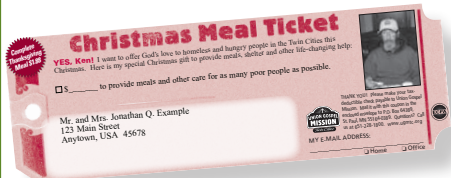


Naomi Family Residence Needs

- Children's Bibles for pre-school, elementary, and early teens
- Life Recovery Bibles for our resident moms
- Reference books for the Naomi Family Residence library: dictionaries, thesauruses, Bible concordances

Complete holiday meal: Just \$1.88!

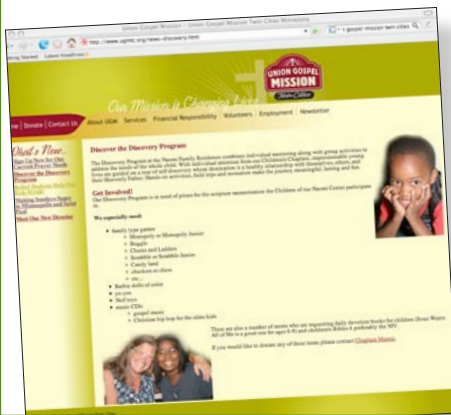


Return the enclosed Meal Ticket and share Christmas with someone who is hungry!

Visit our Web site

For more stories like these, or for specific information about our many programs, go to www.ugmtc.org. You can also use our Web site to:

- Learn about volunteer opportunities.
- Receive updated information about events
- Give a cash gift through our secure donation site.



THE *Heart* OF THE MATTER



A MESSAGE FROM KEN PETERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Christmas story through the eyes of the Mission

Did you realize the Christmas story is filled with outcasts? Elizabeth and Zachariah were old and unable to have children, a shameful situation for their day. The shepherds were poor, isolated... the bottom rung of society. And then there were Mary and Joseph — an unwed mother and a poor carpenter, misunderstood and homeless to boot.

Then, God's hand began to move...

Elizabeth conceived and gave birth to a baby boy who would grow up to be John the Baptist. The lowly shepherds were visited by angels and were the first to hear of the birth of the Messiah. And Mary and Joseph ended up in Bethlehem where the Christ-child was born, fulfilling prophecies spoken hundreds of years earlier.

Out of troubling circumstances, God worked supernaturally — and amazing things happened. That's the story of

Christmas. But it is also the story of the Union Gospel Mission.

Every day, the Mission opens its doors to modern-day outcasts. The homeless. Single mothers with young children. Men whose lives have been turned upside down by addiction.

They come here looking for a little hope through a meal.

A room. Perhaps an encouraging word. What many find, however, is eternal hope through Jesus Christ.

Once again, God works — and amazing things happen!

Thank you for giving to the Mission this Christmas. May your own holidays be filled with the joy of knowing Christ. For that is what you have given to our neighbors in need.

Once again, God works — and amazing things happen!

Ken Peterson

Give love this Christmas

(continued from page 1)

especially on this chilly winter morning.

LaShawn pulled out a \$10 Target gift card she had received as a Christmas gift and handed it to the woman. "Your baby's cold," she told the stranger. "Go out and buy him some mittens and a hat."

"It felt really good to do something for someone else," she says.

"Who would do something like this? They don't even know me..."

So many of us have been blessed this year. Why not be a blessing to others by sending a generous gift to the Union Gospel Mission? Your gift can erase years of hurt and fear — and remind the homeless they still have value and worth.

Please rush your gift today, while there's still time to give love to someone this Christmas. ●

OUR MISSION IS CHANGING LIVES



Twin Cities

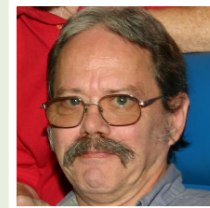
CHRISTMAS 2007

December 2007 Vol. 5 No. 9

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Give love this Christmas

After all the presents have been unwrapped, only love lasts.

LaShawn couldn't remember the last time she felt love.

She hated her dad for the way he treated her mom. She hated her boyfriend for abandoning her when she became pregnant. Sadly, she admits she even hated her kids.

So last Christmas, LaShawn dared God to "show me love." And He did — by bringing her to the

"One volunteer came up and hugged me. Where I come from, guys didn't do that."



LaShawn felt odd — and wonderfully cared for — when she came here for a meal and got a hug from a volunteer.

Union Gospel Mission.

The first step: Christmas dinner.

"At the end of the meal," LaShawn remembers, "one volunteer came up and hugged me. Where I come from, guys didn't do that. I believe it was God showing me love."

Then came the gifts.

Lots of presents for her two children, and even a card for her with \$50 cash in it.

"Who would do something like this?" she remembers thinking. "They don't even know me."

Turns out that love — genuine and unrestrained — melted LaShawn's heart. That's when she

did something completely unexpected.

She gave her love away. Shortly after Christmas, LaShawn was taking a walk when she passed a woman pushing a baby stroller. The baby, she noticed, was woefully underdressed —

(continued on page 4)

For Lataneisha, abuse is a thing of the past

(Last in a three-part series)

By Lataneisha

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lataneisha could have let her abusive past keep her down. Instead, this single mom is starting to dream again — BIG dreams! — thanks to the Union Gospel Mission and friends like you. Determined to put her past behind her, here's how this young mom now pictures her future...

Finally feel like the past is behind me. I don't think about it anymore. Now I think about the future, and it looks great!

I've learned that once a person hits you, you get away. I've learned not to put myself down anymore. Coming here taught me that I could be just as good as the next person.

I came here for me and my kids. I didn't want my youngest seeing what my older kids saw — me getting beaten up. Standing up for myself was the best thing I could have done.

Now that I have my GED, I want to pursue a computer or accounting degree. But what I really want is to own my own beauty shop with an



One of Lataneisha's goals is to see all her kids go to college.

attached restaurant.

But even more than that, I want all my kids to go to college — and I want

to live long enough to see it!

Before Lataneisha came here, her life was in ruins — and her future looked bleak.

But your gifts to the Mission have opened up doors of opportunity and broken the cycle of poverty and abuse.

Thank you for doing all you can to help hurting families find hope and begin brand new lives.

I didn't want my youngest seeing what my older kids saw — me getting beat up.



While many celebrate, some can only remember... The worst Christmas ever



When "I'm sorry" isn't enough

Dan has made a mess of Christmas the past couple years. And he knows he's got nobody to blame but himself.

"The sad thing about being an addict is that you destroy the people that you love the most," he says.

A couple years ago, Dan spent Christmas in jail on a drunk driving charge. Another year, he was in a shelter.

"My two daughters don't even acknowledge me as their dad anymore"

His oldest daughter says, "I'm sick of it." Dan says he understands, although he desperately wants to make things right before another Christmas turns to bitterness.

"I'd say I'm sorry, but that's not enough," Dan realizes. "I don't even feel worthy to be a part of their lives."

"There's no excuse for what I've done," he continues. "God willing, one day I'll be a part of their lives again." ●



Dan says he's messed up so much in the past, he doesn't even feel worthy to be in his kids' lives.

Ten years of marriage — GONE!

No matter how hard he tries, David just can't forget Christmas 1996.

His three-year-old son was still recovering from serious injuries incurred after he was hit by a car out in front of their house. And right before Thanksgiving, David discovered his wife of 10 years was having an affair. By Christmastime, they were moving toward a very messy divorce.

"My life was in chaos," David remembers. "First, my wife tells me that she's happier with somebody else. Then she comes home one day and informs me that our boys are going to live

"For a while, I was not dealing with life very well."

with their grandparents in South Dakota."

David and his wife got into a "knock-down, drag-out" fight that landed David in jail for 10 days.

To cope, David



David's life became one big blur after his son was hit by a car — and he and his wife divorced.

fell deeper and deeper into drugs, and at one point was spending \$150 a day on heroin and meth.

"For a while, I was not dealing with life very well," he says, a gross understatement. ●

This party was a real "eye-opener"

When John was invited to spend Christmas with the resident manager at the Christ Recovery Center where he was staying, his first thought was, "You've gotta be kidding."

During his drinking days, John used to isolate himself from family and friends. Anytime he visited relatives at Christmastime, "I couldn't wait to leave so I could start drinking again."

Now, party with a bunch of guys in recovery? "What were they gonna do?" he thought to himself. "Read the Big Book (The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous)?"

But to John's amazement, it wasn't



John (center) never realized that partying with a bunch of guys in recovery could be so much fun!

anything like he expected. There was lots of talking and laughing and generally having fun — even though everyone was crowded into the resident manager's tiny, one-bedroom apartment.

"I realized that I missed

"I missed out on a lot of good times... now I'm playing catch-up."

out on a lot of good family times (because of my drinking)," he explains. "Now I'm playing catch-up. I'm talking to my family again, and even they say I sound different," he adds. "I'm having fun. I feel excellent. I'm like a new man." ●

John, David, and Dan took different paths to the Union Gospel Mission. But all of them have found hope — and a second chance, thanks to your gifts. Please give again this Christmas. It's a great feeling to know you've helped change someone's life!

