



UNION GOSPEL MISSION

# LIFECHANGE LETTER

*Feeding the hungry, restoring the addict and loving our neighbor since 1927.*

AUGUST 2021

## Operation Overcoat

2020 was a year of flexibility and creativity for us all. With restrictions in place due to the pandemic, UGM had to reimagine Operation Overcoat. Instead of one large downtown event, UGM partnered with several local churches to distribute food and clothing to our neighbors in need.

The UGM staff and LifeChange residents were overwhelmed by the generosity of our community. Thanks to your financial donations, volunteer efforts, and gifts of

coats, hats, scarves, and so many other needed items, we were able to distribute over 600 backpacks throughout Portland as part of our 2020 Operation Overcoat.

This year we are going to continue our effort with local churches and expand the reach of Operation Overcoat throughout the metro area.

Only 25% of Portland's homeless population lives downtown. As you travel throughout the

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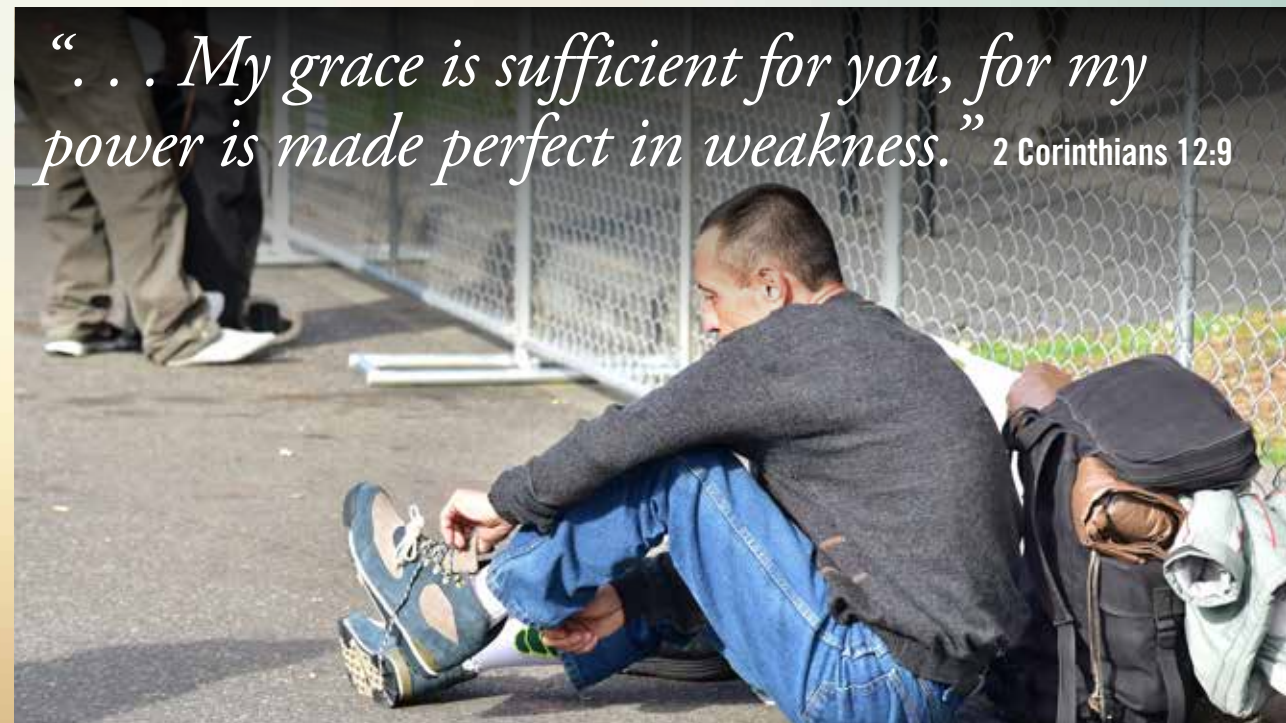
# Operation Overcoat

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metro area it's hard not to notice the impact the last year has had on our homeless neighbors. With UGM's Search + Rescue team and even more church partners, we can reach more people in need that might not have easy access to services.

Starting the last Saturday in September, UGM, along with our partners, will be hosting several mini events that will deliver backpacks with shoes, coats, pants, and other vital supplies to help our neighbors in need navigate the winter weather. Through this effort we are anticipating reaching over 200 more people than last year. We've increased our goal from 600 in 2020 to over 800 in 2021.

**Please partner with us to spread the love of Jesus and make this our best Operation Overcoat ever!**



## UGM BY THE NUMBERS: OCTOBER 2020-MAY 2021



**TOTAL MEALS**  
142,389



**SEARCH+RESCUE KITS**  
15,166



**EMERGENCY FOOD BOXES**  
1,317



**DINNERS**  
7,220



**SACK LUNCHES**  
4,960



**HOT BREAKFAST AND LUNCH**  
48,779

## MARTY: "I finally have peace."

Marty grew up in an alcoholic home. Drinking was considered a reward for a hard day's work. At only 8 years old Marty's father pulled him aside and shared a beer with him. In Marty's family, alcohol was always involved in recreational activities. Since childhood Marty has always used alcohol for stress relief and entertainment.

In the late 80's Marty decided that he needed a change, so he quit drinking for several years. "I've had some long stretches of sobriety in my life," he says. "But I've also had some long stretches of constant drinking too. I was very successful in business, but I threw it all away pursuing pleasure and satisfaction by drinking."

"I believed in God, but I really didn't understand or have a relationship with Jesus," explains Marty. "Not until I came to UGM's LifeChange did I really develop a relationship with Christ, and finally I found that peace I've been looking for."



**Matthew 25:35** "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in . . ."

**UGM's LifeChange is a Christ-centered recovery program where residents live and work in a community of people committed to transforming their lives and breaking the grip of addiction. LifeChange consists of counseling, work therapy, discipleship and transitional after care, at no cost to the resident.**

## OPERATION OVERCOAT:

### Ways You Can Help

- 1. Organize a donation drive at your church, workplace, or school.** Our most needed items include pants, new undergarments, sleeping bags, boots, and coats. Drop your items off at Union Gospel Mission at 3 NW Third Avenue by August 27th.
- 2. Support Operation Overcoat financially.** It costs about \$23.53 to serve each person through Operation Overcoat. Consider a special financial gift for Operation Overcoat. You can give online at [ugmportland.org](http://ugmportland.org).
- 3. Your church or organization can help distribute backpacks.** If you think your church or organization would be interested in partnering with UGM in distributing food and backpacks to the homeless community in your area, please contact our volunteer department at [bernadetteg@ugmportland.org](mailto:bernadetteg@ugmportland.org) or call 503.274.4483
- 4. Please pray.** Join us in praying for reaching the unreachable and sharing the love of Christ with the brokenhearted in our city.

**Your Gift of \$23.53 provides an Operation Overcoat backpack with clothes, life essentials and a meal that would cost over \$200 in a retail environment.**

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

**AUGUST 2021**

# THE PRODIGAL'S PATH

A Message from Union Gospel Mission  
Director Jason Christensen



*“A lot has  
changed, Dad.”*

It had been 18 months since my daughters and I last visited downtown Portland. In between those months a global pandemic imposed social and economic isolation we'd not seen in a century. In our isolation we watched the culmination of decades of racial and social inequality manifest itself in civil unrest across the nation with Portland a focal point of national news coverage. And then there was the cruelest outcome of the virus and failing economy: An unprecedented number of people experiencing homelessness.

While acknowledging the obvious changes, I would also tell my daughters the opportunity to love our neighbor and advance the Kingdom of God in Portland had merely grown. A car ride and conversation with UGM's Executive Director, Bill Russell, only further inspired me to depart my comforts in Denver and move to Portland to be part of this amazing ministry.

I was honored to be selected by the UGM Board of Directors to serve as UGM's Executive Director. I am also grateful for the foresight they had in keeping Bill Russell with the organization over the next couple of years as he will lead the expansion of our Women's LifeChange program; I will benefit from his mentorship and wisdom. Both of our hearts long for serving the poor and poor in spirit, and I look forward to working with him as we take the mission and ministry of Union Gospel Mission to the next level.

The health of the organization is strong. We are in an excellent position to respond to the situation of homelessness and addiction that has so impacted the Portland area. UGM will continue to respond with love and the best instrument at our avail: The transformative power of Jesus Christ.

Grateful to serve,

**Jason Christensen**

**\*About the Title:** In Henri Nouwen's seminal work, *The Return of The Prodigal Son*, the author explores how we experience seasons in our lives where we identify with each of the three characters in the famous parable found in the Gospel of Luke (15: 11-32). I plan to use this space to help others understand the importance of identifying with the poor and being in solidarity with those whom society has shunned. It's my prayer that when we see the beggar on the street we won't look at them through the eyes of the judgmental older brother, but through the eyes and compassionate heart of the loving father.



## THE JOURNEY HOME

The campaign to build a center for homeless women and children

### *WLC Update*

**The Journey Home** progress continues! We are excited to update you on Union Gospel Mission's campaign to build a center for homeless women and children.

After years of intentional prayer and seeking, an exciting location has been purchased! Nestled off of Highway 26 on NW 185th and Rock Creek Boulevard, the new center will provide easy access to transportation, day care facilities, schools and affordable housing.

We are now working toward securing permits for construction of the 50,000 square foot facility which will end cycles of addiction, poverty and abuse for more than 2,000 women and their children in the next decade. This new facility will help take women and their children out of unhealthy situations and increase opportunities for healing by adding onsite counseling, mentoring and biblical guidance for all who call it home.

The new location will also offer ample green space for a state-of-the-art fenced outdoor playground and an inner courtyard designed for healing and play for the children in LifeChange.

**UGM's new center for homeless women and their children will continue to be a place where women and their children can heal, build community and connect to loving support.**

### *We want to hear from you!*

We have put together a short survey to learn how our community is thinking about and engaging with the growing issues around people experiencing homelessness. What issues do you care about and in what ways are you excited to help? Please visit the link below and share your thoughts.

[www.ugmportland.org/survey21](http://www.ugmportland.org/survey21)

## LIFECHANGE LETTER

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