



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WAY

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BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:

SECTION 1. Pursuant to an ordinance heretofore passed by the City Council, which allows the erection of honorary street name signs, the Commissioner of Transportation shall take the necessary action to designate the 3400 and 3500 blocks of West Division Street as "New Life Covenant Way."

Roberto Maldonado Alderman, 26th Ward

SECTION 2. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect upon passage and publication.

New Life Covenant (formerly Palestine Christian Temple) has been a vital presence in the Humboldt Park Community since 1965. In 1997, the church took a big step towards community involvement under the leadership of newly anointed Pastor, Wilfredo "Choco" De Jesus. Under his leadership, New Life Covenant (NLC) birthed The River of Life women and children's shelter in Humboldt Park, which served 1,350 families until 2016, but this was only the beginning.

In 2001 the police commander approached Pastor Choco with a community crisis -the police had arrested over 600 women for prostitution and asked, "Is there anything the church can do?" Pastor Choco wrestled with this question, and in the summer of 2002, with the blessing of his church, they purchased a farm and created, New Life for Women Residential Program, endearingly called "The Farm." It is located three hours from Chicago and exists to rescue women from life-controlling addictions such as drugs, alcohol, prostitution, and sex trafficking. The women stay in the program for one year, free of charge. This initiative is entirely funded by the members and friends of New Life Covenant, and impressively to date, it has served over 700 women.

"The Farm" led to the formation of our non-profit entity, the Chicago Dream Center (CDC).

CDC serves as an umbrella for various life-giving ministries such as Hope House for Teens residential program (to date 70 teens have lived in the teen home), Manna for Life food pantry (serving groceries to over 200 families weekly) and Bridge to Life (serving meals three to four times a week to 50-75 homeless individuals).

The Chicago Dream Center reaches hundreds of hurting and broken people across all races and cultures. The goal is to overcome poverty and its ill effects by providing the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. In addition, referrals for drug rehabilitation, education, employment opportunities, and training are provided as well as spiritual development through biblical counseling and training. At its core the Chicago Dream Center truly provides individuals and families with the opportunity to dream again and have hope for their future.

In 2005 New Life Covenant began HopeFest, an annual back to school event. Over the last ten years, HopeFest has grown to become one of the largest back to school events serving thousands of children and families in the City of Chicago. HopeFest successfully collaborates with community organizations, schools, and hospitals, to holistically meet the needs of our city, one family at a time.

New Life Covenant purchased a building on the corner of California Avenue and Wabansia Avenue in 2005. The purpose of the purchase was to secure the street corner from gang violence and intimidation. New Life Covenant bravely purchased the corner lot that housed a liquor store without any other motives but to create a safe space that would transform the neighborhood and allow it to flourish. Today, that same property houses a thriving medical clinic, New Life Clinic, in partnership with Norwegian American Hospital, as well as a resale shop called Let's Change, which directly funds nutritional sites and orphanages around the globe.

In 2013, after ten years of holding services at Roberto Clemente High School, New Life Covenant purchased a blighted warehouse, which became a haven for crime and drug activity on the corner of Homan and Division in Humboldt Park. NLC strategically anchored itself in the community and built a state of the art church with a seating capacity of 1,000 to be a beacon of hope in Humboldt Park and beyond. On December 8, 2014, New Life Covenant inaugurated the facility by holding its first service as a community celebration welcoming all through their doors. Soon after, in 2016, the church was recognized for its work by the Chicago Association of Realtors and received the prestigious "Good Neighbor Award."

NLC continued to find ways to serve the community. In 2016, the River of Life Men's Shelter opened, and from 2016 until 2018, the men's shelter provided care to over 287 men. Two other

outreach ministries surfaced in 2016, "Love Life" and "Safety in the Sanctuary." These outreaches emerged as a response to the surge in gun violence in the city in 2016. In the middle of the chaos, New Life Covenant began the "Love Life" campaign by placing crosses for each victim of gun violence, on a grassy hill on its property. Each cross had the name and age of the victims. The church invited neighbors, families, and friends of the victims to a memorial service held in their honor. The church continued this campaign until the end of the year, adding crosses as the number of deaths increased. By the end of the year, the death toll was at 762.

Since the "Love Life" campaign, the church decided to take another step to help heal the wounds of the city with an initiative called "Safety in the Sanctuary." Since 2017 the church opens its doors for one or two weeks during the coldest months of the year, providing a warm and safe environment for all. "Safety in the Sanctuary" provides three hot meals, bathroom facilities, and a place to sleep overnight. NLC has hosted homeless men, women, and entire families.

The impact of these outreach efforts throughout the years is immeasurable, the families it has touched, immense. New Life Covenant dared to do what others thought would be impossible.

New Life Covenant's vision was birthed as a result of years of consistent action and fueled by sincere compassion. NLC lives out the gospel by loving God and loving all His people with the goal of improving the quality of life in Humboldt Park and beyond. As a result NLC created church campuses throughout the City of Chicago as well as in other states. These efforts have been solely inspired by the character of Jesus Christ, made possible by leaders and members who have committed to becoming "A Church for the Hurting."

This vision was not assigned nor manufactured as a smart marketing campaign for an organization. Instead, it was organically grown as a result of the compassionate efforts of the New Life Covenant's church family. It is because of its tremendous work in the city of Chicago and around the world that New Life Covenant is humbled to receive this honorary street designation. Governments, institutions, and societies change, but what will never change is this: where need exists, so will New Life Covenant; where hurt exists, so will New Life Covenant; and where community exists, so will New Life Covenant.

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