

Homeless Ministry Talking Points

Shenkel United Church of Christ
1580 Shenkel Road, Pottstown, PA 19465 610-326-3535

- There is a need for safe, warm, temporary emergency shelter right now in North Coventry Township. There are few local options for people who are homeless.
- Shenkel UCC participated for three years in Montgomery County's "One Night at a Time" program, providing temporary emergency shelter for homeless guests for one month during the winters of 2002-02, 02-03 and 03-04. This program ended with the opening of a shelter at Norristown State Hospital which has a waiting list, and is a long way for homeless folks from our community to have to travel.
- Addressing this need, Ministries at Main Street (www.ministriesatmainstreet.org) coordinated a rotating shelter program last winter, where churches provided, for one month per location, a safe, warm sleeping space for people in need. Zion's UCC, St. John's UCC, and St. Paul's UCC were among the churches in Pottstown who participated in this ministry during the winter of 2007-08. (They will be participating again this year.) In this program, guests were transported to and from the host churches, remained in the building between the hours of 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM, and were supervised by two adults who remained awake throughout the night.
- North Coventry Township would not allow Shenkel UCC to participate in this ministry, claiming that doing so would violate zoning law. Shenkel's position is that providing temporary, emergency shelter for people in need is not a residential use of church property, but is part of the ministry of our congregation as we seek to be faithful to Jesus' commandment that we "love our neighbor as ourselves." Churches throughout the state of Pennsylvania and across the country have been participating in similar ministries for decades.
- Shenkel UCC is appealing North Coventry Township's ruling. In the meantime, it is going to be long, cold winter for many of our neighbors.

Where would you go if you suddenly found yourself homeless?

Please support the desire of the congregation of Shenkel United Church of Christ to offer their church building as a temporary emergency shelter for people in need of a warm, safe place to sleep. Thank you.