

# MISSION Update



Washington Street  
**MISSION**

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## RESOURCES STRETCHED AS DAY CENTER MINISTRY EXPANDS

These are exciting and challenging days for Washington Street Mission. After months of discussions with city officials and other social service agencies, the Mission has stepped forward to begin to meet the need for a day center for homeless people. As the weather turns colder and the overflow shelter is opening to provide additional overnight housing, the Mission is extending the hours of its neighborhood coffee hour.

The Mission is now open every weekday morning at 7:00 A.M. This earlier opening provides a place for people who are leaving the overnight shelters when they close and for other individuals who need to get into a warm, safe environment. Two new part-time people have been added to the Mission's staff to make the extended hours possible. These changes will stretch the Mission's resources.

With the extended hours the number of people who visit the Mission has increased significantly. We are now averaging over one hundred each day and expect the number to continue to increase during the winter season. To provide a point of comparison, during 2003 we averaged just over fifty people being served during the coffee hours each day. The ministry has doubled.

Representatives from other social service agencies will be available at the Mission during the extended coffee hour. They will be able to meet with people who need their services and to provide referrals to other services.

We are also working on plans to upgrade the restroom, shower and laundry facilities at the Mission to meet the growing need for these services. Current estimates for the projected changes are about \$50,000.

Obviously, this expanded ministry is only possible with the faithful support of people like you. Please give generously.



A typical group of men gather at a table during the Mission's neighborhood coffee hour. They enjoy the coffee and doughnuts and use the quiet time to talk, read and socialize.

# TEN PROFILES OF TYPICAL HOMELESS PEOPLE

To make the life stories of homeless people come alive, try scrawling these profiles on pieces of cardboard and discussing them with a small group of friends, your church's youth, or a Sunday School class. All of these profiles are based on real people we have encountered at Washington Street Mission.

Try to put yourself in the shoes of these individuals. Imagine how they see God at this point in their lives. Think about how you would communicate the love of God and the hope that we find in Jesus Christ in ways that they could understand.

My name is **JACK**. Ten years ago I lost my home and my only daughter in a fire. It wasn't my fault, but my wife divorced me. Really my life just fell apart right then. I've been drifting and drinking and homeless ever since. I've stayed in shelters in different cities all over the country. Life shouldn't have treated me like this. It's not fair.

My name is **JANETTE**. I've been homeless for more than five years, but I am willing to work as a waitress or do some house cleaning. I just can't find anyone I can trust who would be willing to hire me right now. Every time I talk to a landlord about getting a place, they always want to invade my privacy and ask all kinds of personal questions. Everyone is against me.

My name is **JERRY**. My anger has gotten me into more trouble than I want to remember. I just can't seem to control it. My mental health caseworker keeps stealing my money and never gives me as much as I need. They won't give me the right medicine either. I don't think they're helping me and I'd probably never go back there if they didn't control the money that ought to be mine.

My name is **JIM**. I might be homeless at the moment, but I'm not checkless. I get a Social Security check and a little pension check. They never seem to go far enough. By the middle of the month, I'm usually out of money for a place to live or for food and I end up moving in with friends, back in the shelter, or just out on the street. I just don't know where the money goes.

My name is **JOANNE**. I've needed a wheelchair for at least five years, but I can't seem to qualify for any kind of disability check. My boyfriend tries to support me, but he can't keep a job very long. His drinking gets him in trouble and my troubles hurt him too. My health is just getting worse and worse every day and I can't see any end in sight.

My name is **JOE**. I usually drive trucks when I can get a job, but I've had one too many arrests now to ever get my license back. I just finished serving some jail time for a petty theft that wasn't really my fault. Now I'm on parole at the shelter. I'll probably end up doing some hard time soon if my luck doesn't change.

My name is **JOSH**. I dropped out of school when I was 14 or 15. My mom kicked me out of the house soon after that. I've had a few run-ins with the police, but nothing really serious yet. The friends I hang out with on the street are the only real friends I have. I do some drugs with them, but if I could get a good job, like the kind the rich kids all end up with, I would be okay.

My name is **JOYCE**. I'm only 22, but I've had five children. They mean the whole world to me. I love them so much. I couldn't finish school and my mom is more concerned about doing drugs than helping me. The state has taken all of my children away and placed them in foster care or somewhere, but I'm going to get them back.

My name is **JUNIOR**, or at least that's what everyone calls me on the street. I work, but it's impossible for me to have any kind of regular job. My past debts and child support orders catch up to me whenever I fill out the paperwork for a regular job. I just work for cash -- fixing cars, hauling stuff, other odd jobs. Of course, the money isn't very good and I often find myself unable to afford a place to stay.

My name is **JUSTIN**. I've had more jobs than I can count, all different kinds of jobs. I had a really good job once. And I enjoy working, but as soon as things start going well, something seems to happen and I end up on a binge. I try to go to the AA meetings and stick with them, but the people around me all just seem to be pulling me down. Just last week someone stole all my cash right from my motel room.



The children were able to roast hot dogs over a fire during an outing in the country that was a highlight of the summer for many of them. Jessica Moss, who worked with the children all summer, shows them the proper technique for cooking the hot dogs perfectly. The outing also included swimming.

## SUMMER MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A reading day was included in the summer activities for the children at the Mission. Volunteers spent time showing each of the children that reading can be fun as well as important to their growth.



## OUR MISSION

To share the love of Jesus Christ with the people of Springfield by providing opportunities that meet their spiritual and physical needs.



One of the junior high youth from the Mission built some close friendships during a week of Bible camp this summer that will last a long time.



Junior high youth from the Mission enjoyed a special end-of-the-summer outing at Kicks. Eating was good, but riding on the go-carts was even better.

## A SISTER'S PERSPECTIVE

Two homeless men who died in Springfield this past summer came to Washington Street Mission quite regularly. Their deaths were difficult for us, but we knew that we had been faithful in sharing with them the love and truth of Jesus Christ.

The sister of one of these men presented the following thoughts at the memorial service we held for her brother at the Mission. Her words should help all of us better understand the struggles and choices faced by the people we serve.

*I want to thank you all for taking the time to be here for my brother and for his family. Thank you so much for your friendships and loyalty to him. I also want to thank the Mission staff and others who provided support for my brother's well-being and the provisions he needed to get by from day to day. I just wish he would have reached out and received the help that he needed the most.*

*From early childhood my brother was bitter toward those who had more than he did. He developed an attitude that he was mistreated and unloved. He believed that he deserved more than what he was given. As time went on he struggled with feelings of distrust and anger. He felt emotional pain, bitterness and resentment. He fell victim to a deceptive life, trapped in Satan's grip, believing that there was no hope for ever having a better life.*

*We are all given the choice of how we live out our life. But, when some are stuck in relentless adversities, those circumstances cause them to think*

*negatively about the whole world around them.*

*Ultimately my brother allowed his adversities to wear him down. That choice led to destruction, oppression, addiction and devastation in his life. When you're living with a broken spirit, it's difficult to make wise decisions and right choices. You find yourself turning to alcohol or drugs to lessen the pain, or to forget. Those choices only open the wounds for further destruction and more disappointment, causing hatred and anger toward yourself and others.*

*When you don't have self-acceptance, you lose all confidence in yourself. You live without ambition. You distance yourself from those who mean the most to you because you feel like you have nothing to offer them. You feel worthless.*

*I have gone through tough times myself. I've learned that it is in those tough times that God is right there. He is within your reach, available to ease your pain, give you strength and carry your burdens. He dwells with the broken-hearted. You actually find growth in your struggles and become a stronger person. Many, many times I could have easily given up. But I wouldn't be where I am today if I had decided that life isn't worth the effort.*

*If you can understand what I am saying, and can find yourself in light of all this, just reach out to God. He will light your way. He will give you the courage to move forward. He will bless your efforts and give you the life he intended for you to have. I know because He has always been there for me. I've learned it's just not worth the effort to live my life without Him.*

"Just as 'believers' are a dime a dozen in the church, so are 'activists' in social justice circles nowadays. But lovers are hard to come by. And I think that's what our world is desperately in need of -- lovers, people who are building deep, genuine relationships with fellow strugglers along the way, and who actually know the faces of the people behind the issues they are concerned about. We are trying to raise up an army not simply of street activists but of lovers -- a community of people who have fallen desperately in love with God and with suffering people, and who allow those relationships to disturb and transform them."

-- Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*  
(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006), pages 295-296.