

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church
Park Working Group

July 28, 2009

Dear Friends of the Homeless,

Our church, St Vincent de Paul and the Archdiocese of Baltimore have negotiated an agreement with the City of Baltimore that requires us to restore the park to the condition in which it was received and seek help to reinforce Maryland State regulations against encampments.

The park will be closed and "no trespassing" signs posted for the park restoration beginning on August 1, 2009.

This restoration will take 4-6 weeks. When the park re-opens it will be under new rules that close the park for a two hour period every day for cleaning and clearing of anything left behind.

Please read the attached newsletter for details.

We again **STRONGLY** encourage you to redirect your donations to the agencies that provide direct service and care to the homeless. The **city shelter**, in particular, is faced with providing a bed and meals to hundreds of men, women, and children EVERY DAY and have to rely on shrinking city funds to do it. The **Salvation Army** has provided meals for years to people in the park and has a great system for distributing to those who need. Contact information is provided in an attachment.

We do not know how the park will be used when it re-opens. We do not know if people in need will congregate there. People can sleep there but no one can live there.

People who donate to those in need by leaving food and/or clothing on the sidewalk should note that the sidewalk is city property and the city intends to issue citations for violation of the "no dumping" ordinance.

At day's end, the answer is not in tolerating and supporting encampments on church grounds or under bridges. The answer is affordable housing, good education, employment opportunities, and addiction treatment. Please have your church community join ours in participating in BRIDGE (Baltimore Regional Initiative to Develop Genuine Equality). BRIDGE is an ecumenical organization doing grass roots Gospel work to address, advocate, and solve our common problems.

God's blessings on your work,
Audrey Rogers for the Park Working Group