



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

Best Gift



—STORY OF IMPACT—

Warming the City and Saving Lives

On Christmas Day, it's Bethlehem on Broad Street in Columbus, Ohio. At this event, First Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ, also known as First Church, puts their faith into action. First Church invites their neighbors who may be experiencing homelessness, poverty, or food insecurity to join. Participants receive gifts which include a warm meal, clothing, CWS Hygiene Kits and CWS Blankets.

As temperatures drop to freezing, participants of this event look forward to receiving CWS wool and fleece blankets. Jim Lowe, who coordinates the event each year with his wife, recalls the event participants eagerly asking about the blankets as soon as they entered the building.

Each year following the event, First Church reaches out to local organizations to continue sharing the gifts from Christmas day. One of the organizations that received gifts this year was the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless.

The Columbus Coalition for the Homeless was created to advocate for people experiencing homelessness in the city. In the wake of the pandemic, as businesses closed, finding a safe space to warm up became increasingly difficult. "There was nowhere to go," explains Josh Posten, a Program Coordinator at the Coalition. In response to this new challenge, the Coalition created six warming centers in the city. At these centers, the Coalition provides a warm space for people to shower, receive donations and get connected to resources. The centers have now become a space "where people feel part of a community and where they're safe," Josh explains.

The Coalition has brought the kits and blankets to their warming centers and plans to "hand them out personally to anybody who needs one," Josh says. A warm blanket provides warmth and safety to our homeless neighbors and allows them to rest a little better during these restless times. A hygiene kit gives them a chance to clean up and feel refreshed. "We could not do this without the support of the churches in Columbus, in Ohio and throughout the nation. Our guests are absolutely thankful, and to be honest, you are saving lives," Josh tells us.

CWS is thankful for our partners and donors who make stories like this one possible. Your support allows us to expand our reach to marginalized communities and help warm both our cities and our hearts.

