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## Wayne pastor's mission leads him to join Paterson's homeless

MONDAY JANUARY 23, 2012, 3:23 PM

BY HANNAN ADELY  
 STAFF WRITER

THE RECORD

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The dozen homeless men made their way through Paterson downtown to their camp — a cold, dark mass of blankets, tarps and trash under a Route 80 overpass.

But among them this time was the Rev. Thomas Keinath, pastor of the Calvary Temple International Assembly in Wayne. He was there to learn about the home their hardships, to build trust and to improve his church's aid efforts.

"I needed to understand what they were experiencing, an help or healing to the streets if I did not know what their living as the homeless do and returned to his church Sun Calvary Temple for the 10:30 a.m. service. Calvary Temp institutions trying to alleviate the homelessness problem largest and most visible homeless populations in North J on park benches, under highways and in shelters.

Keinath said he counted about 75 homeless individuals who on a typical day pass through Cianci Park, where he led prayer and Scripture readings each night at 7 last week. Church volunteers have also been on site to deliver food and clothing.

The church has run a food pantry for years and gone out occasionally to deliver food. But Keinath was inspired to step up efforts after getting to know several homeless men during a Thanksgiving dinner last year. Since then, church teams have been delivering food and clothing to homeless individuals downtown on a weekly basis, and Keinath has held Friday evening Bible study under the highway overpass.

But the pastor of the 2,000member Pentecostal church said he felt he needed to do more to establish trust and help, and that living among them was the



CHRIS MONROE / SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

Rev. Thomas Keinath, the pastor of Calvary Temple in Wayne, spent a week living on Paterson's streets with he city's homeless as part of his church's outreach efforts.

### Rally at park

The Rev. Thomas Keinath of Calvary Temple in Wayne is organizing a prayer rally with other local clergy for Saturday at Barbour Park in Paterson.

The theme is "rebuilding the walls and restoring our streets." It will be held from from 4 to 5 p.m. at the park, on Broadway between Rosa Parks Boulevard and Carroll Street. For information, call 973-694-2938.

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way.

"People have to know you really do care about them," said Keinath, who has ministered in 21 nations. "That's part of what I think this is about. My identification with them has brought down the walls."

Fires, needles, coughs

Keinath left comforts behind on Jan. 15, when he boarded a van with homeless men leaving a morning service at Calvary Temple. He spent his days walking downtown streets before heading to Cianci Park to pray. At night, when temperatures dropped into the teens, he slept in the encampment where men built fires to ward off frostbite, where hypodermic needles littered the ground, and where coughing was a nighttime chorus.

When he returned Sunday, he had on his street-soiled jeans and bulky layers of sweater and coat that he had worn all week. He sat in the pews bearded and unshowered with the homeless men he had befriended — a far cry from the Sunday preacher who appears in pressed suit and tie, reading glasses and neatly trimmed blond hair.

"We really became like brothers," said Keinath, who wrote mini-biographies for 48 people he met during his week on the streets, so he could remember each one and their stories.

During the service, Pastor Joshua Escobar extended a special recognition to the men, and the church responded with a standing ovation. Reflecting on his experience, Keinath said he was amazed by the humility of those he met and their willingness to accept God.

"I did not have one person on the streets, homeless or addicts, who overtly rejected the hope we were trying to bring," he said.

Keinath hopes the church will be reinvigorated in its mission to help by his firsthand report on the damage wrought by homelessness and the stories of those he met.

"I believe all of this is just the groundwork and the beginning for a long-term solution," he said. Keinath spoke with compassion and understanding for the people he has met, but said that many struggle with drug and alcohol addiction. His goal, ultimately, is to buy or build a structure and start a "hope center" that serves to shelter the homeless while helping them recover from problems including substance abuse.

The pastor said he recently learned that his church was founded in Paterson's 4th Ward, where he now ministers. To him and his church, he said, that was a sign.

"I feel," he said, "like this is God saying: 'Get back to your roots. Get back to where people are hurting.'"

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