

THE PRODIGAL'S PATH

A Message from Union Gospel Mission
Executive Director Jason Christensen



Many Hands Make the Load Light

When I learn about people like Gary (see cover story), I am left with a contrast of emotions. First, I am delighted to see how the Body of Christ responds to people in need. At the same time, I am filled with a righteous anger, how this can happen in a nation where people like Gary served.

The State of Oregon has the ignominious distinction of having the second highest rate – per capita – of American veterans experiencing homelessness. This is wrong. Regardless of a veteran's status, the fact that any one of God's children is living out on the streets should prompt us into action.

That's what Pastor Matt Huff chose to do. He and his congregation at Central Nazarene Church in Southeast Portland chose to partner with Union Gospel Mission to provide a safe, warm overnight shelter in these colder months. Every night nearly 50 people are the beneficiaries of Central Nazarene's hospitality, and they are opening doors for the houseless to gain access to permanent supportive housing.

We need more pastors like Pastor Huff, and more congregations like Central Nazarene, and I would ask the faithful to pray for elements within the Body of Christ to have both the courage and compassion to join in this fight against homelessness, poverty, and despair.

Together we can restore people like Gary to the life God intended him to have.

Grateful to serve,

Jason Christensen



THE JOURNEY HOME

The campaign to build a center for homeless women and children



The Journey Home Update

The campaign to build a new home for women and their children escaping the effects of homelessness is making great progress due to our generous donors, contractors, and foundations.

When we began our campaign in 2020, our cost for the building and construction of a new building was \$17,800,000. Due to inflation, our costs have increased to the current \$20,875,000. The increase in our budget is not a change in scope but rather the rising cost of materials.

We have been anticipating this increase for some time and have taken steps to prepare. We have a strategy to solicit in-kind donations for labor and material to help reduce costs and partnerships with new foundations, businesses, and churches.

We have currently raised over \$15,000,000 and we are hopeful we will finish our fundraising goal by Fall of 2023.

LIFECHANGE LETTER

is a publication of Union Gospel Mission



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UNION GOSPEL MISSION

LIFECHANGE LETTER

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

FEBRUARY 2023

Surviving the Cold

Gary is a veteran who served during Operation Desert Storm. Like many veterans, Gary now struggles with homelessness. He deals with PTSD which often leads to insomnia. His anxiety levels increase as the noises of the city keep him awake.

"It's not easy sleeping on the streets when you still have shell shock!" says Gary.

During the winter months, however, Gary does not have to sleep on the street. He takes the train Northeast to Union Gospel Mission's overnight shelter.

UGM has partnered for the last three years with Portland Central Nazarene Church to shelter nearly 50 houseless guests. Guests like Gary can now sleep in peace away from the constant noise and worry of the outdoors. Together with the help of volunteers and LifeChange residents, UGM provides a warm place away from the cold weather November through April.

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Surviving the Cold

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Trena, a long-time volunteer says, "I've volunteered at many different shelters around the Portland area, and UGM is the only shelter I know of that keeps their doors open for six months straight, during the winter." Many shelters in the area only open their doors if the temperatures drop below 32 degrees.

Sarah Chapman, the Outreach Coordinator at UGM has been at the shelter since the beginning. She sees many fresh faces this year as well as a few returning guests. For Sarah, it is all about building relationships with the guests.

She says, "If you get to know them well and hear their story, it can drastically change your outlook on homelessness, just because they are unhoused does not make them any less. They are just like you and me, made in the image of God."

One way we begin building relationships with individuals struggling with homelessness is through UGM's Search + Rescue mobile outreach program.

Meeting needs through Search + Rescue is the first step we take to help the houseless community. The relationships we create often lead to a transition to our overnight shelter. Furthermore, guests who stay in our shelter can move on to stay at Agape Village. Agape Village is a small community of tiny homes run by Portland Central Nazarene Church that aims to help

the houseless population by empowering life change. This program is not intended to be a long-term solution but instead, a stepping-stone to help them prepare for life-long success. By providing a safe environment for growth, our guests can transition into permanent housing and a healthier life.

"You may think that a pair of socks doesn't make a difference until you are walking around with wet feet," says Sarah. "You may think one hour isn't enough time for a change, but if you sit with someone who is going through a trial that day, it makes a difference. So, no matter how much time is spent, how big or small a donation is, it is hugely impactful for the ones who are being served."

If you know of someone battling addiction or homelessness and they are interested in a LifeChange, then contact Union Gospel Mission at 503-274-4483.



UGM BY THE NUMBERS: OCTOBER 2022 – DECEMBER 2022



MEALS SERVED
54,823



INDIVIDUALS WARMING
IN COLD WEATHER
SHELTER

319



INDIVIDUALS SAFELY
TRANSITIONED OUT OF
HOMELESSNESS

42



MEN, WOMEN AND
CHILDREN SERVED
IN LIFECHANGE

84

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Shawn

Everyone at the Women's LifeChange Center knows Shawn by name. You can spot him from blocks away by his iconic bright yellow van. He is accompanied by his loyal companion Lily who sits in the passenger seat.

Shawn has a heart for those dealing with addiction because he once dealt with addiction himself. He was able to overcome his past through rehabilitation at the VA. Over the past two years, Shawn has struggled with depression and anxiety. "After sitting in isolation for two years due to the pandemic, I became so socially anxious that it interfered with my health," Shawn explains.

In 2022, Shawn was ready to start interacting with people again. So he contacted WLC and began donating items once or twice a month. "Making the call, shopping, and donating gets me out and about. I finally feel normal again."

Shawn says, "If you have ever struggled with depression, addiction, anxiety, or other mental health issues and had someone who helped you through it, maybe it's time to give back!"

"I encourage you to spend time in the word and pray, and the Lord will direct you to an area where you can serve, just like he did for me."

To learn more about how you can volunteer, visit our website: ugmportland.org/volunteer.



Heart of Hope

CONSIDER BECOMING A HEART OF HOPE MONTHLY PARTNER

Heart of Hope partners make an even bigger impact in the community! As a Heart of Hope Monthly Partner, you'll be taking a stand against poverty, addiction, and homelessness, joining what God is doing among our most vulnerable neighbors. Reasons to join Heart of Hope:

- 1. Reliable Income.** Monthly giving helps provide stable support to vital Mission programs like meals, clothing, and addiction recovery. The Mission can more effectively plan with support the Mission can count on.
- 2. It's convenient.** With the automated Heart of Hope program, you don't have to hassle with checks, envelopes, and stamps. Your gift comes automatically to the Mission each month.
- 3. Reduced Administrative Costs.** Heart of Hope members receive reduced mailings, with just occasional newsletters and one annual receipt each January, saving the Mission anywhere from 30% - 75% in mailing costs, this means more money goes straight to the ministry.

To become a Heart of Hope partner, please call 503-274-4483 to set up your monthly giving plan or visit ugmportland.org/heart-of-hope

Heart of
Hope 
Partner

FEBRUARY 2023

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Jeremiah 41:10