

THE PRODIGAL'S PATH

A Message from Union Gospel Mission
Executive Director Jason Christensen



Creator, Redeemer, and Restorer

Our LifeChange residents come from a variety of different backgrounds. Many have experienced hurt and trauma from a young age. But thankfully, that does not have to determine their future. Karina, whose story is featured this month, shows what kind of life transformation is possible. Transformation not only for her, but her children as well.

At UGM, we believe God is our creator, redeemer, and restorer. We believe it is through His love and power that lives are transformed. Our programs and services are built upon the solid foundation of Jesus who can redeem and restore all who seek him, especially the prodigals among us who come to us for help.

I invite you to attend our Annual Tea Fundraiser happening in May. Please plan to join us and hear stories of restored prodigals. The funds raised at this event will support LifeChange for Women and Their Children and help complete our new home for women and children that is currently under construction in Northwest Portland.

As we look forward to the future, we encourage you to take this opportunity to get involved with the mission. Perhaps you can give or volunteer to help those in need. Join with us in restoring the prodigals.

Grateful to serve,

Jason Christensen

***About the Title:** In Henri Nouwen's seminal work, *The Return of The Prodigal Son*, the author explores how we experience seasons in our lives where we identify with each of the three characters in the famous parable found in the Gospel of Luke (15: 11-32). I plan to use this space to help others understand the importance of identifying with the poor and being in solidarity with those whom society has shunned. It's my prayer that when we see the beggar on the street we won't look at them through the eyes of the judgmental older brother, but through the eyes and compassionate heart of the loving father.

you're invited to:

UNION GOSPEL MISSION'S

Annual TEA Fundraiser

to Benefit LifeChange for Women and Their Children
MAY 13, 2023 | 12 - 2 PM

The Embassy Suites
9000 SW Washington Square Rd
Tigard, OR 97223



THIS ANNUAL FUNDRAISER benefits women and children escaping homelessness, addiction, and abuse. Georgene Rice will be our host this year as we enjoy a light lunch along with delicious teas from Harney & Sons and hear stories of radical transformation!

LifeChange for Women and Their Children provides a safe, healing home for single women and women with children who are struggling with abuse, addiction, or homelessness. We help transform their lives through intentional community and support.

To RSVP head to our website at www.ugmportland.org/tea2023

Planned Giving

Have you ever really thought about your legacy? When most people think about their legacy they think about their children, and rightly so. Sometimes when we hear words like wills, trusts, or estate planning our brains short circuit.

UGM recently launched a Planned Giving department and would love to share what we have learned. We start by asking questions like:

*Beyond family, what passion has God placed on your heart?
Is this passion one you want to include in your "legacy"?*

We would be honored to listen and learn about your passion. We can help you begin your journey and identify available opportunities that can help to establish your legacy.

If you'd like to connect with us about planned giving please reach out to Ron Smicker at rons@ugmportland.org

LIFECHANGE LETTER

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UNION GOSPEL MISSION

LIFECHANGE LETTER

Through the transformative power of Jesus Christ, we open life-changing pathways to people experiencing homelessness, hunger, addiction, and abuse.

APRIL 2023

Karina's Story

Karina grew up in a home filled with alcoholism and drug abuse. She was often left alone while her mother worked multiple jobs to support the family. By age 12 she found herself at a house party where she was introduced to marijuana and methamphetamine. Karina became a mother at age 16. Determined to build a better life for her children, Karina decided to attend a local college. While in college Karina fell back into old habits and eventually dropped out. "Each time I relapsed, things got worse and worse."

Things continued to spiral when Karina started to visit casinos. "The rush of gambling was more intense than any drug I could take," says Karina. Her gambling escalated to the point where she received death threats due to unpaid debts. Even her children began to fear for their lives. "You know things are bad when your children call their grandparents and ask to go live with them."

After losing her children, Karina fled to Los Angeles. During her time in Los Angeles, she

Continued inside . . .



INSIDE

WELCOME
YOUTHARY SIM
TO LIFECHANGE

CREATOR,
REDEEMER,
AND RESTORER

UGM ANNUAL
TEA FUNDRAISER

Karina's Story Continued from cover . . .

reconnected with an old friend through social media who was a resident of Union Gospel Mission's LifeChange community. Karina explains, "When I saw how my friend turned their life around, it gave me hope to know that change is possible."

"When I arrived at LifeChange I felt excited but scared at the same time, but when I walked through the doors all my fears went away. I was shown love like never before. It was genuine love, you know? It's like they were just waiting to receive me with open arms," Karina says with a sigh of relief.

Over the past nine months, Karina has spent time building healthy relationships in the program as well as with her church family. She feels confident that these relationships will give her the support she needs to continue her sober living. She has a new-found relationship with God. "I've learned the abundant grace Jesus has for me," Karina explains.

Karina's children were able to join her 20 days after her arrival and have experienced change as well. "I'm so thankful for the counseling and mentoring my children have here. They used to struggle in school, but this semester they passed all their classes!" Karina says with a big proud smile. "God has blessed my relationship with my children by making us stronger than ever before."

Karina is currently taking courses to become a recovery support specialist. She wants to re-enroll in college to finish her degree in substance abuse counseling. She says, "I want to use my life experiences to show others that change is possible... because I am living proof."

If you know of a woman battling addiction, homelessness, or domestic abuse and she is interested in a life change, contact LifeChange for Women and Their Children at 503-802-2271



UGM BY THE NUMBERS: OCTOBER 2022 – FEBRUARY 2023



MEALS SERVED
86,187



INDIVIDUALS WARMING
IN COLD WEATHER
SHELTER
488



INDIVIDUALS SAFELY
TRANSITIONED OUT OF
HOMELESSNESS
53



MEN, WOMEN AND
CHILDREN SERVED
IN LIFECHANGE
97

Welcome Youtheary Sim to Women's LifeChange

This last Fall Johnni Olson, UGM's Woman's LifeChange Director, retired after many years of faithful service. Johnni came to UGM Portland in 2013, not just to take a job, but rather to live out her calling. She lovingly and gracefully spoke the truth of the gospel to women and children and saw hundreds of lives transformed.

We miss Johnni, yet we are pleased to introduce you to the new Women's LifeChange Director, Youtheary Sim.

Youtheary is a Graduate from Clark Atlanta University. She has worked with organizations such as Harkins House, Teen Challenge, Centro Cultural, Latino Network, National Urban League, and Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center. She also served as the Women's Ministry Leader at the Potter's House Ministries.

"What an exciting time this is to join the UGM family! I was born and raised in the Northwest. My commitment to my community started with my immigrant parents who experienced firsthand the daily challenges and barriers that our city faces. I am thrilled to be back in my hometown and to serve the women and their children at LifeChange."



Please welcome Youtheary and pray for God to bless her work and the women and children we serve.

THE JOURNEY HOME

The campaign to build a center for homeless women and children



The Journey Home Update

The Journey Home Campaign to build a new home for women and their children is on track to open by March of 2024!

The community has stepped up to see this project come to fruition and the foundation has been poured, literally, to offer a safe home for women and children escaping the effects of homelessness. This new construction will expand LifeChange programming to a larger number of single women and women with children. This new facility will double our capacity to serve more than 2,000 women and children in the next decade as they work to end cycles of addiction, poverty, and abuse.

So far, we have raised over \$15,700,000 of \$20,875,000 and we are hopeful we will finish our fundraising goal by Fall of 2023.

To learn more updates about the Journey Home, please visit our website at www.ugmportland.org/journeyhome

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." Psalm 139:14

APRIL 2023