

Press Statement

Dane County Health and Human Services Budget

November 5, 2014

Rev. Eldonna Hazen

First Congregational United Church of Christ

First Congregational, as a faith community, feels strongly about the care of ALL of God's children. Our church community is not shy about providing resources to help those who struggle. Our members are generous with their giving, providing resources for the staff to be able to assist people with eviction prevention, bus passes, food coupons, gas cards, utility shut-off prevention, and hotel vouchers, just to name the most used resources.

But we also feel that it is impossible for us to keep up with the growing needs of the community. Our church provides \$21,250 in direct support (meaning support directly to the individual), and \$26,000 in indirect support (meaning some staff time and support to service organizations) to those who need a safety net. How much more should one church be expected to provide? These are only the track-able dollars, this does not include the hours of volunteer work our members do directly with agencies.

I think it might be helpful for each of the Dane County board members to spend a day listening to the needs of individuals and trying to decide who gets assistance and who doesn't. Often the people who come to our church asking for assistance have gotten into this challenging financial situation through no fault of their own. Maybe it would be helpful to spend a day at Luke House, Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, the Salvation Army Women's Shelter, Madison-area Urban Ministry, Community Action Coalition, or Porchlight; all organizations that we work directly with and provide assistance to their clients.

To cut services or to withhold monies meant for Health and Human services is the equivalent of robbing people of their dignity. I encourage this sub-committee, and ultimately the Dane County Board to make a strong stand saying that they will provide support for services and follow through with the designated funding.