



# Threshold Times

To share Jesus' love for the world compassionately with our neighbors in need because God first loved us.

Leslie Raymer, Director

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## Meet Roy!



Roy is from Monticello, Georgia and has 4 daughters and a son. He found himself experiencing homelessness and heard about Threshold Ministry from word-of-mouth on the street. Threshold has helped Roy get on the list for an apartment at Park Terrace.

Roy reports that one thing he hopes for is to be able to take care of his family. Roy says, "I woke up today and I thanked God. I am blessed to know that Threshold is here for people like me."

## FAQs

### What is Threshold Ministry?

Decatur Presbyterian Church (DPC) maintains the Threshold Ministry to support the people experiencing homelessness and other effects of poverty. The purpose of Threshold Ministry is to invite women, men, and children who are in need into a community of faith where their stories can be heard, where Christ's love can be demonstrated, and where practical assistance can be offered.

### What are the goals and objectives of Threshold Ministry?

Threshold Ministry of DPC seeks to realize its vision by:

- providing hospitality;
- addressing basic needs;
- fostering an atmosphere of dignity and hope;
- connecting people to relevant community resources; and
- developing relationships within the community to support people in need

### When was Threshold Ministry Founded?

In May 2012, then Associate Minister Ken Hughes began the Threshold Ministry as part of his Doctor of Ministry (DMin) Thesis. He articulated theological foundations of such a ministry and extended these to respond to persons knocking on the door of the Church across from the MARTA station.

Initially, Threshold Ministry operated three mornings per week (using part of a DPC classroom), providing limited MARTA access, listening to stories, and referring for other services. In that first year, Threshold welcomed more than 200 guests and offered more than 1,000 services or conversations. "The need was made clear, and the Church has continued to provide this ministry for more than 10 years now.

### How has Threshold Ministry evolved over its ten-year history?

Threshold outgrew the classroom and moved into Sycamore House. Grants from the Imlay Foundation, Rotary Club, and Decatur Emergency Assistance Ministry (DEAM) enabled Threshold to expand services to assist with rent, utilities, and cell phone bills. Recently, partnership with Legal AID of Decatur has enabled Threshold to offer limited legal assistance. During the COVID Pandemic, in-person services were reduced, but Threshold never closed. Many service operations were shifted to remote or virtual operations, which continue.

**What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.**

**-Micah 6:8**

## Work with our Partners

In preparation for the retirement of Karen Johnson (longtime DEAM Pantry Manager) at the end of April, DEAM re-structured their staff positions so that one person, Ruth Callahan, serves as DEAM's pantry coordinator. Ruth will be re-instituting the monthly Food Drives in each of the member churches to keep the Pantry well-stocked with the items that are no longer available through COVID Emergency programs that supported the Atlanta Food Bank and other sources for our DEAM Pantry.

Decatur Presbyterian Church's DEAM Pantry Representative will be Sara Jo Craw who is already an active volunteer for the Threshold Ministry. Sara stands ready to step into this role with her extended family as members of the team! Decatur Presbyterian Church will be responsible for collecting the needed food items during the months of February and July and transporting them to the DEAM Pantry at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. Our gratitude goes out to Bob and Fran Wiggins for their service in this role in recent years.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Threshold Ministry cookout for Decatur Presbyterian Church members, Threshold friends, and guests: July 26, 11:45 am, Sycamore House parking lot.**
- **Lunch and learn with safe space training for volunteers and Steering Committee members, August 23, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm.**



## Recent Updates from the Threshold Steering Committee

On April 3, DeKalb County reopened its Tenant-Landlord Assistance Coalitions (TLAC) and began accepting new applications. The TLAC program provides financial relief to tenants and landlords affected by the pandemic. To date, it has distributed \$53.7 million for rent and utilities to more than 5,500 DeKalb families. TLAC is designed to provide financial relief to DeKalb renters threatened by eviction and landlords facing revenue losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Threshold Ministry has been awarded a grant from DeKalb County as part of funds available from the American Recovery Program (ARP). Threshold is using these funds to assist households which include someone with a disability. A subcommittee of the Threshold Ministry Steering Committee reviews each application, and to date has awarded almost \$75,000 of \$100,000 awarded to assist with rent, utilities, and making access to facilities possible for people with disabilities.

In partnership with Decatur Legal Aid, Threshold offers a legal assistance clinic which operates in Sycamore House by appointment on the third Wednesday of each month.

Calls are received on the Threshold Ministry line (470-237-9115) Monday through Thursday from 9-11AM. Voicemail messages left on the phone are checked and returned during these hours as well. Linda Huffine, the Threshold Ministry assistant, answers and returns calls during phone line hours. Additionally, she monitors calls left on the Decatur Presbyterian Church voicemail, as well as email messages sent to DPC Staff and to the Threshold Ministry email account ([thresh.min.info@gmail.com](mailto:thresh.min.info@gmail.com)). Linda reports that most callers are seeking rental and/or utility assistance. The second largest group of callers are homeless individuals or families that need information, shelter, requests for MARTA or help with storage or phone bills. Decatur Presbyterian Church members are able to contact Linda Huffine ([lhuffine@dpchurch.org](mailto:lhuffine@dpchurch.org)) or the Threshold Ministry Coordinator, Leslie Raymer ([lraymer@dpchurch.org](mailto:lraymer@dpchurch.org)) for questions or to join us in serving or volunteering with our unhoused and marginally housed community.

The Steering Committee is planning to return to modified in-person operations in Sycamore House in the near future. Many services will continue to be offered successfully virtually.

# DPC VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Scott Overcarsh is a member of the Threshold Steering Committee, Scott reports, "I am involved as a member of the Threshold Steering Committee as a result of a long journey. My wife, Jody, and I moved to Decatur from Gwinnett County to locate closer to ministries we felt called to support. With an eye out for ways to give time and resources to the hungry and homeless, we joined Decatur Presbyterian Church and found opportunities to serve the Decatur Cooperative Ministry, A Home for Everyone in DeKalb, and the Decatur Education Foundation.

My recent retirement and my passion for woodworking has opened doors to assist Threshold in a variety of ways. When asked if I would serve on the Steering

Committee, I was honored to extend my connection with this vital ministry that serves so many in our community. I feel that loving our neighbors through a ministry like Threshold is one way that we express love toward God.

Needs are virtually unlimited as Jesus has promised, "for you always have the poor with you" (Matt 26:11). There is joy in that as we serve 'the least of these', we are standing in the presence of our Savior. As we encourage them, we are ourselves encouraged (Hebrews 3:13).

When we simply listen or share food with someone, the deep peace that God's Spirit gives is a gift that cannot be bought or sold. Those who serve understand the joy it brings. The field is white for the harvest. Who will be next to join those tending the sheep?

Enjoy the Journey!"



Fran grew up in Brooklyn in a working-class family, a home open to all kinds of people and supporting social justice causes. Her grandparents had left Russia, seeking refuge from persecution of Jews.

In New York, Fran noticed neighbors with visual impairments leading very productive lives. As a result, she volunteered at the Lighthouse Guild for ten years before coming to Atlanta. Seeing so many people overcome their disabilities, left an impact on her. When Fran moved to Decatur, a new friend asked if she would be able to provide some meals for our homeless neighbors. This led her to Threshold Ministry. Fran confesses that she is challenged not to be judgmental of the people of the street. Since, coming to Threshold on a regular basis, she knows personally many of our quests. Fran says, "It is a true blessing to provide our guests with secure mail delivery, transportation for doctor appointments, winter kits, and hygiene kits. Sometimes our guests have a special request and it is a true blessing to be able to provide them with these specific wants & to show them that someone cares about them." Fran serves as the Community Member on Threshold Ministry Steering Committee.

# COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Fran Gersten



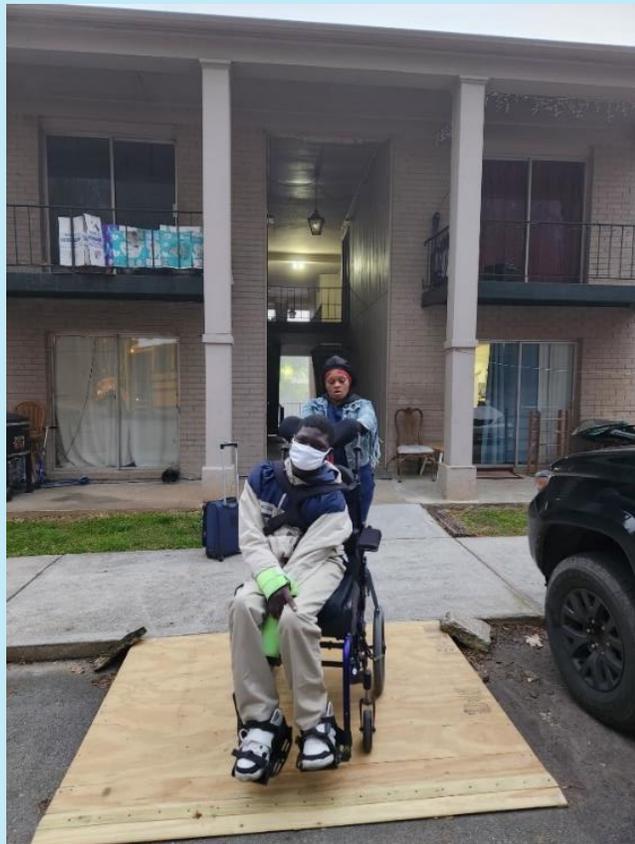


## American Recovery Program Grant Support

In December 2022, DeKalb County awarded \$100,000.00 from District 6 American Recovery Program (ARP) appropriations to Threshold Ministry to assist financially to those who are limited by physical and/or mental disability and who are able to prove a need for assistance for housing, utilities, transportation, communication, and/or related expenses needed as a result of COVID-19.



One recent beneficiary of the grant funds is Nestorine and Eric, members of our DPC Community. Nestorine let us know that the ramp needed for Eric to exit their apartment and use MARTA MOBILITY was in severe disrepair. Threshold's faithful steering committee member Scott Overcarsh responded and replaced the ramp. Sue Bingeman writes, "Thanks for facilitating getting Eric's wheelchair ramp replaced. It seems a small thing, but it is making a huge difference in his day-to-day life. Scott did an amazing job – and it will probably last for a very long time. Thank you again – I know that Nestorine and Eric are both grateful."



## Pastor's Ponderings

I had the good privilege of breaking bread recently at Athens Pizza with Marlene White, is the Executive Director of Decatur Cooperative Ministries (DCM), one of Threshold's key partners in addressing critical community needs. Marlene shared with me that she was working on a model for hierarchy of needs, outlining various needs of the poor and unhoused in our community. What struck me about her model was that, closely following the need for food and shelter, Marlene identified the human need for belonging and community.



From its earliest inception, Threshold Ministries has sought to provide hospitality to our guests as well as the opportunity to enter into relationships over time. Some we see only one time; others we have known for over 10 years. Our volunteers and staff feel a close connection to many of those whom we have known for a long time. We have walked alongside each other through joys and sorrows, and we have learned much from each other along the way.

I am deeply grateful for the many relationships with our Threshold guests, from sharing worship in the sanctuary, to breaking bread at round tables on Wednesday nights, to engaging conversations on the Terrace Garden benches. The stories shared by our guests are sometimes tragic, often inspiring, and usually quite enlightening. I encourage you - whether you are a DPC member, a community volunteer, or a Threshold guest - to make the effort to get to know the people in our community, listen to their stories, and imagine with one another how we might strengthen our local community for the common good of all.

DPC has committed itself to live and serve as a "Matthew 25 Congregation" (<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/>). This includes being involved in building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty. For me, each of these efforts begins with deepening the interconnectedness between individuals over time and addressing that critical human need for community and belonging.

May God guide us in our efforts.

Rev. Dr. Todd Speed, Senior Pastor