

## History of Samaritan Ministries

Increasing numbers of hungry people who were visiting downtown churches and Crisis Control Ministry led to a meeting at Crisis Control Ministry on Dec. 3, 1980, to establish a soup kitchen in Winston-Salem. The Rev. Stimson “Stimp” Hawkins, associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church, led the effort.

The group’s goal was to provide a vehicle where Christians in the community, in fellowship with other Christians, could respond faithfully to the message of Jesus as recorded in the 25th chapter of Matthew’s gospel where Christ says, “In so far as you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”

Samaritan is an interdenominational Christian ministry where members of the community strive to be examples of the Christian gospel and to share their beliefs with all who come through the door.

Those who came to the soup kitchen were to be referred to as guests, not clients. They would be seated at tables and served their food in an atmosphere of dignity, welcome and hospitality. Volunteers would be recruited and trained to staff the soup kitchen.

Crisis Control served as the umbrella organization for the soup kitchen. N.C. Baptist Hospital donated a building on Patterson Avenue rent-free for five years. Six years later, the hospital sold the building to Samaritan for \$1. A grant from the Winston-Salem Foundation paid for renovations and equipment.

The Samaritan Soup Kitchen opened at 1243 Patterson Ave. on March 2, 1981. The first meal of vegetable soup was served to 26 guests.

Demand for the Soup Kitchen’s services continued to grow. On September 19, 1985, Samaritan Soup Kitchen received its charter as an independent 501(c)(3) corporation in the state of North Carolina.

In January 1986, Dr. Thomas Hinson and his staff opened an independent free clinic in the space above the soup kitchen. The clinic outgrew that space and relocated to the Winston-Salem Rescue Mission in 2005.

The increasing numbers of homeless people who came to the Samaritan Soup Kitchen led the board of directors to approve the opening of a shelter for 60 men and nine women. The name of the corporation was changed to Samaritan Ministries in 1987.

Dalton Ruffin and Aurelia Eller took the lead in raising over \$500,000 in the community to build the Samaritan Inn. Brian Hart, an architect with Calloway, Johnson and Moore, designed the addition that would serve as a shelter. The Samaritan Inn opened on September 14, 1988. In 1992, the Salvation Army opened a shelter for women and children and the Samaritan Inn became a 69-bed shelter for men.

In October 1995, Samaritan started Project Cornerstone, a residential substance abuse recovery program for homeless men. Up to 10 men are admitted to the program and they stay an average of 13 to 18 months with a goal of beating their addictions, gaining employment and living independently.

The Homeless Opportunities and Treatment (HOT) Project began in 2009, as a partnership between Samaritan Ministries and Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, under the direction of Dr. Liz Arnold. The HOT Project was an onsite mental health clinic for homeless people in Forsyth County. It received funding from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, Health Care Division. After serving over 930 clients, the clinic closed in 2017 having achieved its goal of reaching the chronically mentally ill.

The partnership with the Medical Center continued as the Empowerment Project, which was housed at Samaritan Ministries. Empowerment was a street outreach program for homeless people and ensured that homeless people received referrals for mental-health counseling, housing and other needs. Wake Forest chose to discontinue the program in December 2022 due to lack of funding from Partners, the local management entity/managed care organization for the state.

An increase in the number of guests in the soup kitchen and overcrowding in its original 13,000-square-foot building led to plans for Samaritan's move to a new 20,000 square foot building in 2009. Michael West, a former board member and principal in West & Stem Architects, designed the new building at the corner of Northwest Boulevard and Ivy Avenue, on land that was behind Samaritan's original building. Samaritan launched a \$4.1 million capital campaign in 2011, and ground was broken in June 2013. Staff, volunteers and guests moved into the new building in December 2014.

The Samaritan Soup Kitchen increased its seats from 47 to 96. Shelter beds increased from 69 to 80. A number of features in the new building were designed especially for guests. These included

cell phone charging stations, a computer lab, an outdoor restroom and four private healing beds for guests who were too sick to be outside.

On June 30, 2020, Sonjia Kurosky retired after 27 years as Samaritan's executive director, and Jan Kelly, the development director who joined Samaritan in 2011 to lead the capital campaign, took the helm. During the COVID pandemic, Samaritan remained operational every day, with reduced shelter/Cornerstone capacity and take-out meals. Samaritan celebrated 40 years of continuous operation on March 2, 2021.