

UNION GOSPEL MISSION

LIFECHANGE LETTER

““ *The meals mean everything to me.* ””

- AVA

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OUR CHRISTMAS STORIES

Tim, Ava, Hannah and Nick are very different people. But they have something big in common: Their lives were changed because of friends like you.

TIM'S STORY:

Because of faithful friends like you, Tim learned that Christmas doesn't have to be a holiday that you dread.



"I came from a broken home, so the holidays are not really fun for me."

Since he was a child, Christmas always included danger, fighting and fear. But that changed when Tim came to the Mission.

"Having a home-cooked meal at the Mission on Christmas really changed how I felt. Everyone is so loving and generous and safe. There's no drama, there's nothing getting broken. There's nothing like that, except for love. Just love, fun and food. So that has meant a whole lot to me."

Your generous Christmas gift to the Union Gospel Mission will help people like Tim.

AVA'S STORY:

Before coming to the Mission last year, Ava was on the streets, hungry, undernourished and feeling terrible.



It's amazing what the meal a friend like you provided did for her.

"The food was so great! When you're hungry, you don't feel good. And when you don't feel good, you can't move on to try to help yourself," she says. So, the meals mean everything to me."

A meal is often the very first contact we have with a hurting neighbor like Ava. A meal is often our first opportunity to show God's love.

Ava is just one example that the journey to stability often begins with a meal at the Union Gospel Mission.

**Photos changed to protect privacy*



MATT STEIN
Executive Director

*“Long lay the world in sin and error pining til he appeared,
and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope, the weary world
rejoices for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.”*

AS THE DAYS get darker earlier, as the temperature gets colder, as rain becomes more and more frequent, this Christmas carol holds a special place in my heart. It pulls me up from the doldrums and discouragement. It paints a beautiful contrast between the brokenness of our world and the dawning hope that come through Jesus Christ.

It is easy to miss this message of hope. All around us, there are reminders that our sin, our brokenness, our mistakes, leave us yearning, reaching for something we don't have. A place that we feel stuck and not moving forward. Our friends experiencing homelessness can relate with the feeling of being stuck, pining for better. They can speak of the weariness that comes from being on the outside of society looking in. Nothing is permanent for them. Nothing is secure. You must keep your guard up 24/7.

Can this situation change? Is there hope for the struggles we are facing?

I recently talked with James at lunch in the Union Gospel dining hall about why he decided to join the Men's LifeChange community. James said that having battled different drug addictions for the last 10 years, including fentanyl, he had had enough. He wants a life change, he wants to stop pining for change, he wants a different life.

Can people change? Yes. They can. I know that because as I have walked through the halls of the Mission, I have met so many that were stuck, trapped in their addictions, and they have changed magnificently. They felt the priceless worth of their souls as they turned to Jesus. Hope grew in their hearts that life could be different, and they are now living testimonies.

If you are tempted to despair at the state of our world, or our city, can you ask God to renew your hope this Christmas? Can you ask God to remind you that change, real change, is possible? Would you join us at the Union Gospel Mission in bringing that hope to our friends that are stuck pining? Let's be on mission together as we celebrate that God has indeed broken through, and none of us, need stay in despair.

A new morning has begun.

DECEMBER 2023

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” 2 Corinthians 9:15

*Friends like you made all these Christmas stories possible.
We can't wait to see how God uses you this year!*

HANNAH'S STORY:

While trapped in addiction, Hannah was a different person. As she came to the Mission and started getting clean, she felt the weight of



shame from her past mistakes.

"I used to let shame control me to the point where I felt like I didn't deserve to be around my kids," she says. "I missed Christmas one year and kids don't forget that."

"Coming to UGM has helped us a lot. The kids can talk to counselors about these things that they have been holding onto. We will celebrate Christmas together this year as a family. I'm so thankful for the healing that LifeChange has brought to my family."

Families find new beginnings here at the Union Gospel Mission. Transformation happens when they experience the love of God. With your gift, you can help other families find healing.

NICK'S STORY:

Nick has spent plenty of Christmases out on the cold, wet Portland streets. But this year, he won't be – and it's because of friends like you!



"I'm so grateful the Mission helped me find an apartment," he says. "I don't have to spend another Christmas out in the cold."

Nick has also reconnected with his family and looks forward to celebrating the holidays with them this year.

"I can have my family here for a change and have a real Christmas tree! I'm really looking forward to that," he says.

Your gift to the Union Gospel Mission will help reach more hurting people like Nick with an expression of *hope*: hope of a good meal, hope of dignity, and hope finding a way off the streets into housing.

MORE THAN JUST A DAY

The Christmas Season at the Mission

At the Mission, Christmas isn't just one day, it's a season – a season when we show our neighbors in need that they aren't alone, that through Jesus they are loved and have hope that their lives can change!



FOOD BASKETS:

During the holiday season, we partner with area churches and other local non-profits to pack and distribute over 600 holiday food baskets to low-income families

around the Portland Metro Area. The baskets include a gift certificate to redeem one turkey or ham from a local grocer, along with all the fixings needed to make a warm holiday meal for the family!



CHRISTMAS IN LIFECHANGE:

This will be the first Christmas in a safe, stable home for many of the men, women and children in our LifeChange community. To make it as meaningful as possible, several

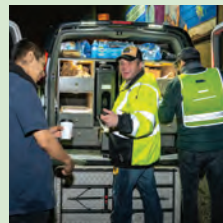
local partners donate items so that parents have a chance to “shop” for gifts for their children. We also make sure that all the adults get a little something to unwrap, too.



CHRISTMAS MEALS:

Our dining room will be decorated, Christmas carols will be playing and our doors will be open for any of our neighbors who need a hot, holiday meal.

We expect to serve 400 meals on Christmas Day alone! Most of these people have no other options for food or celebration and the meal is the highlight of their day.



SEARCH+RESCUE:

This time of year, we pack the LOVE van with holiday meals to deliver with hot cocoa and coffee to our neighbors experiencing homelessness. We'll also distribute

jackets, hand warmers, socks and blankets, too.



WINTER SHELTER MEAL:

Along with our partner at Portland Central Church of the Nazarene, we'll be providing safe shelter during the Christmas season and will serve a special holiday meal

Christmas week. The Winter Overnight Shelter is open every night, 9PM to 6AM, November – March.

The Journey Home Update

Framing on the second floor of our new center for women and children has begun! Every day there are visible changes as we get closer to putting up walls and installing windows. But while there are a lot of great things happening, we're not without challenges. Our original budget was set in 2019 and costs have done nothing but escalate since then, making construction even more challenging.

But we're stepping forward in faith because we know how important this life-changing home will be for the generations that have access to it. As each nail is driven, we are closer to the completion of a new home.

To learn more about the Journey Home, visit www.ugmportland.org/journeyhome





Will You Give Christmas Meals?

The holidays can be a lonely and difficult time for those experiencing homelessness. And for many, Christmas is the worst. Instead of counting down the days in excitement, they wish time would stop so that they didn't have to spend another Christmas hungry and alone, remembering all that they have lost.

That's why, at the Mission we do everything we can to make sure they feel seen, loved, welcomed and cared for. **And we make sure that every single person gets a good, hot meal on Christmas.**

But we can't serve those meals without your help.

Each \$2.33 you give will provide a meal for one of your neighbors in need here in Portland.

For our guests, the meal you provide is much more than a plate of food. It's a chance to come together with others in their community, to feel the warmth of the holiday season, to know that they are not alone, to hear that Jesus loves them and learn about all the ways the Mission can help them get their life back on track.

We're expecting to serve 400 meals on Christmas Day alone. Will you send a gift of meals today?

Give quickly, safely and easily at
ugmportland.org/here
or scan here.



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Hope 
Partner

WANT TO MAKE AN EVEN BIGGER IMPACT?
*Become a Monthly
Heart of Hope Partner*

When you sign up to give monthly, you'll know you're changing lives every day while saving postage and administrative costs and making sure that vital Mission programs keep running.

To sign up or find out more, call 503-274-4483 or visit ugmportland.org/heart-of-hope

LIFECCHANGE LETTER

A PUBLICATION OF UNION GOSPEL MISSION

Through the transformative power of Jesus Christ, we open life-changing pathways to people experiencing homelessness, hunger, addiction, and abuse.



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