

Thanksgiving 2016

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Dear Friends:

During this Thanksgiving season, I've been thinking a lot about transitions. I'm not sure why. Maybe it's the presidential election, or retirement age creeping closer, or maybe it's just the weather turning colder. Regardless, I've realized that transitions are all around us, all the time. Change is in the wind.

Of course, we see lots of transitions at the Mission's transition house. Men are moving from life on the streets to a more stable and productive life, transitioning from addictions or from prison to new freedom. Often they find the changes so frightening they try to sabotage their own success. We walk with them and remind them that God is walking beside them through these times of transition as well.

Although transitions often bring fear and uncertainty, we can be thankful for them as we look back on the way God has brought us through some major changes. And we can be grateful for the hope that God will guide us through more times of transition in the days ahead. Thanksgiving for God's faithfulness in the past brings us sure hope for the future.

Several big changes come to my mind as I reflect on transitions in the history of Washington Street Mission. At the time the Mission was forced to move from Washington Street to Fourth Street when the city's convention center was built in the 1970s, some major adjustments and changes were required. The Mission had been on Washington Street for sixty years and had no plans to change either its location or its programs. It was a difficult time.

When the Mission's long-time director Mrs. Miller died only a few years after the move and Jim and Lorraine Beatty took over, resources were stretched almost to the breaking point. As the ministry shifted from evening evangelistic services toward more focus on families and children and more personal contact and support for deeply-disturbed individuals, new techniques and programs needed to be developed. Afterschool tutoring and a morning coffee hour were direct results of that transition.

Please visit our updated website at
WashingtonStreetMission.org

At these points of traumatic change in our history, God graciously provided generous supporters and donors and key people to continue the vital ministries of the Mission. The faithful hand of God is clearly visible in our rearview mirror.

While these major changes are behind us, additional transitions are looming on the horizon. And they are likely to be equally challenging and just as traumatic. With the addition of Dave Swihart as full-time chaplain at the Mission, we are looking for ways to strengthen our personal outreach to people who are hurting and in need. People with mental health issues and addictions and broken lives demand our attention day after day.

We are also becoming increasingly conscious of the need to shift our focus toward longer-term housing and employment issues, instead of providing the kind of emergency assistance that often creates dependency. We understand that unfocused charity can be toxic for both the giver and the person who receives it. Our efforts need to be directed toward solutions that address more fundamental needs. We anticipate focused efforts on housing and employment issues to move to the forefront of the Mission's concerns in the days ahead.

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

As we are getting closer to thinking about retirement and what God may have in mind for the next season of our lives, my wife Mary Lynn and I feel very privileged to be leading the Mission during these days of transition and challenge. Just as transitions can be scary, they are also always times of opportunity. And we are thankful for God's assurance that he will be walking beside us in the most turbulent times we may face.

Pray with us that we will continue to be faithful in fulfilling the mission that God has placed before Washington Street Mission in these days of change. Join us in thanking God for his faithfulness in difficult days in the past and in the future. And please remember that we rely on your faithful and generous support.

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Mitchell
Executive Director