

REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL MISSION

MAY 2021



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On their own, a hot meal, a slice of cake, a birthday card or a free haircut may not seem like that big of a deal.

And to many of us they are small things. But when you are experiencing homelessness, those small things can change everything – and it's not always about what those things are as much as how they make you feel.

The first time Tracy came to the Homeless Birthday Party, she felt seen for the first time in a long time.

"Being homeless was really sad, and I was in a desperate place," Tracy says. "I don't remember having birthdays when I was on the street."

That's because when you are homeless, there are no birthdays and no holidays.

Every day just blurs into the next when you are struggling to survive, wondering where your next meal will come from or facing the angry stares of people who just wish you would disappear.

So, when Tracy heard about the Homeless Birthday Party from some women that she knew, she wasn't sure what to expect. But when she got there, she was blown away.

(Continued inside . . .)

Small Things Change Everything

Before coming to Redwood Gospel Mission and joining the New Life Recovery Program, Tracy was homeless and battling addiction for three years – over 1,000 days when no one celebrated her birthday.



Get involved at srmission.org/birthday

Showing People Love Gives Them Hope to Become Who They Were Created to Be!

(Continued from cover)



"I walked up the sidewalk and there was a section where people were getting their haircuts, and there was a table where people were handing out bag lunches. There were toiletries and socks and all kinds of things that when you're on the street you really need," Tracy remembers.

"I could feel the kindness coming down the street, so the vibe was really strong, and I saw a lot of homeless people there and they seemed to be happy."

Some of the things that made the biggest difference to Tracy were getting some really good food, some snacks she could take with her, a few clean pairs of socks and getting her hair cut – something she hadn't done in years.

"My hair was really shaggy, and I wear bangs. It was in my face," she says. "There's something about the personal touch of a haircut that fills my heart."

No Small Thing: Why Celebrating Matters

All the little elements at the birthday party added up to one really big thing for Tracy.

"It felt like people loving on us," she says.

Feeling loved was Tracy's favorite thing about birthdays before being homeless. And to experience it again reminded her of who she was created to be.

"The biggest thing was the love," she says. "And the attention because we were celebrating that I'm alive, that my life matters, it matters to God, and it matters to other people."

Tracy went on to join our New Life Recovery Program and has gotten clean and sober and is off the streets!

"Now I am filled with the hope that recovery gives me, and the Lord gives me. I'm working, and I'm sober almost 3 years," she says.

Tracy has been to the Homeless Birthday Party twice. Once as a guest and once as a volunteer.

Your signed card and gift can help the next "Tracy" feel loved enough to change.



We Celebrate to Share the Gospel

Jeff Gilman
Executive Director



Our God values life. He values it so deeply that He sent His son, Jesus, to die so we could spend eternity with Him.

But of course, it's not just my life or your life that God values. It's all of humanity.

Every man and woman matters because God created them and is at work in their lives. And because of that, every life deserves to be celebrated.

I believe that by celebrating, we are living out the Gospel and sharing it with people like Tracy in a way that they can easily see and feel.

While having a big party is always fun, fun isn't the point of the Homeless Birthday Party. The point is to share God's love and proclaim the Gospel. That is the plan for June 4th, and we'd love to have you participate.



Can We Come to Your Church?



God calls us to help those in need, and yet often we don't know how – especially if they are in our church family.

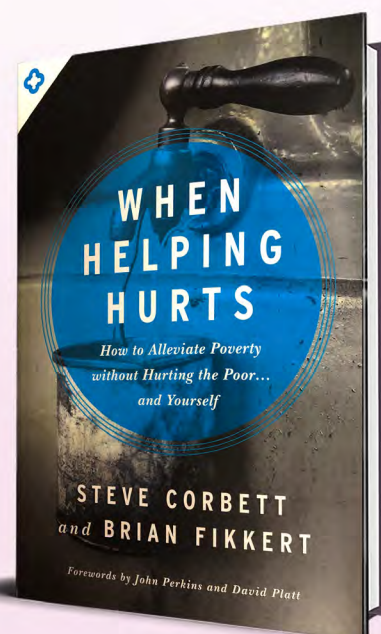
That's what makes the book and video curriculum *When Helping Hurts* such a great resource. It offers practical tools for helping to alleviate poverty within the local church, and we want to share it with you and your church.

Here's how it works:

1. Your church provides the space for a 1-day seminar and invites people to attend.
2. The Mission provides the video curriculum, the book, someone to help emcee and facilitate the program, as well as lunch.
3. Everyone walks away better equipped to help the people God places in their life in sustainable ways.

We've already had seminars at two churches, and they both found it so valuable they want to do it again!

We'd love to bring *When Helping Hurts* to you too. Talk to your pastor and then give Rod Bowman a call at 707-578-1830 or email: rbowman@srmission.org to schedule your church's event!



"It was such a great learning experience for all of us. We want to do it again as soon as we can so that more people can attend. I'd say it was invaluable."

Share God's Love



All of us have experienced feeling forgotten, neglected or unimportant. But for those of us with strong families, caring friends and homes, those feelings are usually short-lived.

When you're homeless, you live with those feelings every day – even on your birthday, the one day that people are supposed to remember you.

You can show your homeless and hurting neighbors that they haven't been forgotten, that their lives matter, and most important of all, that God loves them and has a purpose for their lives.

And you can do all that by doing two simple things:

1. Sign and return your birthday card by June 1st.
2. Send a gift. Each \$1.87 helps provides a delicious sit-down meal at the party, and that includes cake.

Your gift might give them the hope they need to change their lives. Your generosity and compassion will be a hands-on way to share the beauty of the Gospel, which is something we all need more of in our lives!

Please send your signed birthday card and gift by June 1st. You can also give

Each \$1.87 you give helps provide a birthday meal for one person – \$18.70 provides 10!



SHARE GOD'S LOVE Give \$1.87 Birthday Meals

Yes, Jeff! I want to share God's love and show my homeless neighbors their lives matter! I'm sending a key partner gift of:

☐ \$ _____

☐ My signed Birthday card is also enclosed.

Name _____
Address _____
City, State ZIP _____

The Homeless Birthday Party is June 4th.
Please return your signed card and gift by June 1st.

MISSION MEMBER

Giving by credit card? Fill out the back of this form, or mail payment and processing by donating securely online at missions.org/birthday

Please make your check payable to Redwood Gospel Mission and return this response card in the enclosed envelope. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

REAL CHANGE

is the newsletter of
Redwood Gospel Mission
PO Box 493, Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0493
T: 707.578.1830 | F: 707.578.4841
srmission.org

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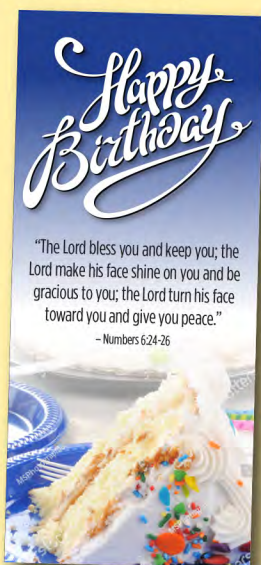


Send a Birthday Card to a Homeless Neighbor

“Happy Birthday!”

**Just those two words say:
I see you. Your life matters.
You are loved.**

But once they become homeless, many people don't hear those words. They don't have anyone celebrating them or telling them that they're glad they are alive. That's why the Homeless Birthday Party is so important and why signing and returning the enclosed birthday card is such a big deal.



By signing and returning the card (and sending a gift), you are saying that you believe that every life is valuable, that people can change and that there is always hope.

- 1.** Sign your first name (there's room for you to add a short note if you'd like).
- 2.** Put it in the enclosed envelope with your gift and send it to the Mission by June 1st so we'll have it in time for the Homeless Birthday Party.
- 3.** Pray for the person who will receive your card.
- 4.** Smile, imagining what your birthday card will mean to someone who hasn't gotten one in years.

NOTE: Please use ballpoint pen and sign your first name only. Thank you!



Let God Use Your Used Goods!

Many of us happily drop off our gently used items at the Mission Thrift Store, knowing that the profits from the sales of those items help support the Mission. But what many people don't realize is that those items can also help men and women in recovery earn their retail certification, and they can also be used to help furnish the homes of people in need. In fact, after the Santa Rosa Fires in 2017, people who were left with nothing were able to get approval to receive clothing, furniture and other items from the Thrift Store for free.

And sometimes just the act of experiencing that kind of generosity is enough to turn you to Jesus. One woman recently came into the Thrift Store in search of items for a ministry at her church. She turned to Pastor Fernando who was on site at the time and asked him if he remembered her. Three years ago, she'd come in and been blessed with specific items. Best of all, Pastor Fernando had shared the Gospel and led her to the Lord!

So, the next time you decide to upgrade your plates, consider donating your used ones to the Mission's Thrift Store. You never know who might eat off them next or how God will use them!

Thrift Store Hours:
9am-7pm Monday-Saturday

Donation Drop-Off Hours:
8am-5pm Monday-Saturday

For pickups, contact Carol at
cward@srmission.org

Happy Birthday

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.”

– Numbers 6:24-26



You were created with a purpose
and you are loved. I'm glad you
were born, and I believe that there
are great things ahead for you!

Your friend,

(First name only)



707.542.4817
Santa Rosa, CA
srmission.org