**BostonWarm Update (September 2015)**

Dear Friends,

We at Church of the Covenant continue to be very strong supporters of BostonWarm – that interfaith coalition to support those experiencing homelessness in Boston that formed in direct response to the Oct. 2014 closing of the Long Island Bridge. After raising significant funds to open and sustain 2 warming day centers through the coldest and snowiest months of the year this past winter, and one shelter through to this day, some changes are taking place. After 2 working retreats, and other follow-up strategy meetings, our leadership team has faithful discerned that there is still a profound need in our city to continue this BostonWarm Coalition, both

1) to provide more safe and warm community gathering space for those experiencing homelessness in Boston, especially as the winter approaches, and

2) to continue to advocate as an interfaith community for the needs of those experiencing homelessness in Boston including fighting for housing, dignity and justice. To be what I like to call a group that “collects and directs” information about the needs of our homeless sisters and brothers to those in the halls of public office and power.

The following decisions have prayerfully and carefully been made:

* BostonWarm gives its full support to a transition of day center management and operations to **Ecclesia Ministries (Common Cathedral).** The new center will operate two days a week at **Emmanuel Church on Newbery St**. BostonWarm will assist with a fundraising effort for the centers. Staff and volunteers that are willing and able to continue through the transition will do so, with ecclesia taking on recruitment and management of any future staff and volunteer needs.
* **City Mission Society** will continue to convene a BostonWarm group to work on advocacy and education on homelessness and addiction recovery.
* Over the coming weeks, BostonWarm staff will begin the process of getting notice about the transition to guests. Due to space constraints, storage services/lockers will not be available at the Emmanuel site. Staff will assist guests in retrieving stored items, and plans are being made to ensure guests will be able to retrieve belongings even if they are unable to get to Old South by the end of September. We will not throw away any belongings stored with BostonWarm.
* BostonWarm funds will be used to ensure a responsible end to the locker program and the Old South day center. Funds that remain after transition costs are accounted for will be disbursed to ecclesia ministries and City Mission to support the day center and advocacy efforts.

Special thanks to the staff and board of Ecclesia Ministries for jumping in and working quickly to see if their leadership of the day centers would work and for the Old South church staff who have helped administer the day center in these past few months. And finally, our enormous thanks to the staff of the Old South day center—Kate, David, Robin. The day center transition will not be without pain and loss. Our gratitude to them as they minister through this change.

**Please let your COTC Next Steps Team know if you would like to help in anyway with BostonWarm through volunteering at Emmanuel or attending advocacy meetings. Please continue to keep the guests of the day centers in your prayers,**

In peace and solidarity,

Rev. Rob Mark