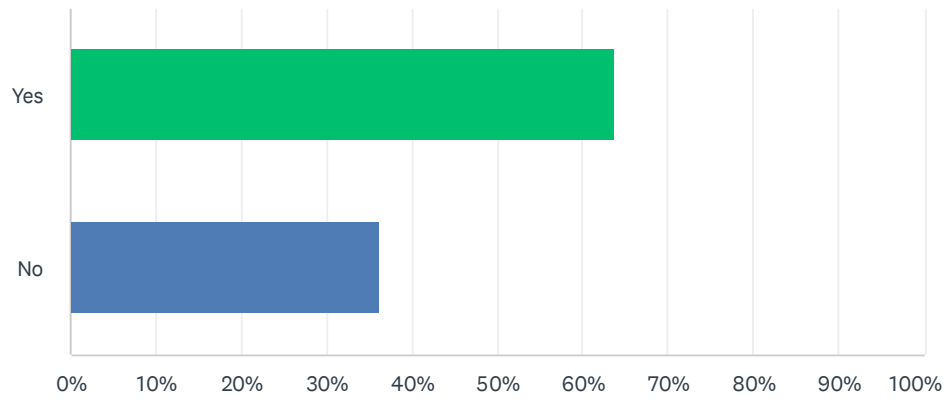


Q1 Do you support this policy?

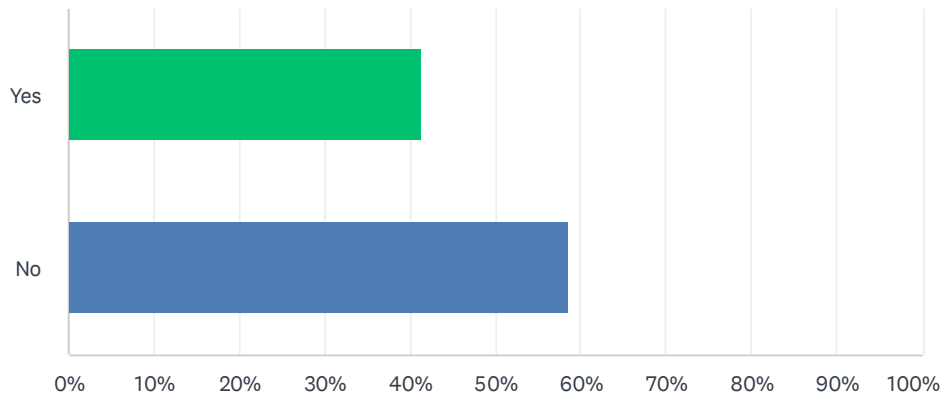
Answered: 116 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	63.8%	74
No	36.2%	42
TOTAL		116

Q2 If yes, would you be willing to help?

Answered: 92 Skipped: 24



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	41.3%	38
No	58.7%	54
TOTAL		92

Covenant Overnight Guest Policy Survey

Q3. Explanations and additional comments welcome.

83 answers

1. Need not encourage the use of our campus for sleeping, charging phones etc.
2. Right now I would not have the time help.
3. Covenant must work to address homelessness as it has and possibly in new ways. However, the church is not equipped to manage nightly residents. Legal issues related to liability and responsibilities need to be clarified and communicated.
4. I urge the Session to establish a task force with the charge to establish clear communication toward helping the homeless who trespass our church and grounds to help us work with ACC law enforcement, and existing public social services that have a mission for assisting homeless persons, so that professionals are guiding our efforts to help these homeless persons.
5. I am willing to help, but am at a loss as to how. I have picked up cigarette butts and trash which, according to these policies, should be unnecessary. I do not feel able to help enforce the policies, such as asking them to leave or pick up after themselves. The situation is far better than it was at this time last year, and I appreciate the people who have worked so diligently for the unhoused and for Covenant.
6. "In truth, the trash requires Covenanters to pick up it up; visitors are on benches when worshippers arrive; defalcation and urination persist. If Covenant were able to make this policy work, I would still resist. It is incumbent upon us to let these folks get the psychological and emotional help they need and we cannot provide. We are enabling them to put off addressing their most critical issues."
7. Other than plugging in their cell phones or using the public toilet outside, what "church facilities" would a homeless person use during the day?
8. " It's hard to draw the line between enabling a person suffering from addiction/mental illness and helping a person with no problems who is down on their luck. 20% of the homeless are schizophrenic and need professional care. Covenant can't provide such care. Until we hire a person with Travis's skills, we should put a moratorium on overnighting and daytime loitering."
9. The best help I can provide on a regular basis is placing food in the Little Pantry.
10. As an aging congregation active participation by many of our members is limited. The support of our members for the drive through food bank has been a fine avenue for community support.
11. We are limited in what we can do but I equate turning a blind eye to the homeless at our door to watching a drowning person and not throwing them a life line and telling them they should have learned how to swim. As a church I don't think out of sight out of mind is a solution.

<p>12. Define hangout. Is there a time limit. If I volunteer to help enforce the policy I need to be able to define hangout using the same criteria as other volunteers. Add to “buy” to the phrase “sell” and “use” drugs. Indicate that any item regardless of usefulness or value, unattended is considered discarded and will be immediately removed</p>
<p>13. I think it is a fair and clear contract for both parties. Our church community must maintain a Christian atmosphere for everyone. I think the policy has been well thought out.</p>
<p>14. The policy is problematic in two ways: it does not define temporary, and it does not include a commitment by the church to commitment the financial resources to hire the additional staff required to support it. At this point we know the challenges and that it will take additional staff to support this policy. I also think it conflicts with our other goal of growing church membership as we need younger families to join. Young families will be concerned about the safety of their children due to the presence of homeless citizens staying on campus (consider the effect of a child finding a used needle on the playground or worse, being pricked by it). In the present day, most homeless people currently using out campus need professional support services to rise out of their living situation and our church does not have the resources to provide that.</p>
<p>15. I am concerned about the safety and security of our members and our church property. Unless there are people who can spend the time to enforce this policy, I do not believe that our current situation is sustainable. We do not have the staff with the expertise to support people who are homeless, as they often have a myriad of needs which may require the assistance of social workers and others. It is my understanding that Family Promise, formerly IHN, was created so that multiple church families could volunteer their support as well as have professional support to enable the families to transition to more permanent housing. I do not think that our policy can support a homeless program on our campus as it is. Therefore, since there are other programs we can support more safely and with a proven record of success, I do not agree that our church should continue its current homeless situation.</p>
<p>16. Really none of the above listed requests for the homeless are respected or followed so I say it's time to stop offering it. We are finally getting the outdoor area looking like someone cares. Our location is not the answer to what these homeless people really need. They need more than we can offer them on our property so let's work to make that happen instead of just providing a place to hang out, charge their phones, and sleep.</p>

<p>17. "At this time overnight visitors are remaining on campus at our front and back doors. They are leaving trash, not usually in cans provided. Police can remove them, and even ban them after 3 times. They still return. This situation is what greets anyone coming to the church both day and night. At times there have been some dangerous events. Covenant has a good heart, which is why we provide the food pantry distribution. That mission is safe and serving those in need. I don't believe we will gain new members with what greets them when they visit during the week or on Wednesdays or Sundays. We will not be inviting to families with small children or teens. Even now they are afraid to play on the playground or basketball area. We need children to stay vital and grow. Please remember serving youth and children is important for their growth and stability in Christ. They need the nurture and grounding. Our mission can be food distribution and growth of our congregation. I think otherwise we are a dying church. We are a wonderful congregation that is spread too thin."</p>
<p>18. We do not think this is an effective way for Covenant to support efforts to assist the homeless. We think Covenant should consistently support efforts by the county to provide temporary shelter and long-term care for the homeless, including assistance with psychiatric issues, joblessness, addiction problems, etc. This assistance may be financial or in other forms and should be consistent and on-going.</p>
<p>19. "If the overnight guests abided by the policy 100%, I could better support it, but that isn't the case. Having homeless people hanging around the church in the evenings makes it very uncomfortable (and scary) for those who must go to their cars in the dark parking lot, especially women who are alone. Installing very bright lights in the dark corners might discourage camping out.</p>
<p>20. I don't believe that the church can provide shelter for the homeless and still function as a church for families. I am afraid that the homeless require different help than we can provide. I think that we will compromise our primary mission as a house of worship trying to be a shelter for the homeless.</p>
<p>21. "The policy is fine. Assuring adherence to it is the problem. Enforcement of the policy must be consistent, as well as persistent everyday. Does the church have the people required to accomplish enforcing the policy in this way? Does the church have the emotional strength to tell a person in need of something beyond the furnished temporary shelter that it does not possess the means to help? After all, the church has been subjected to more than a decade of teaching that it is unChristian not to help a person grappling with a hardship. Isn't it the fact that this policy is taped-up only at a window in the narthex near the Memorial Garden? How does this limited scope of communication inform the unhoused person, or lend support to an enforcing volunteer or staffer?"</p>
<p>22. I really am on the fence. I think this will take a tremendous amount of supervision and checking for compliance. I am working all the time and have no time to supervise. And am not tough enough. So who will? Can we sponsor a real homeless shelter away from the church grounds?</p>

<p>23. We do not have trained staff to provide mental or medical health to the homeless individuals staying on our property. We should help them go to the homeless shelter or encampment. They provide showers, bathrooms, sleeping space, and have social workers and community activities who visit there regularly to help them.</p>
<p>24. If this policy is enforced and guests abide by guidelines I support it. Hopefully we can network with other community organizations to offer more all encompassing support for the homeless.</p>
<p>25. Hasn't this policy been in effect for several years, at least? Why is it being questioned now? Because the way the question is written you can't answer NO to the first question and yes to the second. Strange. Why can't I answer No to #1 and yes to # 2- -I think there are problems with the policy but I would like the option to help. Can the option be somewhere between being the Good Samaritan and the church leaders who decide to cross on the other side? Love your neighbor--maybe we need to ask who is our neighbor in the era of the homeless and drug addicted? And the church has no right to determine who is allowed to live on the properties bordering the church-#5. Good wishes to all the session--you can figure it out.</p>
<p>26. Should not be allowed on campus during day at all. Eliminate item 3</p>
<p>27. I think the policy comes from a kind place in people's hearts. I think we served a critical need at the height of the pandemic. I like having a sink and ports potty available. I think we need to look at the makeup of our congregation to determine if we have the skills, knowledge and manpower to supervise such an offering. I think working through established agencies is a better way to serve our neighbors-Food bank, Family promise, the Ark, meals on wheels.</p>
<p>28. The weather is getting more chilly, soon rain will start and we might have snow or ice. It tears my heart that our sisters and brothers may be huddled in a blanket under a tent. I'm getting older, and will be on a fixed income soon. When I see these homeless women with only a rolling totebags, I worry about my things, and about my cats. Would I survive on the streets. While many of the unhoused may indeed be mentally ill and self medicating with illegal drugs or alcohol--but not all. Some, who stand one paycheck away from being homeless, fall ill, miss that one paycheck, and the ball rolls downhill from there. That missed paycheck means the rent will be late and build a fine, so then the gas and electricity will be late or partially paid. And the cycle continues until they are evicted. Why do we not have a volunteer team, so that in inclement weather (and we can decide what inclement means) , we can open the rooms used by Family Promise, and allow them to sleep and bathe in warmth? We can bring in dinner and have breakfast foods available. The primary difference in these unhoused and Family Promise unhoused is "our" unhoused aren't part of a family with children. With the Salvation Army closing indefinitely, it is only going to get worse. I don't know how we would chose the six who get to stay. I'd say to pray on it.</p>

29. "* I support if clarifications are made to the policy. In my opinion, church members/other volunteers must have specific policies to rely on in order to ensure consistency. And all must enforce these policies/guidelines in the same manner. One person should not be allowing a behavior that someone else may deem inappropriate. I have sent my revisions to the policy directly to Bert. "
30. I feel happy and proud that covenant is a safe shelter for those in need to lay their head. I do not have time to commit, though, to helping facilitate our church policy. I am grateful to those who do this.
31. "I wish I could feel differently about this, but I have been personally involved with trying to help this policy work. I find the homeless population to be defiant in obeying the policy and disrespectful towards church volunteers. We are not a homeless shelter, nor are we capable of being one."
32. This experiment with housing folks has progressed beyond the initial intent. It has gotten out of hand several times. We are not capable of sustaining this situation as it is, due to lack of resources (volunteers and other resources). Also, many members and staff do not feel safe coming and going and being at the church with homeless folks hanging around. We determined through the previous survey that one of our primary goals should be to grow the church. Many of us, including myself, do not think it is possible at this time to do both (house homeless folks on-site and encourage new families to join Covenant. We do not feel it is a safe environment, esp for children, youth, and older folks. There are other ways that we can support the homeless community, by collaborating with other entities, like Family Promise. We can investigate into other partnerships in order to help the Athens community. Thank you!
33. "Parameters are not clearly defined. What is a ""brief time""? Who decides what ""use church facilities as anyone else might""includes? Does that mean only to attend services, meetings, etc? or can anyone come into the restrooms and kitchen at any time to go to toilet or microwave food?"
34. How do we identify a 'regular' user of the property? ... or know when someone has overstayed?
35. "If other services for the homeless aren't provided then nothing in their life will ever improve. Offering a place with no responsibilities attached or mental health services is just Inabling the homeless. Family Promise is a wonderful example of what a church can do for the homeless. Providing just a camp site is not..."
36. We will continue to provide food in the little pantry.
37. I believe our present policy of allowing homeless people to stay overnight on our property is a very divisive issue for our congregation at this time. I think we need to spend our energies on evaluating our mission and getting our scattered congregation back to a united group of strong believers so we can again reach out to the many needs of our community. We need to take some care for ourselves so we can reach out and care for others.
38. "Regarding question 2, my heart and spirit are willing, but my aging body is weak. I do hope we can find ways to continue to help our homeless neighbors."

<p>39. I do not support homeless people sleeping or even being on our church campus. The rules listed above are not followed by people who sleep/live on our campus. I have seen trash, cigarette butts, wrappers, toilet paper, etc. I have heard that there are needles, and condoms found on the campus. I think that the congregation of Covenant Presbyterian Church has been very generous over the years and currently in trying to help the homeless and hungry. This church participated in setting up organizations such as the Arc, the Food Bank, the Council on Ageing for people in need. We participated in The Feast, and the Tuesday/Thursday food distribution, that I realize are down to only Thursdays for food distribution currently. I don't think we will be able to attract new members when our campus is a place for the homeless as it has become. I fear that we may already have lost members due to the presence of the homeless on campus. I wonder if our liability insurance covers these homeless who we have invited to essentially live here. I also feel that it can be a dangerous situation because I expect that some of these people have mental health issues. I really wonder how many of them are truly trying to find permanent housing. I am actually in awe of how we have provided for their needs on our campus -- sink for hand washing, bathroom facilities, charging stations, little food pantry. I think we have made them too comfortable on our campus. Thank you for allowing me to say what I feel about this situation!</p>
<p>40. The rules are too vague, and we have few resources to enforce them. The rules are being generally ignored, and our church members and guests are uncomfortable when they encounter people sleeping on our property.</p>
<p>41. I think it expresses the love and welcoming Jesus expects from his followers while still making clear that we have limitations because we aren't equipped to be a shelter and we expect folks to treat the grounds with respect. It is also clear that we will follow through with consequences for those who treat the grounds and the policy with disrespect. It strikes a good balance.</p>
<p>42. It would be wonderful if this signage would work. We've already tried parts of it and the priveledges have been abused. Maybe we should volunteer at the new homeless shelter. Right now we are out of our depth. Concentrate on what works- the food distribution.</p>
<p>43. Covenant has a long tradition of outreach to the community which should continue. I do not believe we have staffing to support a policy that allows and encourages individuals to sleep unsupervised on the property. There is no way to enforce this policy, even though most agree with our church's desire to be a welcoming and caring place for all. We should do all we can to continue to support Family Promise in its effort to help homeless families; continue to provide food distribution to those in need, and support the community's efforts at the Homeless Encampment. We should consult and partner with congregations on the east side of Athens to try to address homelessness and seek solutions on how to truly help individuals move out of homelessness. Inpatient mental health treatment is a definite need because we have individuals who may be helped with treatment for alcohol, drug, and mental health disorders if inpatient services are more available.</p>

<p>44. I am not in favor of this policy. I don't think they need to come in to use phone, rest rooms, or sleep on our property. Athens Clarke county has a homeless site that is on the bus line to provide shelter for the homeless. I feel the church should support the homeless encampment at some level. Maybe they can charge phones and use rest rooms at east side police precinct on Lexington road. I don't think our staff is prepared to facilitate at the level that is required to maintain a growing homeless population. I am concerned about Insurance Liability that might not be acceptable to our current church insurance policy in the event that we knowingly provide shelter and access to church property by the homeless. Our church may incur liability if an accident or crime might happen on our property by those individuals we knowingly permit to reside here.</p>
<p>45. We should not encourage or support - in any way - overnight sleeping on our church campus.</p>
<p>46. Not clear what help is mentioned in question 2, but we are willing to help where we can.</p>
<p>47. Policy could be clearer on enforcement and we could try to find a way to be a vehicle for other social services needed by this population.</p>
<p>48. "I firmly believe we should do as Christ would do. He aided the poor, hungry and homeless but didn't approve of abusing others or our own bodies. Allowing the homeless to be on campus in the evenings and leave by 8:30 sounds reasonable as does #1 and 4. How can we as members of Covenant help as asked in #2. "</p>
<p>49. Having the homeless hanging around deters the use of the church property by anyone with small children and we need families to join our congregation.</p>
<p>50. Thanks to all who continue to help with these homeless people. If the visitors egregiously overextend their welcome at some point again, we should consider disbanding our open door policy. I know there's often a fine line that Brian skillfully and compassionately walks in dealing with the individuals, and we are thankful to him for that. But the situation is no doubt wearing on anyone who monitors/cleans up, and can't a welcome sight for church visitors.</p>

<p>51. This is a different policy than the one previously worked on and adopted right before the pandemic. The tone is clear and mostly welcoming. I would encourage partnering with any local agencies that address homelessness and substance abuse to bring programs to the campus. Covenant may serve as a refuge but without either Covenant provided staffing or outside providers, it could continue to be a strain on church resources. If there were local programs that had a persistent presence on the campus, it could provide refuge for the weary unhoused neighbors and also discourage the use of the campus for illicit activities (namely drug use and/or sales). Homelessness is a complex issue. The persons seeking refuge are largely benign and in need of a safe place to rest for the night. We should minister to those folks, even if the ministry is a clean campus. I would hate for them to be punished due to the wayward acts of a few. Those few, still, are deserving of compassion and mercy and, again, partnering with local agencies doing the work of substance abuse treatment would be wise. I'd love to see Covenant house more programs that help the community that lives around the church, whether in their own homes or not.</p>
<p>52. Unable to help right now.</p>
<p>53. "I am totally against hosting homeless persons. This policy is not compassion, it's turning a blind eye to individuals with mental, addiction and other problems. ACC has agencies that can help these individuals. By hosting them, we are discouraging them from seeking proper help.</p> <p>There are two approaches to homelessness: service before shelter (individuals must use services before being given shelter) or shelter before service. I am a firm believer in the former and it has a strong track record.</p> <p>If I were a homeowner in Green Acres, I'd be irate at Covenant for hosting homeless individuals. We are bringing drugs, unsanitary conditions (fecal matter, urine, needles) into their neighborhood; and there's no denying that is happening. And it will spread outward from Covenant. It's inexcusable and I'd be looking to take legal action.</p> <p>The back grassy area used to be a play area. If we still had children, I probably wouldn't allow them to play there due to the probability of encountering needles and human waste.</p> <p>Covenant is now seeing the side effects of its homeless policy. The last three Wednesdays that I have come to Covenant Connection, there has been a homeless person on the bench in front of the fellowship hall begging. This is not going to make the Covenant campus a place that people want to be, including its current members."</p>
<p>54. "I was hesitant to say I would be willing to help not knowing what that entails. We should continue to search for additional ways to help the homeless. It would be a good idea to talk with members of neighboring churches to learn how they handle the homeless issue and how we might join together in service to the homeless."</p>
<p>55. Policy seems straightforward, welcoming and supportive. I don't think it should be weakened nor made more stringent.</p>
<p>56. Well, It's me Brian.</p>

57. Maybe a Monday thru Friday limit on overnight stays as most Congregation facility use is on weekends.
58. "Good work! Please correct grammar. Clean up, get up, and stop by should not have hypphens, but hang-out should have one. Thank you. "
59. Help how?
60. This is a slippery slope that could turn out to be a huge deal. Too risky
61. Maybe add something about no weapons on campus
62. I support this policy for those who abide by it. I live in Oconee Co., so it is not as convenient to be a regular presence on the church grounds as if I lived on the eastside. If cameras can be used to monitor the abusers, and if the abusers can be effectively prohibited from being on the grounds, I am in favor of this policy. I do not wish to see our facility and grounds abused.
63. Rules may be set but they will not be honored by those involved. No policing should be done by the church. Discovery of undesirable things found should be reported to authorities. No one should be allowed inside to protect safety of office staff, Charging a phone? Not a reason to threaten safety. You are squatting yet you have a phone? The fact is that they will be there whatever we say so make our policy to our advantage only. We may be charitable but we live in reality. Face us . Work within a framework and we support you within our means. Ann Anderson, not wishing to be anonymous
64. We have to be willing to say "no" when the situation fits, ie someone sets the tent on fire, or leaves trash on the steps and doorway. But perhaps, if we had volunteers, we could allow the visitors to take showers one day a week from 9-12, and in inclement weather, if we had volunteers to watch them, could put their sleeping bags in an inside room near the bathrooms...an in at 6pm out by 8am. Get volunteers to bring hot meals on those days.
65. Knowing that we can only provide a temporary haven, what can we do to improve links with professional help like ABHS and Bigger Vision, etc.
66. I believe we should continue to continue to host the weekly food bank and participate with the Family Promise program (and I am willing to help with these two programs) but I don't believe we are set up to host overnight guests
67. Covenant is not a homeless shelter & should not attempt to be one.
68. I am unable to help, although I support the policy. My only concern is the enforcement of the times, cleaning up, etc. We have come to the church during the day to see people sleeping under the stairs and trash on the ground. As long as it's enforceable I am fine with it.
69. Because my husband is immunosuppressed, we have to be extremely cautious regarding Covid. I can't help in person but am willing to help in other ways.

<p>70. "Help" is ambiguous here. What kind of help is needed? Who currently on staff is able to help coordinate it? My understanding is that Travis' role before moving on was helping do this work, and we have an approved position that includes community outreach and ministry. We should clarify how the congregation would assist that hire.</p>
<p>71. The issue of having people spend the night at the church is not going away, regardless of our policies. We need to figure out how to make this work, rather than trying to pretend it will all go away if we have the right policy in place to keep people off the church property. Allowing people shelter is literally the least we can do to help the most marginalized and vulnerable people in society. Not wanting to see their pain is no excuse. We must work until we find a solution that includes offering shelter.</p>
<p>72. "The policy is fine. However, we are dealing with folks that: will not or cannot read the policy will ignore the policy that will most likely continue to make our church a haven for undesirable, often illegal activities that will defeat any purpose to make this a young family friendly place of worship and a place to bring children. and, in my opinion, be a very difficult policy to maintain."</p>
<p>73. We need to work as closely as possible with all other churches on the Eastside to come up with ways to help the temporarily unhoused.</p>
<p>74. I believe a church must follow the belief of love thy neighbor where love means to provide needed support. So I believe Covenant congregation must provide support to the homeless otherwise it is a group of people who meet in a building and is not a church. The homeless need to have the perspective that Covenant is a loving support community but is not a place of residence or an organization that can fulfill all the needs to maintain a person's health. I believe the statement aligns with my thoughts but i think tje opening paragraph needs to include an items where the support of a homeless shelter can be obtained. This may help indicate us be more explicit that the church grounds is not a homeless shelter</p>
<p>75. As stated in #2, should not be on campus at all during day. #3 should be eliminated. It effectively negates #2. Preferably, homeless should be suggested alternative places to stay. Free buses provide access to most parts of town. Former church activities such as "mothers morning off" can never be offered again if homeless are on the campus. After school programs such as "the Cave" will also be impacted negatively. If problems continue to occur I suggest a "No Trespass" policy.</p>

<p>76. "I believe the camping hours should be narrowed: 9:30pm to 8:30pm. Our building hosts many evening meetings, and the presence of the homeless scares off some attendees who really need the AA meetings or the camaraderie of social gatherings. While it might be easy to shrug off their fears, sometimes the homeless DO have mental problems or substance abuse issues that make them unpredictable and could cause them to be dangerous. Our church is currently in decline and we need everyone to feel safe here to help it grow. We don't know which of our members and guests have had ""Me Too"" moments that haunt them and I'd like to see the church respect their needs as well. If people no longer feel safe at Covenant, the church goes under and then NOBODY gets helped. In that same vein, I'd also recommend that unhoused guests not be allowed to use the patio areas connected to the main doors (front door and fellowship hall). Maybe these cement areas are painted with a colored border to let the homeless know which zones are used for passage and official gatherings but not for loitering. When I have guests in my own home, I draw boundaries on where they can roam and what I offer. That's simply maintaining a livable balance.</p> <p>I marked that I would be willing to help, but I have to admit I don't feel led to do anything on a regular basis. I want the church to become a FAMILY church again as well as focus on community activities we can do well such as the food pantry, Family Promise, Jubilee Partners, and The Cave. We cannot be all things to all people and hosting the homeless regularly means a lot of cleanup and vigilance. Since we do not have the manpower and resources to become a homeless shelter, the church's role with the homeless beyond the ministries listed above should be warm and kind yet brief and limited."</p>
77. Live at PVA and am a cartaker of a relative
78. We need to make sure we back this up with a policy to bar anyone who breaks these rules for 2 years and make sure we have an LOA signed so officers can bar them, too.
79. Requires volunteer congregants willingness to monitor the grounds regularly for compliance.
80. enforcement is key.
81. I like the practice of maintaining a Porta-Potty on-site. If one is to be kept then that should probably be mentioned in the visitors policy—no peeing in the bushes, etc.
82. I think the policy should include that only the fellowship hall can be available for such individuals. Opening up the whole church, including showers, creates a risk to persons and property. I think it is also critical that the insurance company be aware of this policy or other matters. They may have an issue with potential liability.
83. Does not address the question of interference with evening meetings since the prohibition ends at 5:30 pm. Maybe add something like "Please keep the main entrance to the building clear (until 10 pm, if you want to add a time) to facilitate access by groups that meet here in the evening."