

Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

May 31, 2015

“Why We House The Homeless”



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister
Eckart Seeber: Music Minister
Marie Paulus-Nyquist: Children's Minister
LouAnne Fraser: Lay Reader

Menifee United Church of Christ

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

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Live Life Fully Alive!

Romans 8:14-17

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

John 3:14-17

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

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Why We House The Homeless

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A man is sitting at a table outside a bar, enjoying a beer. A nun suddenly appears and starts decrying the evils of drink. The nun says, "You should be ashamed of yourself! Drinking is a sin! Alcohol is the drink of the devil!" The man gets annoyed and says, "How do you know, Sister?" The nun says, "My Mother Superior told me so." The man says, "But have you ever had a drink yourself?" The nun says, "Don't be ridiculous, of course not." The man says, "Then how can you be sure that what you are saying is right? Let me buy you a vodka on the rocks. If you still believe afterwards that alcohol is evil, I'll give up drinking for the rest of my life." The nun says, "Okay, but have the bartender put it in a teacup for me, then no one will know that I'm drinking." So the man goes inside the bar, orders a beer and a vodka on the rocks. Then he tells the bartender to put the vodka in a teacup. The bartender says, "Oh no! It's not that drunken nun again, is it?"

Why we house the homeless. That's what I want to talk with you about today. Why we house the homeless. It's an important topic, whether you're a nun or a priest. Why we house the homeless. It's an important topic, whether you're a Catholic or a Protestant. Why we house the homeless. It's an important topic whether you're a drinker or a teetotaler. Why we house the homeless. Maybe you know that we do house three homeless people in three rooms in our Fellowship Hall, as part of our Residential Assistance Program or RAP. We have room for perhaps six more homeless people. We used to house more than three homeless people in our church, but two have graduated from our RAP. They found jobs and places to live, so they are no longer homeless! Maybe you also know that some people in Menifee are upset by our housing of the homeless. They've gone to the Menifee City Council and complained. They've spread false rumors: That our RAP is really a homeless shelter; that our RAP guests have broken into their homes and been arrested by the police. That's just not true. I and others went before the city council and defended our housing of the homeless. The city is now investigating whether or not the law allows us to house the homeless. I hope today to give you at least three reasons why we house the homeless.

This church is justly proud of its social events. We hold a Christmas Tea every December, Rummage Sales twice a year, and every week people get together to create crafts during Sit and Stitch. Then this church called a new Senior Minister, and all heaven broke out. The "No Trespassing" signs that were up in our Peace Garden and elsewhere on our property, designed to keep homeless people away, were quickly torn down. Then we put up a sign in our front yard: Peace Garden Open For Prayer 24/7. Then the staff, the church that was renting from us at the time, and even the police, were told that if someone is in our Peace Garden seemingly sleeping at 3 in the morning, we are to assume that they are praying and we should leave them alone. Then we turned part of the pastor's office into a Food Pantry and a Clothing Closet. People can get food and whatever clothes they need. Then the Pastor's Fund, which had been used by a previous pastor for his continuing education, was used instead to help the poor. Then we allowed homeless people to sleep in our church. Now they're in our Fellowship Hall, where they can

spend the night. People from this church have been very generous with goods, services, and money to help the homeless and other people in need. This church can be proud of that, too.

We are a church, not a social club. That's one reason why we house the homeless. We are a church, not a social club. We can't just have Christmas Teas, Rummage Sales, and Sit and Stitch. Well we can, but then you'd have to call a different Senior Minister. Our monthly Saturday breakfasts for the poor, and our assistance to the Community Cupboard and Survival Ministries were good, but we needed to do more. And now, because of your help, we do a lot more. I would think that the Menifee City Council would commend us for what we do for those in need. I would think that our neighbors would commend us for what we do for those in need. And I would think that the Menifee City Council and our neighbors would give us financial assistance for what we do for those in need. (I'm not gonna hold my breath.) Don't get me wrong, some members of the Menifee City Council and some of our neighbors have thanked us for what we do for those in need. Heck, the other day I was sitting at a table outside In-N-Out Burger with my daughter, and Mayor Scott Mann drove thru the drive-thru, rolled down his window, waved and said, "Hi, Bill." I waved and said, "Hi," back. Now, the only reason he knows me from Adam is because of our help for the homeless. I hope his friendly greeting bodes well for our continuing to house the homeless.

"God created humankind in God's image," the Bible tells us. "We are children of God," the Bible tells us. "God's steadfast love endures forever," the Bible tells us. And, "God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does God require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God?" the Bible tells us.

The Bible tells us to. That's another reason why we house the homeless. The Bible tells us to. The Bible tells us homeless people are made in "God's image," just like you and I are. The Bible tells us homeless people are "children of God," just like you and I are. The Bible tells us homeless people are loved by God "forever," just like you and I are. And the Bible tells us to treat the homeless with justice, kindness, and humility, just like

you and I would want to be treated. And you know, since any of us could, in fact, find ourselves homeless someday, wouldn't we want to be treated the way the Bible says we should treat the homeless?

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God,” Jesus tells us. “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another,” Jesus tells us. “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him,” Jesus tells us. And “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,” Jesus tells us.

Jesus tells us to. That's yet another reason why we house the homeless. Jesus tells us to. Jesus tells us the poor - including homeless people - are blessed and part of God's kingdom. Jesus tells us to love one another - including homeless people. Jesus tells us that the world - the world that includes homeless people - is saved through Jesus. And, Jesus tells us that people in need - including homeless people - are members of his family and we should care for them. Also, Jesus himself was homeless. Jesus tells us, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” If Jesus were homeless in the city of Menifee, would some city council members and some of our neighbors have us turn Jesus away from our church and not house him?! Well, the homeless people we do house in our church are Jesus, at least they are to me and to others in this congregation.

Kathleen, my daughter Erin, and I went grocery shopping the other night. A homeless woman in the parking lot asked us if we could help her out with some money. I gave her \$20 from the Pastor's Fund. She was very grateful. Then Kathleen asked her her name. She said her name was Jodi. Kathleen said, “Well hello, Jodi. I'm Kathleen, this is Erin, and this is Rev. Bill Freeman from Menifee United Church of Christ.” Jodi got all teary-eyed and said, “Oh, I've heard about all that you do for us homeless people. Thank you so much.” I then invited Jodi to come and sleep in our church if she needs to. I don't know whether she will take me up on my invitation. But Jodi and Kirk

and Isaac and Dana and Richard and Kelly, and anyone else who needs our help, are the main reasons why we house the homeless and why we will continue to do so.

Will the city tell us it's illegal for us to house the homeless? I don't know. I believe we are protected by the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." I believe we have the right to house the homeless as part of our "free exercise" of our religion. With your support we will continue to house the homeless for as long as we can, because we are a church, not a social club. With your support we will continue to house the homeless for as long as we can, because the Bible tells us to. And with your support we will continue to house the homeless for as long as we can, because Jesus tells us to.

Let us pray...

*God of Love,
Help us to continue to house the homeless.
Help us to continue to care for the poor.
And help us to convince our neighbors
and the city council that what we are doing is right.
Now and forevermore.
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*



**Menifee
United Church of Christ**





THE GOLDEN RULE

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*

Judaism

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*

Christianity

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*

Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*

Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*

Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*

Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*

Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*

Humanism