



*To move from words to actions*  
*To move from individualism to intimate fellowship*  
*To move from charity to changing structures*

About once every three months, I run into a woman at the grocery store who used to go to our church. Although I know it, I don't think I've ever used her name. I'm not sure she knows mine. But we always stop and chat a few minutes, usually talking about how much we try to accomplish on our day off. I often inquire about her young children – they are growing up. It doesn't seem awkward, but I always walk away wondering why she stopped attending First United and often kicking myself for not coming right out and asking.

As I hear and learn more about our Vision themes, I am thinking about ways I might live into each of them. Which one speaks to me? Where might my gifts best be used? When I think about the woman I see at the grocery, and others who have fallen away from First United, I wonder what led them to leave? Was it a lack of intimate fellowship? Was it too much talk and not enough action? Wouldn't it be good to know? I do believe that most people appreciate being asked or hearing they are missed. It sometimes makes a difference.

Inspired by the Vision, I'm committing myself to follow through on my wonderings. There are three families I intend to be in touch with. I will be stepping into conversation that is uncomfortable for me but I am challenging myself to act, to worry less about myself and more about our First United community. It is a place that has supported and comforted me through some rough times, and provided me with deep relationships I would not have had otherwise. I am excited about our future. I plan to be intentional about building our blessed community. And the next time I see her at the grocery, I will greet this woman by name and let her know her absence is noticed and that she is missed. It just might make a difference.

Gracious God – I am so very grateful for the blessing of being part of your community at First United. We are called to be your eyes, ears and feet when we encounter others. We feel your presence most when we are doing just that. Thank you for holding us in your heart, and showing us the way to hold others in ours. Amen

Beth Mrkvicka