

## FAQ – Sacred Settlement Open Door

### What is a Sacred Settlement?

A Sacred Settlement is a tiny home community placed on church land where one third of the homes are occupied with people who are resourced and have never been homeless. The other two thirds are occupied by people who have experienced chronic homelessness and want healing, restoration and dignity with supportive friends and neighbors.

Our future tiny home community is part of a growing effort to use church properties to address the root causes of chronic homelessness. We have partnered with another organization, Settled, and other churches from different denominations to provide more than just housing — we offer a way of life.

### FULL COMMUNITY MODEL:

- **Intentional neighbors:** People who willingly change their lifestyle to live life alongside formerly homeless neighbors.
- **Permanent homes:** Small, simple homes are gathered together to provide safety and help promote community.
- **Cultivated places:** The homes are placed on religious land that is carefully adapted to meet the needs of the community.
- **Purposeful work:** Everyone in the community shares in the labor and is compensated fairly for their work.
- **Supportive friends:** Each person has one or more helpers to navigate services and to be supported with friendships.
- **Over the next two years,** in partnership with other churches and community members, we are working on designing and building this community.

### ***Why Has Open Door Decided to Plant a Sacred Settlement?***

As a church we are responding to God's call seen all throughout the Bible to care for the poor, outcasts, and marginalized people in our society. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus says "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these

brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” We believe we are following God’s heart to care for the most vulnerable people among us who Jesus calls his very own ‘brothers and sisters;’ we are seeking to follow Jesus in this way.

Open Door has had a long partnership with Settled. In 2021, Open Door began sending people to do outreach in the unhoused communities in St Paul in partnership with Settled and Walking with a Purpose. In 2022, Open Door build a tiny home on our land to support the Sacred Settlement being planted in St Paul, which one of our pastors moved into in October 2022. In 2023, Open Door began building another tiny home in partnership with other churches. The leadership team at Open Door has been prayerfully considering partnering with Settled in developing a Sacred Settlement on Open Door land for nearly two years. During this two-year timeframe, we have had numerous meetings, workshops, and facilitated sessions with Settled to fully understand how we might go about undertaking this effort. Open Door put a leadership team together to design this Sacred Settlement the summer of 2024. The Sacred Settlement team was assembled to pray, plan, and design the Sacred Settlement from the summer of 2024 for the plan phase. The build phase started in the summer of 2025 and continues through summer of 2026.

### ***How many tiny homes will be in Sacred Settlement Open Door?***

There will be twelve tiny homes at Sacred Settlement Open Door. Eight homes are for people who have experienced chronic homelessness. Four homes are for people who haven't experienced homelessness but desire to be an intentional neighbor with everyone in the tiny home community. The church building will have a specific area dedicated as a ‘common house’ for those living in the Sacred Settlement to have a living space, separate from the rest of the church.

### ***Why Has Open Door Chosen to Plant a Sacred Settlement in an “Outer-Ring” Suburb of Minneapolis?***

Homelessness is a state-wide problem in Minnesota, especially in the Twin Cities. Unfortunately, it is not solely an urban problem and, therefore, cannot solely be solved by urban churches. Open Door wants to respond to this very real need in our

community. Homelessness is not a distance issue; there are about 35 people sleeping in their cars each night within Maple Grove.

Open Door wants to take advantage of its expansive land ownership to open its doors to formerly homeless neighbors and work to address this problem in a way that fully expresses the heart of our mission. The use of religious land is federally protected by The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), enabling our church to utilize its land to carry out its mission and vision unencumbered by restrictions (such as zoning discrimination).

Additionally, in 2023, Minnesota passed a groundbreaking new law that *encourages* or *allows* faith communities to fulfill their sacred mandate of loving some of our society's poor, outcasts and most vulnerable. Now cities and municipalities have a roadmap to permit and approve Sacred Settlements more efficiently to help eradicate homelessness in Minnesota.

Through our extensive research and vetting process, we have determined that Settled's Full Community Model is the best way for us to fully express our church's mission and show love and support for our unhoused neighbors.

### ***How Long Will It Take Open Door to Build the Sacred Settlement?***

Open Door is following Settled's roadmap for planting a Sacred Settlement. There are three stages of the process prior to the Grand Opening: **Discern**, **Plan**, and **Build**. Settled provides guidance, tools, approaches, experience and works side-by-side to support the church's efforts. The first three stages, on average, take anywhere from 9 months to 36 months. The Grand Opening will likely be in the summer of 2027.

After the Sacred Settlement is established, the **Steward** stage is an everlasting commitment to deepen relationships for everyone connected to the Sacred Settlement community. We are establishing a permanent community where we hope every person grows deep roots and enduring loyalty to one another and the land they live on.

### ***How Will Open Door Select People who are Experiencing Homelessness to Move into the Sacred Settlement?***

It is important to note that all churches planting Sacred Settlements seek to know their neighborhoods and want their Sacred Settlements to be a neighborhood asset. Open Door is no different in that regard.

Each host church sets its parameters regarding who it accepts into its Sacred Settlement, such as no sex offenders or violent criminal offenses. Open Door is currently customizing these parameters. While the specifics are currently in development, all incoming neighbors will fill out an application, submit to a comprehensive state and national background check, be interviewed, review the policies, and sign off on a Good Neighbor Agreement to abide by community rules and standards before being offered a home in the community.

We have partnered closely with Settled and learned from other churches. The leadership at Sacred Settlement Mosaic told us: “We have found healthy and beautiful relationships develop with our church community, including many young families with children and elderly adults.” We are inspired by what is possible and what is happening.

### ***What Criminal History Can a Person Have and Still Be Approved to Live On-Site?***

Criminal background checks are performed prior to approval. Violent or sexual criminal offenses would prevent a potential resident’s approval. Some residents do have previous criminal backgrounds (including offenses such as bounced checks, drug possession, DUI, etc.), which would not necessarily preclude their approval. Each background check is scrutinized prior to approval to ensure applicants are a right fit for the community and that the right support system is in place to help them on their healing journey.

### ***What is the Support Structure for the Sacred Settlement?***

The Full Community model is deeply immersed in relationships that help guide neighbors towards wholeness and wellness in their daily lives. A robust structure is in

place comprised of the following team of people who help govern the community and ensure it remains safe and beautiful:

- **Property Manager** who leads regular home walkthroughs and who cares for the property, cleanliness, and safety of the homes, land, church building, and community.
- **Sacred Settlement lead or couple** who run weekly neighbor huddles and family dinners where rules are enforced and trusted relationships are built in order to create a sense of stability and security within the community.
- **Stewardship team** of 5-7 people who operate like a board of directors to help support the community, create new policies, and enforce decisions that affect the health and safety of the whole community.
- **Intentional Neighbors** who are living their daily lives in the community.
- **Supportive Friends** who function as advocates, mentors, and helpers for each neighbor to set goals, care for their medical needs, and be a safe space to support neighbors in their daily lives.
- **Social workers and social service providers** regularly check in with neighbors to support them in their care, benefits, wellness, and mental health.
- **Every neighbor in our community** empowers other neighbors to follow the rules and keep the community safe.

### *Get in Touch with Open Door*

- Learn more about Open Door's planting of a Sacred Settlement: [www.thedoor.org/settled](http://www.thedoor.org/settled)
- To contact the church for questions regarding the Sacred Settlement, email Rose Larson at [rlarson@thedoor.org](mailto:rlarson@thedoor.org)
- Learn more about Settled: [www.settled.org](http://www.settled.org)

Scan to check out  
[thedoor.org/settled](http://thedoor.org/settled)

