



## Pastor's Corner

Dear Friends,

Elaine and I recently met with Officer Melissa Ripley, Coordinator of the Lincoln Police Department's Homeless Outreach division. Our goal was to learn a little bit more about how we can be a faith community that is helpful to those in need, keeping in mind our own safety as well as the welfare of those who come to us. Lincoln is rich in community resources, and we want First Christian Church to be aware of these resources so we can guide those who need help to places that can assist them - because we know we cannot be everything to everybody. We as a church have limited resources, but we offer up what we have with the belief that if we all do a little to help we can make big changes for the better in people's lives.

Here are some things we'd like to encourage you to ponder:

- First and foremost, let's continue to be the welcoming, loving community that we have always been, not only on Sundays but every other day of the week too. This love is what propels us to reach out to the community around us.
- Our office (pastor and administrative assistant) will be the hub of the wheel (organizing, communicating, being present during the week for people who come to our church for help, etc). But you all, the spokes, might also encounter situations where we are called upon to help. On Sundays, for example, we sometimes have people come to us with needs before or after worship. Should this happen, *please come find one of the following people who can assist you: Pastor Kara, Elaine Parman, Wayne Duncan or Jim Blosser*. They have access to the resources we can provide, such as food or gift cards. If you are unable to find someone to help, invite the person/s to join us for worship (should this be prior to church) and let them know the office will be open for assistance from 12-2pm Mondays-Thursdays, and we can help them at those times. (FYI: the office is open from 9am - 2pm Mondays-Thursdays, as always, for your needs and the work of the church, but we offer assistance to others only between 12 - 2. This is a common practice among organizations.)
- We provide assistance to each particular individual once a month only, as we want to serve as many people as possible.
- If you provide assistance to people at church, or see people sleeping in our stairwells or other places around the building, let us know so we are aware that they are there and can handle accordingly.

Officer Ripley had some helpful feedback and guidance for us as we continue to be the light to the downtown community that First Christian Church has been for 155 years:

- ⇒ For our own safety, Officer Ripley asked us to please not drive individuals anywhere or invite them into our homes. Most homeless or in-need people are harmless and are, in fact, much less likely to engage in illegal activity than the rest of society. But, as with anyone we do not know, we need to be cautious.
- ⇒ She also encouraged us to not give people money. This is why we give out food and gift cards instead.
- ⇒ Download the MyLink app (no data plan or WIFI required) on your phone and give the link to those whom you are assisting. This allows them to immediately access all the resources in Lincoln and when/where they offer their services. For example: where to get meals, where to access food pantries, get diapers and other basic need supplies, find assistance with domestic violence and the list goes on and on. If we have that at our fingertips and share with them, we provide some guidance for the people we are helping. Officer Ripley says most homeless/in-need individuals have cellphones, in fact CenterPointe gives them out.

There's a lot more to share, but this is already a lot. You are always welcome to call me or the office or come in and sit for a cup of coffee and a chat! Our doors are always open to you. Learn, Equip, Educate, Engage. That's what we're doing. So keep up the good and faithful work, and keep walking with the light of Christ in your hearts.

With love,

Pastor Kara