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**“HOMELESS JESUS” SCULPTURE TO BE UNVEILED AT MISSOURI UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

*Donor Gifted Statue To Recognize Church’s Commitment To Columbia’s Unsheltered*

**COLUMBIA, Mo.** – Missouri United Methodist Church will unveil and dedicate a “Homeless Jesus” statue in its downtown courtyard on Sunday, June 26, at noon. The sculpture has been erected in cities around the globe and was presented to the church by David Webber in recognition of the church’s work with Columbia’s unhoused population, notably for helping establish Room at the Inn in the community.

Webber has been an active advocate for Columbia’s unhoused community members for years and was moved after seeing an iteration of the statue in Washington, D.C., thinking it a simple and powerful way to inspire action. “I hope it [the statue] sparks thousands of looks and conversations about our obligation to one another,” he said.

The church’s lead pastor, Rev. Troy Bowers, added, “This statue is a striking reminder that we have neighbors who need our help. It honors our congregation’s work with Room at the Inn, but also inspires our community for the future.”

The seven-foot-long bronze sculpture by sculptor Timothy Schmalz is a visual representation of the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 25 and features an individual lying on a park bench, their face and body obscured by a blanket. Only upon examining the figure’s uncovered feet is it evident that the person is Jesus, as indicated by the two wounds.

Rev. Jim Bryan, who was lead pastor at Missouri United Methodist Church when the emergency shelter was created in the winter of 2008-09, was instrumental in the creation of Room at the Inn and recently said, “I’m proud that the church stepped up then and said, ‘Yes, we will help.’ And I hope we all continue to do so.”

**About the [Homeless Jesus Statues](#):** Sculptor Timothy Schmalz installed the original sculpture at Regis College at the University of Toronto in 2013. Iterations of the statues have been erected on five continents, notably at the Vatican, where it was blessed by Pope Francis.

**About Room at the Inn:** [Room at the Inn](#) is an interfaith and community effort to provide a warm and safe place to sleep for those experiencing homelessness in Columbia during the winter months. Room at the Inn rotates between several local churches that recruit volunteers to help run the shelter day-to-day.

**About Missouri United Methodist Church:** [Missouri United Methodist Church](#) is located in downtown Columbia. The church is noted for its community outreach and mission work, including the creation of an emergency winter shelter that became Room at the Inn in Columbia.

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