

REAL CHANGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF REDWOOD GOSPEL

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Sharing the Gift He Was Given



Not too long ago, Chris' mom gave him a house key.

That may not sound like a big deal, but when you know how far Chris had fallen into addiction, it's huge. It's huge because it shows that God has transformed him so much that trust has been restored. And there was a lot to restore because Chris' battle with addiction started early.

He remembers going to class high when he was in 5th grade.

Five short years later, before he even graduated from high school, he was doing meth. That continued for the next 26 years.

"When I looked at it, drugs were a solution to pain," Chris says. That pain came from watching his mom and sister be abused by his mom's ex-boyfriend.

"It's heavy duty when you're in grade school and your sister's getting punched by him, and your mom's getting punched by him. It's a lot to go through when you're just a kid," he says.

(Continued inside ...)

"Without the Mission, I have no doubt I'd be either incarcerated or dead. I was deep into Oxycontin, and those are just like heroin. In fact, the person that used to sell them to me died while I was at the Mission." — Chris



Get involved at

srmission.org/joy



How Will you Share God's Love this Christmas?

Sharing the Gift He Was Given



(Continued from cover...)

Not only is it a lot to go through when you are a kid, it can impact decades of your life. It wasn't until Chris came to Redwood Gospel Mission that he finally began changing and healing. And it's all because this is where he met Jesus.

"I really encountered God in a big way. I felt like Jesus coupled with AA was just a match made in heaven. I felt like there was more than just rehab, it was a way of life. A family. A church family. Man, great things started happening when I encountered God," says Chris.

"I got everything back that I lost. My kids are back in my life and I've got a place to live, I got a job, got a car. And my mom gave me her house key."

Now Chris is doing everything he can to share the gifts of love, grace and freedom with as many people as he can. He is one of our teachers here at the Mission, working to inspire and encourage the guys currently in our program by pointing them to Jesus and showing them that new life is possible!

Blessed by Blessing

But even as he works to give back, he's blessed in return.

"I get way more out of it than the guys that I go teach," Chris says. "I could be having the worst day, and I go show up at the Mission, it just turns right around on me. I think it's because God does something amazing here."

God does amazing things here, and He does it through friends like you. Chris is proof. He's been sober for almost 11 years now. He has a relationship with his kids, a steady job, his own place to live, serves on the worship team at his church, volunteers here at the Mission and now that his relationship with his mom has been restored, he uses the key she gave him to help around her house.

It's a life he never could have imagined 25 years ago, and he loves it.



"God owns me, not the enemy." – Chris

Each \$18.55 you give can help someone like Chris meet Jesus and begin a new life!



Christmas Bells

Jeff Gilman
Executive Director



My favorite Christmas carol is “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” based on the poem “Christmas Bells” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Although it was written well over 100 years ago, I believe it's incredibly relevant today.

As I believe you are well aware, we have a society that is increasingly in despair and buying into the idea that “God is dead.” But the last stanza of Longfellow's poem boldly proclaims the truth that God is not dead or even absent.

*“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.”*

I see reminders that God isn't dead every single day. I see it in the generosity and partnership of faithful friends like you, and I see it in lives that are completely transformed, like Chris's.

To me, Christmas is a reminder that even in our broken world, God is here. He came to us as one of us and sacrificed Himself so we could know Him as He truly is: alive, real, loving, full of grace and ready to transform every willing heart.

Triple Impact: A Gift that Gives Back

If you have anyone on your Christmas list this year who is a coffee lover, we have a great idea for you!

Redwood Gospel Coffee is some of the best quality coffee you can buy, and it's roasted right on our campus in a state-of-the-art roaster.



There are a variety of gifts to choose from, including a year's worth of coffee, monthly coffee subscriptions, 12-ounce packages of coffee and coffee with mugs. Prices start at \$10.80.

Best of all, this is a gift that has triple impact:

1. Our coffee is all direct trade, meaning we build relationships with our coffee farmers and pay them a wage that will both bless them and help them transform their communities. (Some of our growers are missionaries, so you'll be blessing their ministries too).
2. All our coffee is roasted through our Coffee Certification Program, where men and women in recovery are taught to roast coffee as a skill they can use to enter the work world again as a coffee professional.
3. Our coffee is high-quality, gourmet, specialty coffee, which means it tastes incredible and will be a blessing to any coffee lover you know!

Go to:

**redwoodgospelcoffee.com
to start shopping!**



Kids helping Kids

Hazel has already done two toy drives and one coat drive.

There is so much beauty in the unrestrained compassion of kids. They see someone in need and often just want to help. Hazel, who just turned 8 years old, decided to host a stuffed animal drive and began collecting toys to give to kids in need at our various events. She even gave away her own favorite stuffed animals!

"I was scared because it was one of my favorite stuffed animals. I'm pretty sure I was crying. But then the day after, I felt pretty happy I did it," Hazel says. "Because now another girl, she can have that stuffed animal and now she can have happy memories with it."

When her friend Elly heard what Hazel had done, she wanted to help too. She went up to her bedroom and came back with tears in her eyes, her arms full of her favorite toys.

"These helped me in tough times. I hope they help others," Elly said.

She donated her toys and then went on to help with a coat drive so that her homeless neighbors wouldn't be cold in the chilly, winter months.

You can help too!

If you're interested in running your own drive, it doesn't have to be for stuffed animals. We always need coats, new socks and underwear, as well as toiletry items.

Contact Eric Sangervasi at 707.578.1830 x316 to get a list of needs and get started!



WAYS TO GET INVOLVED: Christmas Activities at the Mission

There are a variety of ways that you can get involved to make the season brighter for those in need. Here are four ideas to get you started:

1. Volunteer During Our Christmas Celebration

Our Christmas celebration happens December 21-25, which means we need all the volunteers we can get. Opportunities include: hosting coffee, serving meals, distributing coats, leading an evening worship service, foot washing, caroling and more.

2. Adopt a Stocking

Fill a stocking for one of our overnight guests or someone in our recovery program with the following items:

- Socks – men's or women's (crew or ankle)
- Winter gloves (knit fits most sizes)
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Nail clippers
- Rain ponchos
- Flashlight or book light
- \$5 gift card of some kind (Starbucks or McDonalds)
- Razors (disposable or replaceable blade)
- Optional Life Recovery or Celebrate Recovery Bible
- And either a travel coffee mug, a water bottle, a pedometer or a Santa Rosa City bus pass

Just imagine the look on someone's face when they receive your stocking on Christmas morning!

3. Serve at Our Christmas Brunch

As a special outreach event, we host a brunch the Saturday before Christmas. We need volunteers to help greet, serve and pray with our guests.

4. Pray

Set aside a time each week during the holiday season to lift up your poor and needy neighbors. Pray for provision, for freedom from addiction, for comfort and for God's love to give them new life.

Contact David Perez at 707.578.1830 x 317 or dperez@srmission.org for more information or to sign up for any of the above opportunities.

The Best Christmas Gift:



A New Life

Chris has been clean and sober for 11 years. That's 11 years of holidays, birthdays and family celebrations where he's been able to be fully present.

That's over 10 years faithfully working the same job. And it's about 9 years of teaching and mentoring here at the Mission – with many more ahead of him.

He knows that without God's grace and the generosity of friends like you, he'd be in jail or dead. But instead, he's living a new life!

This Christmas you can offer that same gift of new life to someone else.

Each \$18.55 you donate now will provide a day of care including meals and shelter for someone in desperate need right here in Sonoma County which can be the beginning of a new life.

Jesus came into the world to offer new life, which makes offering it to someone else not only the most fitting, but the most perfect gift you could give to your poor and needy neighbors this Christmas.

So many of our neighbors are in need this holiday season. Each \$18.55 will provide a full day of care for one of them!

Any amount you give will make a difference! Please be sure to send your gift by Dec. 20th.



Give online quickly and securely at:
srmission.org/joy

At the Mission, Chris learned what you already know – helping those in need is a blessing!

REAL CHANGE

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