

**BE THE CHURCH** God is still speaking,  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
*Protect the environment. Care for the poor.  
Embrace diversity. **Reject racism.** Forgive often.  
Love God. **Fight for the powerless.**  
Share earthly and spiritual resources. Enjoy this life.*

Dear Members & Friends of FCUCC,

No one ever said love was easy, and those who have had a front row seat to our struggle with how to best engage compassionately with our homeless neighbors know the long hours, late nights, and big hearts who have showed up in our congregation to try to make logical, safe, and loving decisions. In 2014, as you probably remember, the Council and Trustees were asked to respond to the issue of people sleeping on the church property largely because of the human waste and wet blankets that were left on the grounds. Both boards struggled with the decision of how to respond and proceed. After many long and emotional discussions, the decision was made to file a No Trespassing Order of Consent, and post a sign. As it was explained to us, this letter and sign would allow police to come on our property when we aren't around and move people along if they're engaging in inappropriate behavior.

In practice, it hasn't been working well. We have a couple facing potential jail time because they were arrested for trespassing on the property, while calls we've made to get help with particularly challenging homeless neighbors have been addressed by merely walking the people off the property, only to return a couple of hours later. Moreover, this policy seems to be in tension with our extravagant welcome and commitment to "No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

**So, we are trying two new things:**

**This morning (Thursday) we will install a porta-potty in the parking lot. This potty will remain unlocked 24 hours a day, providing a space for people to toilet so they (hopefully) will cease using our bushes and have a bathroom with a door allowing for privacy and dignity. The potty is an experiment – we’re doing a 6 month pilot on it. It is paid for by a generous anonymous donor. Council will discuss it each month, and is interested in hearing what you think – what are the gifts and challenges of this potty? We are hopeful that our potty will eventually be replaced by an Artapottie on our property, or nearby.**

**We now have a volunteer “Rise and Shine” crew who wakes people up at 8am. They have access to cleaning supplies and universal precautions, and are charged with moving along any sleepers and making sure the property is clean before church opens for the day. They have been coming at 7am this week because of summer day camp – it has been working well. We have a team of 9, and could use a few more. Willing to help? Let Pastor Emily know.**

**In an attempt to live out our “No matter who, no matter where...” commitment, you should know: we’re not adding a “no matter what your behavior is...” clause. We will not tolerate drugs and alcohol on the property, or violence, or inappropriate behavior towards staff, members, or other homeless. We will keep the no trespass order of consent and won’t hesitate to call the police if we witness something inappropriate or unsafe.**

**Thank you for your openness to this experiment, and for being a church who lives out our extravagant welcome, and the call in Matthew 25:35,40: *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I had to use the bathroom, and you gave me a porta potty...Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.***

**Gratitude and grace,**

**Pastor Emily and Moderator Tamara Smith**

**PS: Okay, perhaps Pastor Emily edited Matthew 25 a little for this letter...**

**PPS: Questions? Concerns? Celebrations? Be in touch with Pastor Emily or Moderator Tamara Smith or Chair of Trustees Rick O’Grady**



**Whoever you are and  
wherever you are on life's  
journey, you are welcome  
here.**

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