

REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL

DECEMBER 2020

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LEARN CONNECT

Praise God!

"When I came to the Mission and found the Lord, I was humbled and realized that the only way I could help myself was through helping others." – Philip

If you ever have the chance to talk to Philip, there are two words you're sure to hear: "Praise God!"

"If I go through a day without saying, 'Praise God!' then something's wrong. As soon as that first 'Praise God!' pops out, then I'm back on track," he says.

Philip would never have been on track at all if it weren't for friends like you. In fact, he spent 28 years completely off track – addicted to meth.

"From 2001 to 2017 I spent at least six months out of every year in jail. I was in and out like a revolving door."

Then, on October 2, 2017, when he was arrested, Philip's pretrial officer heard he was homeless. Instead of sending him back to his camp on Lynch Creek, she told him to go somewhere he'd never heard of – Redwood Gospel Mission.

When he arrived, we gave him a ham sandwich and invited him to come back that night. Later, when we walked into chapel, Philip says the Lord touched him.

"I saw a friend of mine that I was in jail with in 2001. I saw how much God has changed his life," he says. "I talked to him, and I said, 'Man, Tommy. . ."

(Continued inside)



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srmission.org/joy

God's love changes everything, and you can share it this Christmas!



Praise God!

(Continued from cover)

how did you do this?' He said, 'It's not me, man. It's the Lord.' I said, 'I want a pill like that.' He said, 'Join the program,' and I joined."

Philip graduated in 2018 and now works at the Mission as a Thrift Store Clerk. He's spent several Christmas seasons with us – as a guest, program participant, volunteer and now staff member.

"Christmas at the Mission is a very, very special time," he says. "To be a part of that is to be a part of my community, and that's something I'd never experienced before."

A Short Wish List

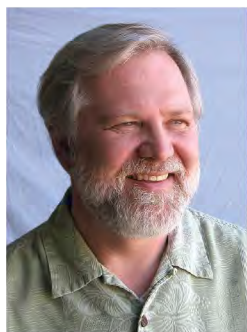
This Christmas, Philip has one wish – to take his mom, who has always been his biggest supporter, a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken. A few months ago, when she caught COVID-19, he didn't even know if she'd survive to the holidays.

Instead of letting his fear pull him back to his addiction, Philip did what he was taught at the Mission – he reached out to his support group and asked them to pray. Even though it was touch and go, Philip's mom survived!

Philip is praying that by Christmas restrictions at her facility will be lifted so he can see her. But even if he can't, nothing will stop him from saying his two favorite words, "Praise God!"

Praise God indeed! Praise God for transforming Philip's life! Praise God for using friends like you to do it!

"My life before Christ was me, me, me, me, me, and drugs, crime and meanness. Then, when I found Christ, it became compassion, humility, serving others instead of serving myself, and I found happiness. I became truly happy on the inside and I try to convey that every day in my everyday life." – Philip



The Foolishness of Christmas

Jeff Gilman
Executive Director

My favorite Christmas verse is 1 Corinthians 1:25, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

It’s my favorite because, by all practical accounts, the entire Christmas story seems foolish. A baby born to a virgin? Impossible! And not just any baby, but the God of the universe. Why would he arrive that way? In a dirty stable, no less?

We may not notice it because we’re so familiar with the story, but it keeps getting more foolish from there, culminating in the three groups that God chooses to

reveal the promised Savior to first:

1. **An unwed, teenage mother.**
2. **Shepherds working in the fields. These weren’t just regular guys but the outcasts of society, who spent all their time with animals.**
3. **The Wise Men who were the ultimate outsiders – aliens not even from the area.**

And yet, without these most unlikely messengers, you and I wouldn’t even know the Christmas story. We wouldn’t have heard of Jesus’ birth, and we wouldn’t be able to continue to share this amazing news with others. That would have been the biggest tragedy of all of history!

So as I think of how God chooses the foolish things to shame the wise, it makes me grateful. I’m grateful for all the ways the Lord works, and all the people He uses because it reminds me that no matter what, God can still use me. I just have to be willing to share the message.

An Unexpected Opportunity

The pandemic has created all sorts of challenges, but it’s also opened up new ministry opportunities. When we began partnering with Alliance Redwoods camp, one of those opportunities became the ministry of transportation.

When we moved guests to camp, we committed to making sure they still had safe transportation to their important appointments – to see doctors, visit the DMV, go to legal meetings, etc. But that meant we had to hire drivers to shuttle people back and forth.

What might have seemed like an inconvenience has become a great blessing. The drivers all have a deep love for Jesus – several are even in professional ministry – and they have devoted the time they get in the car to connect, listen, pray and share the Gospel with the people they are driving.

“It’s more than just providing a service. It’s providing care and comfort for them to get to and from where they need to go. I’ve had a few times where there’s been a couple of guests that shared



This new ministry is more proof that every challenge can become an opportunity to bless others!

things during that captive time that they’ve never shared with anyone. It can be some good time to minister to them and just be there for them.”
– Dan, Mission driver



Change a life.

Share the hope of Christmas!

Philip wouldn't be where he is today if it weren't for people like you.

He wouldn't have gotten to taste that God is good with delicious meals. He wouldn't have seen the miracle of provision as he slept in a warm, dry bed away from the cold creek. He wouldn't have felt the joy of new life.

But he has.

He knows he'll never go back to the homeless, addicted criminal he once was because Jesus has rescued him. His life has forever changed.

Right now, there are others in Sonoma County who are desperate for that kind of change. You can offer it to them by sending a Christmas gift.

Each \$18.55 you give provides three delicious meals, a night of safe shelter and essential care. Like Philip's story shows, even one night can be the start of a changed life.

"I recommend the Mission highly to anybody that doesn't have anywhere to go or that feels like they don't have a friend," Philip says. "The food is going to nourish you and the chapel services are going to nourish you spiritually."

We're busier now than we've been since the pandemic first hit. Any amount you can give this Christmas will be a blessing!

Please be sure to send your gift by Dec. 21st.

**Photo taken prior to COVID and social-distancing restrictions*



Concerned about mail delays? Give your gift securely online at: srmision.org/joy

Your Christmas gift can help transform a life like Philip's!

REAL CHANGE

is the newsletter of
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Looking Forward to an Unusual Christmas

Christmas at the Mission will be different than it's ever been in our 57-year history.

We have New Life Program members and some additional guests staying at the Men's Mission and the Rose like usual. We also have homeless guests staying out at camp. But no matter where they are, we know that the support of friends like you will help them to celebrate the birth of our Savior in a meaningful way.



"We are getting busy planning for the Christmas things that we do for the guests and the community. To be a part of that is such a blessing."

– Philip



"I look forward to spending Christmas here and also with the friends that I've met as family. I look forward being able to share myself and maybe some the gifts that I have to give, I'm anxious to be able to give those to people who have given me opportunities that I have." – Duane



"This year's going to be really nice. It's going to be wonderful. Because the dining hall, they like to go out of their way on special holidays and do something very special for us." – Charles

Thank you for continuing to stand with us as together we strive to see more lives transformed this Christmas!

Winter Coat Giveaway



Even though we don't get blizzard conditions here in Sonoma County, as the temperatures dip, many of our poor and homeless neighbors struggle to stay warm. It can be especially hard for children and the elderly to keep their body temperatures at a healthy level when facing the elements.

As a way to serve and love people who can't afford their own winter coats, we've started giving them away at our Thrift Store. We have a voucher system so that we know that free coats go to the people who truly need them. This year, we hope to give away thousands of winter coats of all sizes to help people stay warm this winter, and we want each one to have a special Coat Tag signed by a friend like you.

Contact Mariella Zapata at 707-578-1830 x 306 if you have any questions.

A close-up photograph of a tan-colored winter jacket. The jacket has a ribbed collar and a zipper. A small, light-colored tag is clipped to the zipper pull. The tag contains text in a serif font. The background is a blurred red and green, suggesting a Christmas tree.

**Stay Warm
and Know You
are Loved**

“The Lord will cover you with His feathers. He will shelter you with His wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.”

—Psalm 91:4 (NLT)

Coat Giveaway!

Add a special touch of love and comfort to the coats we'll give to people in need.

Please sign and return both Coat Tags along with your gift to provide as many \$18.55 life-changing days of care as you can by Dec. 21st!

There's even space on the back for you to add a short note of encouragement if you'd like.



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Dear neighbor,
May this coat remind you that you are deeply
loved by God and people in this community.
I hope it keeps you warm all winter long.

Your friend,

(Sign first name)



Dear neighbor,
May this coat remind you that you are deeply
loved by God and people in this community.
I hope it keeps you warm all winter long.

Your friend,

(Sign first name)

Thank you

For sharing hope and spreading compassion!

A warm coat with your personally signed tag will be a great Christmas present! When you send your tags and gift to change lives, please also pray for

the people who will receive the coats with your tags!



PRAY



Please use a ballpoint pen and sign your first name only. Thanks! - Jeff