

DOING UNTO OTHERS IN CORVALLIS

We rarely see police officers during our morning walks. Never any walking. But the other day we saw two officers standing, looking across the river. That's exciting.

My first reflex is to check my speedometer, but of course we were walking. Should I speak to them? Of course.

So we stopped. They appeared to be young and friendly. Everyone seems young to us! We didn't want to interrupt some police operation. I hoped I seemed friendly.

So I asked a question that was on my mind—

"Do you know where all the homeless guys go now that the men's winter shelter is closed?"

I especially miss one I always speak with almost every day. None of the men we see have been around since March.

One of the officers answered for both of them—

"We were wondering that ourselves. Probably camping around wherever they can,"

I already knew that some camped right across from the river where we were standing and they were looking.

He added something else I already knew—

"They'll probably go to the First Christian Church when it opens at 9:00."

I didn't tell him that I know about that place. I had been minister there for over 8 years almost 40 years ago. They had recruited me from Los Angeles where I had downtown church experience. This church wanted to stay near down town and wanted me to lead a downtown ministry. Well, they got it.

It's a hard ministry. There needs to be a strong base of support in the church because many suburban type families really don't want homeless people hanging around. You have to maintain and grow a congregation. You also have to provide whatever kind of help you can to whatever kinds of people you have on your doorstep.

Those who want a "normal" church will go to the hills or the suburbs where they won't have homeless people.

So I was glad to hear that those police officers knew about First Christian Church. Most of the men I talk to on the streets also know about the church. Our town is in the midst of finding a better solution to this problem, It will need town people who want to treat others as we would want to be treated.

I personally think a nationally tested approach called "Housing First" may be the way to go.

Whichever way it goes I hope First Christian Church eventually gets put out of business...I mean put out of the *homeless* business — because that program will no longer be necessary. The hunger program is something else.

For now, if you want to be helped, or to help, I recommend First Christian Church.

Art Morgan, April 26, 2016

BOOK REMINDER

I have already recommended Kathleen Dean Moore's, "Great Tide Rising" as a book to inspire us in a period of earth and climate change. I noted a line that I believe fits my page above. She writes:

"Ecological science, indigenous wisdom, and almost all the religions of the world call us to recognize our kinships within the interconnected planet" (p. 100)

The Golden Rule invites us to "*recognize our kinships*" with one another.

Kathleen invites us to "*recognize our kinships*" with the whole earth. I suppose that includes downtown Corvallis.