

## Statement to Metro Council on Funding the Louisville Affordable Housing Trust Fund (LAHTF)

by Rev. Cindy Weber, Pastor, Jeff St. Baptist Community,  
on behalf of CLOUT (Citizens of Louisville Organized &  
United Together)

Thursday, March 12, 2015

I'm Rev. Cindy Weber. My church, Jeff Street Baptist Community, is a member of CLOUT, Citizens of Louisville Organized and United Together. CLOUT first proposed an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to Metro Council ten years ago this month. Three years later you approved it, 25-to-1, with a goal of ten million dollars a year in funding.

Now, *ten years* since it was first brought to you...

- *even though* the city's waiting list for affordable housing and the number of homeless children in our public schools has doubled,
- *even though* there are numerous positive economic impacts from which our community would benefit so that the fund would pay for itself many times over,
- *even though* 600 other municipalities are reaping economic benefits from such funds,
- *even though* you have been presented with a viable option for funding—a slight raise in the insurance premium tax, which last June the Kentucky Attorney General ruled OK for this use...

...the AHTF has not yet been funded.

The time to act is now.

We understand that some of you are concerned about passing another tax increase on the heels of the LG&E fee increase that you passed last summer. But let's be clear—cameras and more police officers do not address the root causes of violence and poverty, and that tax should not be an excuse for further delay.

The people of our city cannot wait. It's already too late for Kenneth Winfield, who came to my church on weekday mornings, and who froze to death on the steps of St. Johns Day Center. It's too late for Ray Etheridge, the 12-year-old homeless boy who was stabbed to death last fall. Let's not add any more stories like these to our city's list of shame. Let's quit putting political expediency over the futures of children who are growing up, spending every night of their lives in shelters and in cars and on the floors of someone else's house.

I walked into my church building one morning recently, into a roomful of men and women who are homeless, and there, sitting around one of the tables were four beautiful, bright-eyed little children, and they were eating their breakfast. These children don't know what it's like to sit around their own breakfast table in their own home. Imagine your children, your grandchildren, bright-eyed and vulnerable, every morning of their lives at someone else's table.

I invite you—when you sit down to breakfast every day between now and when this ordinance is passed—you who have the power to pass this ordinance with the push of a button—I invite you to imagine the eyes of these children, to feel the weight of the hopelessness of their little lives. Every morning, when you sit down to breakfast, may your prayer be, “Let's get this thing passed.”