
5. Increase our Visibility

## **URBAN MINISTRIES SUPPORT**

Local congregations, community groups, businesses, individuals, the United Way, the City of Raleigh, and Wake County support all services of the Urban Ministries of Wake County. Our most significant support comes from approximately 800 professional and trained lay volunteers who work closely with the Urban Ministries staff. Volunteer services and in-kind donations double the value of every dollar given. In FY2005, the total value of Urban Ministries programs and services was close to \$4 million.