

First United Church of Bloomington

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First United Bloomington is finding it meaningfully troublesome to be filled so full of ministry opportunities in our own building. Historically the church sanctuary has been filled with music variety. With the nearby Indiana University and our outstanding acoustics and pipe organ, First United has been home to recitals from oboes to opera singers. While musical arts are beautiful, our struggle has been, how to be a church to those who while still perhaps having discerning musical ears need the additional touch that comes from receiving one's most basic needs met while not turning our backs on historic involvements.

This year is finding us devolving deeper into our communities needs and adding ourselves and our place to an ever shorting list of available community caring spots. We are now in our sixth year of being a home for those experiencing homelessness in our area. Three nights a week we are a shelter and a place to eat for sixty men and women. First United is joined with twenty other faith and non-faith partners in providing the volunteers to staff and administrate the program.

In addition, this year we have welcomed as guests four Head Start classrooms. We have long given ourselves to wondering what diversity might look like in our building. Head Start has shown us what it can begin to be.



At the other end of a very long hallway we are now home to and providing volunteers and giving to our area's program to provide nutrition to the most at risk at home seniors in our county....which is also named Monroe. The food pantry takes over two large rooms and a hallway as volunteer staff secures food, packages it into bundles and then hand delivers to needy seniors in our community twice a month.

Our bell choir now practices between stacks of potatoes and piles of rice and beans. On Mondays the space overlaps with the sounds of Bloomington's Gay Men's Chorus and in between the space is used, of course, for AA and ALANON meetings.

In much the same manner the other end of the same hallway we say goodbye to three to five year olds and turn their classrooms into sleeping spaces for those who need a safe, secure overnight shelter and a warm meal. We are operating 24/7 for three days a week.



Will we wear out our space? Was this way the space was ever envisioned to be used? If we wear out our space doing these things we hope it is because that is what doing too much good results in happening. In the meantime our many community involvements are treated with the many and beautiful sounds that our music program continues to inspire.