

# Warm Hearts warming up Durham

*First United Antioch Baptist Church gives shelter to the homeless in the winter.*

**By Travis Butler**  
UNC Staff Writer  
The Durham Voice

It's a February night in Durham, the temperature is creeping below freezing and many of the city's homeless population have no way to escape the harsh winter.

But First United Antioch Baptist Church at 1415 Holloway St. is doing its best to provide a place for homeless people to get out of the cold, according to the church's pastor, the Rev. Michael Page.

Page has been a part of Antioch for over 15 years and has served on the Durham County Board of Commissioners since 2004. He is currently on his second stint as the chairman.

## Giving warmth to those in need

Page said Antioch has been allowing homeless people to stay in the church overnight when the temperature drops below 40 degrees.

This initiative is called Warm Hearts Ministry and has been going on at Antioch for the past few years.

"We decided that we can, as a church, respond to the community and some of the needs that they have," Page said.

Starting around 10 p.m. every night, the church opens its doors to anyone who needs a warm place to stay.

This year, Warm Hearts began in January, when freezing temperatures became the norm at night, said Michael Martin, a church member.

Martin has been a member of Antioch since late 2014, and said he stays with the homeless in the church overnight.

Every night since early January, Martin has opened the doors of Antioch as soon as he finishes his culinary administration classes at the Art Institute of Raleigh-Durham.

"I'm here every night," Martin said. "It's home to me until the program is over."

Martin did acknowledge that even



**The Rev. Michael Page, pastor at Antioch Baptist Church and chairman of the Durham County Board of Commissioners, working in his office to help his community combat poverty. (Staff photo by Travis Butler)**

though the church is plentiful in space and warm blankets, it doesn't exactly have many comfortable sleeping spots.

"The other night, we had more people than we did cots," he said. "We had 10 cots and 20 people."

Martin said the church doesn't turn anyone away, but rather urges people to create a makeshift bed out of the church's heavy supply of blankets.

## A welcome relief

Sabrina Bowyer, a frequent night guest at Antioch, said she appreciates the hospitality of Martin and Page, no matter where she sleeps in the church.

"I think it's awesome," Bowyer said.

Bowyer has been homeless since early 2015. She said she hopes to get more involved in the church.

"You kind of have to give back, too," Bowyer said. "I hope to try and help anyway that I can."

Page said Antioch has a long-term goal of letting the homeless community come in earlier, as well as having breakfast the next morning.

As of now, the church doors open and close to the homeless based on Martin's schedule.

Page said Warm Hearts is also about helping those in need have a better state of mind.

"We don't want to necessarily be a shelter, but more like a support group for these people," Page said.

The church has many other great community initiatives

they participate in, as well.

Antioch hosts a food pantry for low-income households through the Yates Baptist Association, a group of several churches in the Triangle.

The church has also started a transitional home on North Hyde Park Avenue for those who have recently exited the criminal justice system and are in need of housing.

### Contact Information

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