

The  
**UNION  
MISSION**

# MISSION NETWORK

*Food, Clothing, Shelter ... and so much more!*

JANUARY 2025



**"I've given my life  
to Jesus and I never  
want to look back."**

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# Never Looking Back!

**Through the mission, Jeremy has found firm footing in Jesus.**

Jeremy's eyes brightened as he talked about his new church. He explained that church members pick him up on Sundays and during the week. Jeremy said "The people at church are so welcoming. One woman even gave me a hug." Later, Jeremy remembered it had been more than six years since anyone had hugged him.

Eight years ago, Jeremy was married and working three jobs to care for his family. He weighed 250 pounds and was "built" – all the better for his job as a bouncer at a Virginia Beach nightclub. But his life was disrupted when he began feeling exhausted, barely able to get out of bed. It took weeks and many tests for the doctors to determine he had a rare kidney disease. He spent a year in the hospital recovering, slowly learning to walk and care for himself again.

Life looked different after he was released from the hospital. Jeremy's wife left him and he had nowhere to go. He lived with family, but that didn't work. He spent several months living on the street. Then he moved in with friends, but they stopped paying the rent, and were all evicted. "The landlords told me they had somewhere

to take me where there were meals and a bed. They were good Christian people and brought me to the Mission."

Having lost his job and his family, and suffering from a severe foot infection, Jeremy was incredibly depressed, with little hope things would improve.

*"Since being at The Union Mission, I've placed my life into the hands of God. I'm happy now."*

"When I first came to The Union Mission, I was only looking for a place to put my head and a place to eat. I had no idea about all the programs and resources available for me here to better my situation."

"I didn't know how much the people at The Mission cared for me until Mr. Banks, the men's shelter director, noticed my foot infection had gotten worse." He could hardly walk. With

urging from staff, Jeremy was rushed to the hospital.

"When I got to the hospital, there was no hiding my condition. The nurses looked at my toes, and immediately told me that some toes would need to be amputated. I knew right then that my life had to change. I had to find a way to be better."

Jeremy has been hospitalized more times with additional surgeries on his feet. Initially wheelchair-bound, he has been working hard in physical therapy to learn to walk again.

"I questioned God for years. Why does God always take away everything from me that I've worked so hard for? That's when my mom, my hero, told me to talk to God." With encouragement from Mr. Banks, Jeremy has accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He is reading the Bible daily and renewing his relationship with his family.

"I used to wake up with pain every day. Emotional, spiritual, mental. I didn't want to get out of bed. Now, since being at The Union Mission, I've placed my life into the hands of God. I'm happy now. I've given my life to Jesus and I never want to look back."

For more about Jeremy's journey, see Stories of Hope at [unionmissionministries.org](http://unionmissionministries.org).

# Returning to the Goodness of God



*“Without the Union Mission, I wouldn’t have been able to reclaim my passion for art.”*

**I** moved to Virginia from New Jersey after high school since my brother was here in the Navy. After my daughter was born and I split with her father, I moved back to New Jersey. I was staying with a friend, but that fell through and I went to a shelter. I hated every minute of it.”

Felicia shared “Mentally, I wasn’t happy in New Jersey. I was missing something. It was my church here. I have been worshipping with this church family for 18 years now and was baptized there in 1997.”

“I came back and got an apartment but it was unsafe. When I got a job at an oceanfront hotel, they let me stay in a room for 2½ years. But when my boss let me go, I became homeless and jobless. My pastor took me in until I was able to get an apartment. But I live with depression and anxiety. And I wasn’t taking my medication regularly so my finances just got bad and I got evicted.”

“My church was like, ‘Try calling the Union Mission.’ The staff members here are some of the kindest and most

understanding people I have ever met. The food is great and the facility well taken care of. I’ve met some amazing people.”

Felicia worked for a local construction company while staying at The Mission and has moved into transitional housing. She credits the Women’s Shelter staff with getting her back on track. “I didn’t like all the rules when I first came – getting up and dressed at 7 am and a ‘lights out’ time, but this structure has been so good for me. I’ve stayed on my medication for the longest time ever. And my relationship with my mother and 14-year-old daughter is better than it ever has been. My mom told me ‘You’re the happiest I’ve heard you in a long time.’”

“I have been a Christian and have loved the Lord for years. I have always loved art. But recently I have not felt inspired. After only a few days here, I realized my love for God was greater than I could ever imagine. I closed my eyes to pray and saw a beautiful image. The sun was setting. There were two cliffs, with water

in between. On one side, there stood a cross with the sun setting right behind it. On the other side, there were people worshipping the goodness of God. I got my iPad and started recreating that very image.” “Without the Union Mission, I wouldn’t have been able to reclaim my passion for art.”

“Someone once told me, ‘Your struggles are your story, and your story is your superpower.’ Being homeless is part of my story. It may only be a small chapter, but it will have a lasting impact.”

*“Thank you,*

**Union Mission, for being there  
for me and for helping me  
get back on my feet.  
I love the Union Mission.”**

# Get Involved in

# 2025

YOU can help and give hope to our homeless neighbors.

Here are some ways you can help @ [unionmissionministries.org/get-involved](https://unionmissionministries.org/get-involved)

## VOLUNTEER

No matter your skills or talents, we have a role you can fill at The Mission. Go to our website to sign up for our next orientation on March 8th.

## COLLECT

We host drives for needed items like men's winter coats, towels and washcloths, gift cards and bus passes. Challenge your church members or coworkers to give.

## CLEAN & DONATE

Gently-used items provide clothing to our guests, furniture for families, dishes for veterans moving into new homes. Items you don't need are precious to someone starting a new life.

## EMPLOY

For many, a new life starts with a new job. Consider hiring a Mission guest. Local businesses are impressed with the work ethic and loyalty that comes with offering a second chance.

## LEASE

The goal of all our guests is a home! If you have an appropriate rental property, we can match you with a hard-working, grateful tenant.

## WORK

Looking for Christians called to serve God's people in need. If you want to "Care like Christ" in your workplace, we are hiring for our program, administrative, thrift store, and development teams.

*Fairways  
to Homes*  
GOLF FUNDRAISER

THANK YOU  
TO OUR 2024  
SPONSORS!



## A Paycheck and A Purpose

Are you looking for meaningful employment this year?

The Union Mission Ministries is hiring for several positions. Take a look at our current job openings online at:

[unionmissionministries.org/job-opportunities](https://unionmissionministries.org/job-opportunities)



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# Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend,

Every New Year comes with promise and opportunity. The Jewish calendar begins with the month of Nissan. The first month is named as the month the world was created, when the Israelites became a faith community and began their journey with God.

This month, we share the stories of two mission guests who have renewed their relationships with Christ and began a new walk with him. Both speak of the love and hope they received during their stays at the Union Mission. They also speak of the support and acceptance they have received from their church families as they begin their new journeys.

In the past year, your generosity has provided food, shelter, and care for almost 1,200 men, women and children. Over the Christmas season, you shared the love of Christ with our homeless neighbors, and some came to accept him as their Savior.

As we enter the New Year, I am so excited to see how God will use you and the Union Mission to change the lives of more hurting, homeless neighbors in Hampton Roads. Thank you. I trust God will bless you and your family in the New Year as you have blessed so many.

In His service,

Are You an  
**ANCHOR** of  
**HOPE**

Hebrews 6:19 says,  
"We have this hope as  
an anchor for the soul,  
firm and secure..."

Hope...is what our homeless neighbors  
are looking for when they come to The  
Union Mission. Life has beaten them  
down. You can provide that Hope, the  
peace that anchors the soul.

We know you already give! And we are  
grateful! But, knowing how much we  
can count on each month helps us to  
plan and be better stewards of what  
we receive.

**Will you consider becoming an Anchor of  
Hope monthly donor this year?**

Sign up at [donate.unionmissionministries.org/AOH](https://donate.unionmissionministries.org/AOH).  
Or contact Trudy Rains at [trains@ummnorva.org](mailto:trains@ummnorva.org)  
with any questions.

*Rev. Gray, I want to provide help you meet the challenges of the coming year.*

**I've enclosed:**  \$25  \$50  \$75  \$100  \$150  \$\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to commit to a **monthly gift** of \$\_\_\_\_\_. My first gift is enclosed.

**Method of Payment:**  Check  VISA  MasterCard  American Express  Discover

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ CCV Code \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make your check payable to The Union Mission. To make an online donation, go to [donate.unionmissionministries.org](https://donate.unionmissionministries.org).*



Please complete this slip and return it to The Union Mission with your generous gift. Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. We will send a receipt for your records.

# WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

Several years ago, Terry Burgess faced a serious illness and the question of what would happen with his home and assets after he passed away. Terry's parents were supporters of The Union Mission. And he remembered visiting Hope Haven as a child.

Through naming The Union Mission in his will, Terry carried on the legacy of his parents and left his own. As Matthew 5:16 says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven".

Only a few months after making this bequest, Terry passed away and his estate gift came at a critical time as The Mission was growing staff and programs to better serve our community. So many men, women and children in need continue to be blessed by his generosity.

As we age, we want to leave a legacy that inspires and impacts. But a "legacy" is more than leaving behind an inheritance or the "good stuff" you'll be remembered for. According to author Bill High, true legacy is "building intentionally into others with a vision for the future."

It starts by being intentional. Just like creating an estate plan requires evaluating your assets and getting your affairs in order, leaving a heart-felt legacy means you tell your loved ones what you believe, how special they are to you, and why you support organizations like The Union Mission Ministries that align with your values.

*If updating your estate plan is on your "To Do" list in 2025, please consider including The Union Mission and leaving a legacy of caring and sharing Christ with our brothers and sisters in need.*

**For more information, contact Helen Hayes Sommer at (757) 627-8686, ext. 504 or [hsummer@ummnorva.org](mailto:hsummer@ummnorva.org). Or go to [www.christianwill.org/umm](http://www.christianwill.org/umm) to learn more about blessing your family with a God-honoring Will.**

## Comments / Change of Address:

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EMAIL 

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PHONE 

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No person is denied service based on race, creed, gender, national origin, or disability unless it is beyond the scope of our care.

Photos are representative of actual Mission clients.

If you would like to donate much-needed supplies, please see [unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/give-goods](http://unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/give-goods). Thank you!

In the event contributions exceed expenses, extra funds will be used to feed, shelter, and care for those experiencing homelessness throughout the year.

Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-807-2214 or 888-830-4989 for NC residents.

## THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES

P.O. BOX 3203 | NORFOLK, VA 23514 | 757-627-8686  
[giving@ummnorva.org](mailto:giving@ummnorva.org) | [www.unionmissionministries.org](http://www.unionmissionministries.org)