



MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING AND SHELTER ALLIANCE

INITIATING SOLUTIONS TO END HOMELESSNESS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2007

Contact:

Erin Donohue – (617) 367-6447

edonohue@mhsa.net

Mike Bancewicz – (617) 523-4575

Church on the Hill (Swedenborgian)

moxie12794@aol.com

18th ANNUAL INTERFAITH MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE HOMELESS *Luminaries, Tombstones and Church Bells to Commemorate Deceased Homeless*

BOSTON – Government officials, homeless advocates, members of faith communities, homeless people and other concerned individuals will gather at **Church on the Hill (Swedenborgian)** to observe *National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day* on **Friday, December 21, 2007 at noon**.

Held on the longest night of the year, the interfaith service is an opportunity to mourn those who have spent many long nights on the streets and ultimately suffered from the country's failure to end homelessness. Religious representatives from Islamic, Jewish, Christian and other faiths will share a sacred text or prayer from their tradition. The names of known homeless individuals who have died in Massachusetts during the year will be read aloud. Speakers include **State Representative Byron Rushing, Kip Tiernan**, founder of Rosie's Place, **Bob Taube**, Executive Director of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program and more.

In a tangible remembrance of the deceased individuals, handmade tombstones for each will line the sanctuary of the Church on the Hill during the hour-long service. At 4:15 p.m., faith leaders and community members will gather to light luminaries on the Boston Common, near the corner of Park and Tremont St., while churches in Boston and across the Commonwealth will honor those who have passed by tolling their bells.

"Homeless people in Massachusetts are dying at a rate that is almost four times higher than the general population. This *must* motivate us to look hard and fast for solutions," said Dr. Jessie M. Gaeta of the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance and Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program. "If I could write a prescription for housing for my patients, it would be the most effective medical intervention I could make."

The **Interfaith Memorial Service for Homeless People** will begin at noon at the Church on the Hill (Swedenborgian), 140 Bowdoin Street, Boston, across from the State House. All are welcome. For more information, contact Erin Donohue at (617) 367-6447 or edonohue@mhsa.net.

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