



I've really felt loved here,
for myself and the baby.
The staff loves me. I know

★ God loves me! ★

Details on page 2

Hiding God's Word in Her



Darriyona finally had enough!

Pregnant, scared, and homeless, Darriyona's aunt helped her look for shelters. "I called the Union Mission. And the next day, I was here. Living in my car and staying at different hotels was not good at all. I needed something stable. I was so scared. I didn't have anywhere to go. So, when I arrived here, the weight lifted from my shoulders was incredible. Relief. Happiness. Sure, there was some unknowns because the shelter life was new to me, but all the worries just went away. I was safe. I felt so welcomed when I got here in October of 2024."

"The encouragement to get closer to God has been the most important thing for me. I've been trying to do that my whole life. I remember being discouraged in my relationship with God when I was living out of my car. It's not like I didn't believe in God anymore, but my faith was really weak.

Staff here really encouraged me to be in the Bible, because that will keep me closer to God. Now, I love it. Every morning, I go to Bible study at the women's shelter, and every night, I study it on my own. Even on my days off work, I love spending most of the

day learning more about God. I feel like I'm more consistent and content in His Word. The more you spend time in God's Word, the stronger your relationship with Him will be.

It changes you. When I first got here, I would lash out in anger. But the more I spent time in God's Word, the less I would be angry. It's not a quick process, but there's so much growth in my life. Life won't be perfect, it never

"I love spending most of the day learning more about God."

is. But my faith in God is deep despite what happens. I'm a new person"

"It's hard to be selfish when there's so much to be thankful for here. **I had to get to the point where I realized that I have a roof over my head, clothes, food, a shower, and amazing relationships with the staff and other**

guests - and just be grateful. I've learned how to save my money. Saving my money allows me to prepare and take care of what God gives me. I've also learned to view people like God views them. To have compassion."

"Why should you support The Union Mission? You're helping other people in so many ways. I really believe every single part of this place is God's work. It's a blessing. People come with nothing, but leave full. The smallest gift is amazing to someone who doesn't have anything."

Darriyonna is not only thankful for The Union Mission but also for her new baby. She gave birth to her little girl a few weeks early so the baby stayed in the NICU for the first week. The Ladies Auxiliary and staff gave her a baby shower. "I literally have everything I need. I have a car seat, a pack-n-play, diapers, everything. I've been taken care of, and it's a good feeling to know that my baby has all she needs. I've felt really loved here, for myself and the baby. The staff loves me. I know that God loves me." Both mother and baby are now thriving at home together in the Grace Place shelter.

For more about Darriyona's and Eric's journeys, s

RELEASED to a New Life!



Eric considers The Mission a springboard to a new life.

Just seeing how God has moved in my life since the beginning has been incredible. I'm truly at a loss for words," Eric observed.

"During my initial time in jail, my mother passed away. Her last visit, she said, 'I love you, Eric.' Something about the way she said it, I knew this might be the last time I would talk with her. A week later, she was gone. I learned the only way to have peace of mind was to be in the Word of God. My mom instilled that in me, and my relationship with God slowly began to grow. Mom planted the seed, God did the rest."

A year later, Eric was acquitted of the charge and returned to his family. But he soon found himself apathetic, snowballing into severe consequences. "I got back to my family, but I got too comfortable being at home and I fell into a bad lifestyle. "Instead of being thankful for my family and a good job, I turned to drug distribution. I would drop our newborn baby with my wife in the evenings and then work the streets at night with drugs."

Friday, February 11th, 2011, while Eric was making a drug transaction, he was arrested. "Thankfully, I'm alive to tell about

the story. They found drugs in my possession. I was again incarcerated, this time without bond, for the possession and intent to distribute cocaine. Life came to a crashing halt, but I'm convinced God had me arrested and placed into prison to get me out of that situation."

"Just seeing how God has moved in my life ... has been incredible. I'm truly at a loss for words."

"Nothing really went according to plan. My wife ended up divorcing me. I wasn't the man I should have been at all. But God brought a guy in there who knew the Lord. He knew the Bible. We had lots of Bible studies right there in the cells. It made me so thankful for God and for the Bible and those good relationships."

During those 13 years, Eric moved around to different prisons, but always applied himself wherever

he was as his relationship with God grew. He even received a culinary arts certification.

While incarcerated, he learned about The Union Mission. "I was released in September 2024. I really didn't have anywhere else to go. So, I arrived at The Union Mission September 11, 2024. When I shared my story, the staff prayed over me. They were patient, listened to me. They represent God and Jesus very well. Those relationships I have built are definitely a blessing. I thank God daily for the people that God uses here, for the money that's being used to help people like me. This place is a springboard to a new life for me. Three nutritious meals a day is truly amazing. The clothing vouchers they give you to get the stuff you need is awesome. The list could go on and on. It doesn't feel like a shelter."

Since being at The Mission, Eric has continued to work with Norfolk's Second Chances program for ex-offenders. Eric is extremely focused on restoring his relationship with his sons. He enjoys his work at Bauer Compressor Inc. "Some people might view you as at the bottom of the pole, but I feel like I'm on top of the world because of this place."

The Power of

Prayer



Prayer is central to life and work at The Union Mission. We greatly appreciate the prayers of our friends for our work and ministry.

Talking about his very first day at The Mission, Eric shared how much it meant to him to have his case manager and other staff members pray with him for healing and a better future.

We consider it a privilege to pray with and for the friends of The Union Mission. Our staff meetings always include prayer for guests, donors, volunteers, friends, and staff as well.

If you want prayer, email prayer@ummnorva.org to be added to our prayer list.

Save the Date!



We love our volunteers and can not serve our guests without your help!

Our Volunteer Engagement Coordinator is planning a fun Volunteer Appreciation Event for Thursday, April 24 at 6:30 PM in the Craig Center.

Mark your calendar and respond to Christina Geisler at volunteer@ummnorva.org if you will join us!

Join us to

Change Lives!

Maybe even your own!

The Union Mission Ministries has job openings in several departments. Take a look at our current employment listings or apply online at:

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

[hopehavenvb.org/
summer-staff-opportunities](http://hopehavenvb.org/summer-staff-opportunities)



5100 E. VIRGINIA BEACH BLVD.
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Help a Former Shelter Guest Start a New Life

It's expensive to set up your first apartment, so this collection drive project is a big help to shelter guests who are moving into permanent housing. Housewarming Home Totes include many **basic kitchen, bath, laundry, and cleaning supplies**. Each tote **costs about \$75 to \$100** to fill with the items on our shopping list. This is a great project for families, Sunday schools, churches, youth groups, Bible studies, and Scouting troops.

If you can participate, please let us know at

volunteer@ummnorva.org



For our easy packing checklist, see unionmissionministries.org/get-involved/drives

Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.” – Matthew 28:6

As we celebrate Easter and the resurrection of our Lord, I’m quickly reminded of the reality of what “new life” brings to a soul. Because of Jesus, His sacrifice, and His victory over the grave, not only do we now have life, but we have abundant life (John 10:10).

The Union Mission has built its philosophy on the foundation of “new life.” Whether it’s the temporary item of clothing or piece of furniture that is donated, or the emphasis and eternal impact of the Good News of Jesus within our men’s and women’s shelters, the very essence and foundation of why we do what we do revolves around “new life.”

My prayer is that each of you, our donors, recognize your partnership with the Lord by partnering with The Union Mission. Even the smallest gift has eternal significance. Your generosity shows the love of Christ. You play an active role in “new life” taking root in our guests’ lives by believing in and supporting The Union Mission. This is our creed - “new life” is for any and all who come to Jesus. There is transforming power in the blood and resurrection of Christ. We desire for this truth to become real in our lives, in your life, and in the lives of our residents. Brothers and sisters, pray for us.

Thank you for your continued financial, physical, and practical support of our ministry.

In His service,



At The Union Mission, seeds of faith are planted and take root. But plants, like spiritual growth, need nourishment to grow stronger so ultimately, they can thrive outside the greenhouse and bear fruit.

Through regular monthly giving, Anchor of Hope donors help nurture the “New Lives” of Mission guests through hospitality and love so they can flourish after they move back into our community.

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

For more information, visit our website or contact Trudy Rains at:

donate.unionmissionministries.org/AOH
or trains@ummnorva.org

You may get a phone call from our partners at Gateway, they also would be happy to answer your questions about Anchors of Hope.

Rev. Gray, I want to help the guests in your shelters resurrect hope!

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.



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.

Giving Strategies

to maximize your impact, and maybe your tax deductions!



You may have completed and filed your taxes for 2024. But have you ever wondered is it worth donating to charity for tax savings?

When you donate to a charity, you can feel good about contributing to a need in your community. Additionally, if you itemize, you can also use your charitable donations to reduce your tax bill. A win-win! The amount you can deduct in a given year is subject to limits, but you can carry forward some of those unused deductions over a period of five years, again subject to eligibility.

Is it time to strategize your 2025 charitable giving to maximize your tax deductions?

Here are some ways you may be able to impact your taxes and make a lasting difference in the lives of men, women and children at The Union Mission:

1 Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD): People age 70.5 or older can rollover up to \$108,000 from their IRA directly to charities like The Union Mission. This may lower your income and taxes.

3 Donor Advised Fund (DAF): Make a tax-deductible gift to a DAF which then allows you to make grants to The Union Mission and other charities this year and in the future.

2 Gifts of Appreciated Assets: Make a gift of stock, real estate, or another asset, avoid paying capital gains tax on the transfer and receive a tax-saving charitable deduction.

4 Beneficiary Designation: Designate The Union Mission as a full or partial beneficiary of your IRA/401k or life insurance.

Another smart investment - a gift in your will or estate!

By leaving a gift to The Union Mission in your will or estate, you join the Bashford Legacy Circle, a community of friends who have committed to assuring that The Union Mission is here to care for future generations in need. For more information, contact Helen Hayes Sommer at (757) 627-8686 ext. 504 or hsommer@ummnorva.org, or go to www.christianwill.org/umm.

Comments / Change of Address:

EMAIL

PHONE

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. 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

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