



UNION GOSPEL MISSION

LIFECHANGE LETTER

Feeding the hungry, restoring the addict and loving

1927.

FEBRUARY 2021

Austin's story: I hope they see Jesus in my eyes

Experimenting with alcohol and drugs in college is considered normal, but in Austin's case it turned into tragedy. "I was using for six to eight years off and on, and during that time I hurt a lot of people," says Austin. "I got tired of hurting myself and other people, I knew it was time for a change."

"I burnt so many bridges that I found myself homeless in the dead of winter with nowhere to go," he says. "I got so cold that I would collapse in the streets throwing up, and that's where God spoke to me."

From there Austin came to the Union Gospel Mission in Portland.

"The LifeChange program is intense, but the hardest thing for me was sitting alone with myself," he says. "But then through Jesus, I found hope, and now today I can breathe again." Austin recently graduated UGM's LifeChange program and for the first time in years, he is looking forward to the future. Austin is planning on going back to school; helping people is his newfound passion.

He's cautiously optimistic about reconnecting with his family. "I've burnt so many bridges, I want them to see that I've really changed," he smiles. "I hope they see Jesus in my eyes."

Continued inside...



INSIDE

*Search+Rescue
Outreach*

*Rise Up
and Thrive*

*Volunteer Profile:
Vasco*



Union Gospel Mission delivering Christmas cheer to our neighbors in need. Search + Rescue outreach delivered a fresh Christmas tree, Christmas meal and treats to Suzie and Pops.

Search+Rescue Outreach

“The first thing we want to communicate to people is, ‘We see you, and we care about what you are going through.’ We want them to know they are the ones the Good Shepherd is going after.”

Austin’s story: I hope they see Jesus in my eyes

Continued from cover...

While in the LifeChange program, Austin was very involved in the UGM Search+Rescue outreach. “Working with Search+Rescue I learned to see past people’s addictions and afflictions and love them for who they are,” he says. “I learned to really listen to people. More than anything, people on the streets want someone to listen to them.”

Search+Rescue goes out five nights a week and visits homeless camps to bring them vital services they don’t have easy access to. One of the primary goals of Search+Rescue is to build trust so they can open the door to get people off the streets and into an abundant life.

When Austin first met Suzie and Pops out on Search+Rescue, they were sleeping under a tarp in the rain on the streets of Portland. With the guidance of our outreach team and partner organizations, Suzie and Pops are now in a hotel and will soon be moving into permanent housing.

“It breaks my heart to see so many elderly people and children on the streets,” says Austin, “but, it’s so amazing when you can help people better their circumstances.”

“I want to honestly say thank you to the people that donate. Without you I wouldn’t have had the ability to find a relationship with Christ again...I think it’s important to say thank you.”

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.

If you know of someone battling addiction or homelessness and they have had enough and are interested in a LifeChange, then contact our Intake Coordinator at mensintake@ugmportland.org or 503-274-4483.

“I learned to see past people’s addictions and afflictions and love them for who they are.”

UGM BY THE NUMBERS: OCTOBER 2020-DECEMBER 2020



TOTAL MEALS
49,856



SEARCH+RESCUE KITS
5,921



EMERGENCY FOOD BOXES
986



CHAPEL ATTENDANCE/DINNERS
3,490



SACK LUNCHES
1,700



HOT BREAKFAST AND LUNCH
16,136



Since 2016, the UGM Search+Rescue “Love Van” has gone out five nights a week to homeless camps within the Portland Metro area to deliver food, drinks, essential items and hope to our homeless neighbors. One of the main goals of Search+Rescue is to establish trust that will enable us to guide and mentor people experiencing homelessness to resources or services that can get them into housing or recovery.

When delivering services in the evening, the people we serve will sometimes ask for assistance. At that time, the Search+Rescue leader will fill out a “goal sheet” with the person requesting help. These requests include medical assistance, assistance with benefits, replacing lost identification, or help getting out of addiction. The next day the collected goal sheets are sent to Kim, our Search+Rescue Outreach Coordinator. Kim and Austin will call or meet with the person and assist them in developing a plan to get the resources they need.

Last year we saw 57 people transition out of homelessness through the help of our outreach team. Another 226 people received non-housing services.

One night before Christmas, Austin received a call from a man in Troutdale that was on the verge of losing his room at a hotel because of lack of funds.

With his savings exhausted, the man, with his wife and very young daughters, were looking at spending Christmas on the street or in a shelter. Search+Rescue outreach paid for two more nights in the hotel for the young family. This gave Kim and Austin time to meet with them to develop a plan to get them back on their feet and into safe housing.

“On daytime outreach, we focus on coming alongside people to provide the individualized support they need,” said Kim. “The first thing we want to communicate to people is, ‘We see you, and we care about what you are going through.’ We want them to know they are the ones the Good Shepherd is going after.”

“The factors that contribute to homelessness are complex, and there are no 1-2-3 step solutions. Helping people transition out of homelessness and addiction requires long-term commitment and trusting relationships.”

If you know of someone who is experiencing homelessness and they are interested in finding LifeChange, please contact Kim, our Outreach Coordinator at searchandrescue@ugmportland.org or call 503-274-4483.

“The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’” Joshua 1:9

FEBRUARY 2021

BILLBOARD

A Message from Union Gospel Mission
Director Bill Russell



Rise Up and Thrive

Before it is all said and done, I will have spent about a third of a century at the Union Gospel Mission. Nothing has thrilled me more than seeing a person who has been beaten down by addiction or abuse rise up and thrive.

The stunning reality of spiritual transformation is that “*God raised us up!*”

Ephesians 2:6 “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”

I don’t believe that anyone is self-made. Except in the most limited sense, no one can pick themselves up by their bootstraps. We are all flawed humans who need help.

The great opportunity given to us who serve at the Mission is that we get to be part of the help. We get a front row seat to see the greatest helper, Jesus, bring a spark of hope to the hopeless, and bring supernatural trust (that we call faith,) and bring forgiveness that frees us from the past, and bring to the front gifting and strength for the future.

I see it in Austin, our cover story resident, as I’ve seen it in others who have been here before. It is no less stunning now as it was when I first experienced it. I will never tire of seeing lives truly changed through LifeChange. What a great investment!

Your gift today brings new life to a man, woman or child escaping abuse, addiction and homelessness.

Bill Russell
Executive Director



VOLUNTEER PROFILE: *Vasco*

Vasco, a retired pharmacist, was introduced to UGM’s work 40 years ago when he volunteered with Sisters of the Road café in downtown Portland. “Everyone in that circle knew of each other’s work and would eventually find themselves collaborating with one another as neighborhood advocates,” said Vasco. “Three years ago, I saw UGM folks helping assist some homeless campers during a police sweep. Seeing the care UGM was taking in helping the homeless take care of their belongings impressed me. The UGM volunteer said to me ‘these are our friends, anytime you want to help us, come on in.’”

Since then, Vasco has been diligently volunteering with our Search + Rescue team. Over the years Vasco has made some close connections with the people we serve and other volunteers. “I am grateful to have participated in the precious task of bringing the love of Christ to those we serve. Working alongside the other volunteers bonds us together as our ultimate goal is to bring the message of Jesus,” explains Vasco. “I tell our homeless neighbors, you help me! Watching your struggles gives me incentive and faith with my own.”

“My hope is we continue to remain in each other’s lives. I get a return not found today with any internet ‘social media’ relationship.”

For more information on volunteer opportunities call 503-274-4483 or go to ugmportland.org/volunteer.

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