

UNION GOSPEL MISSION

LIFECHANGE LETTER

“ Before coming to LifeChange, my life was out of control ... I just didn't have any hope of getting better or ever changing. ”

— VICTORIA

INSIDE:

- A Firm Foundation
- What's it Like to Volunteer at the Mission?
- The Journey Home Update
- Be a Life-Changer





MATT STEIN
Executive Director

A Firm Foundation

WHEN I THINK ABOUT the women in the program here at the Mission, a lot of emotions come to mind. But, the most prevalent one is *pride*.

I'm proud of each and every woman here because I see how hard they fight for their children and for themselves. It's really hard work, but sometimes the best way to give a brighter future to your children is to work on yourself. And it isn't just me — the pride on the faces of kids is unmistakable when they see the progress mom is making.

As new lives are built, a new foundation needs to be laid. That's where the Mission really shines. Our foundation is Jesus Christ. And when we get the opportunity to help guests get to know Him, that's where the real miracles happen.

Scripture tells us that in this world we will have trouble. Pain and suffering are inevitable. But, when your life is built on the right foundation, when those hardships come, you are better equipped to not only keep standing, but to also stand firm.

That's why our program isn't just 30 days or even 90 days. It's 18 months — 550 days! It takes time to heal. It takes time to build a new foundation. But when you give someone that time, that's when real transformation like Victoria's happens.

This month we celebrate and honor all that moms do for so many. Thank you for partnering with us as we support moms working to make a new start.

Lasting life change like that wouldn't happen without partners like you.



“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.” Matthew 7:24-25

MAY 2024

A LIFE SHATTERED AT 6, BUT HEALED AT 42

VICTORIA EXPERIENCED horrific abuse when she was just six years old. She didn't tell anyone about it for years and instead tucked her pain deep inside, where it haunted her.

At 13, she got her first glimpse of relief when her friend's uncle invited them to try what he was smoking. Victoria doesn't remember what it was, but she remembers how it made her feel: numb to the pain she'd been feeling for years, even though she was just a teenager.

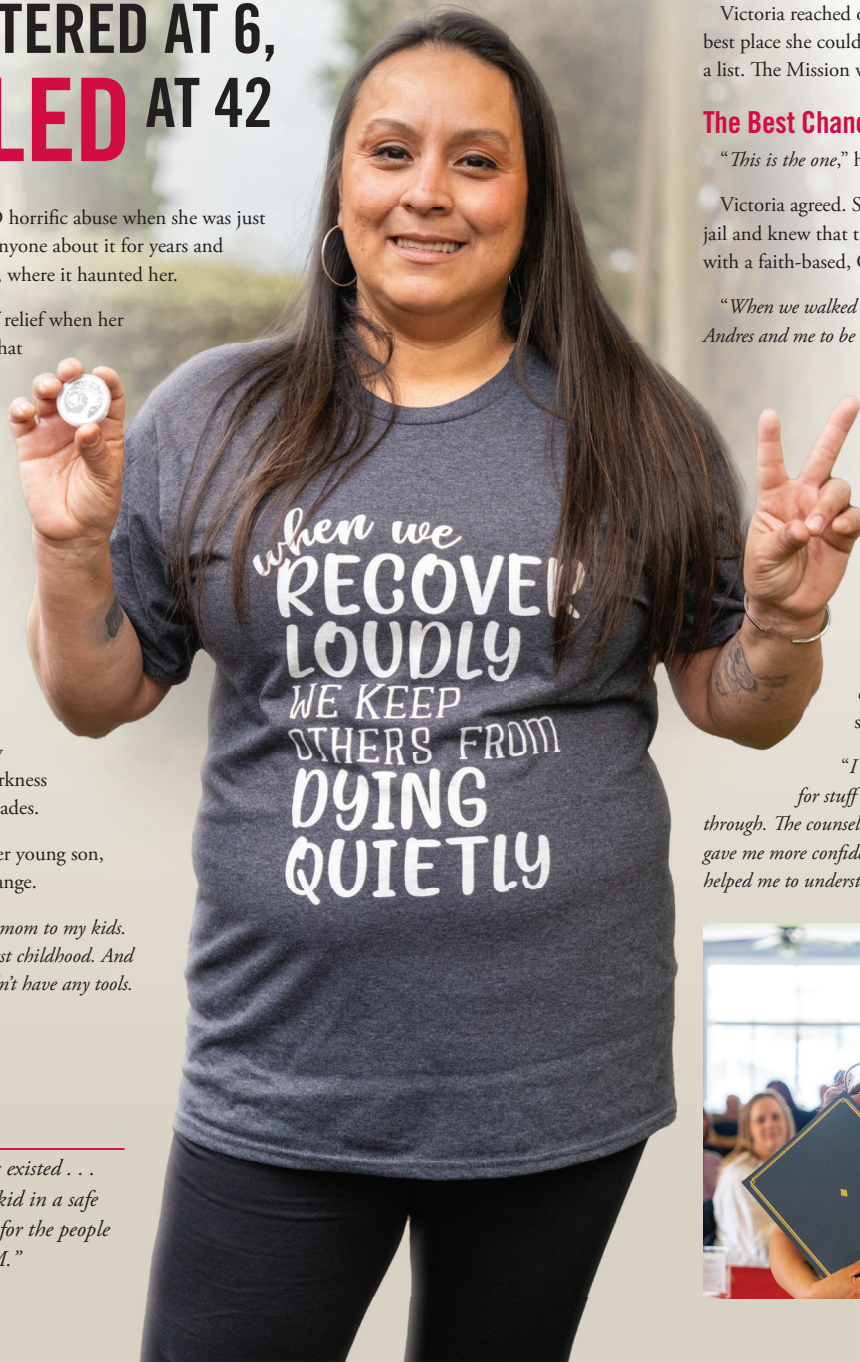
"I just remember taking that first hit and that being it for me," she shares. "It made my mind race to where I wasn't thinking."

That escape from her life was so alluring that it wasn't long before she was using cocaine or meth every single day. She stayed trapped in darkness — in a life without hope — for decades.

Then, one day, as she looked at her young son, Andres, she knew she wanted to change.

"I had always wanted to be a good mom to my kids. I'd always wanted to give them the best childhood. And I never had the skills to do that. I didn't have any tools. I didn't have any resources."

"I never even knew places like this existed . . . where you could come bring your kid in a safe place and heal. I'm really grateful for the people who help support places like UGM."
— Victoria



Victoria reached out to her brother, who researched the best place she could get treatment. He called her back with a list. The Mission was on the top.

The Best Chance for a Beautiful Life

"This is the one," he said.

Victoria agreed. She had given her life to Jesus while in jail and knew that the only way she would really heal was with a faith-based, Christ-centered program.

"When we walked to our room and there was a place for Andres and me to be together, and it was a safe place, that's when I was like, finally, we can start growing. I can start working on this — on us . . . on me. I was ready to do whatever I needed to get better."

For 18 months in LifeChange, Victoria focused on Jesus and let Him guide her steps. She went to classes and counseling, learned parenting techniques, and completed relapse prevention training. The Mission's caring staff even helped her dig into her childhood trauma so that she could build a new foundation.

"I did a lot of digging and forgiving myself for stuff that I had done and put my family through. The counseling helped me become a better me and gave me more confidence in myself. The parenting classes helped me to understand my son."



" . . . I was like, finally, we can start growing. I can start working on this — on us . . . on me. I was ready to do whatever I needed to get better." — Victoria

After graduating from LifeChange, Victoria stayed with us until she found a job and permanent housing.

"The Mission provided transportation for the first couple of weeks of my job and that was a really big help. I saved and purchased my first car ever. Shortly after I got my car, I got my letter from housing saying they had an apartment ready for me. Andres and I moved in September 1st."

Victoria knows that her new life wouldn't have been possible without friends like you supporting our Women's and Children's ministry.

Will you be a life-changer for someone else by sending a gift today? Each \$17.64 you give provides a full day of healing for a woman who is making a new start!



What's it Like to Volunteer at the Mission?

Megan has been volunteering at LifeChange for Women and Their Children for just a few months and she's not planning to stop anytime soon.

"It's been really great getting to know the women," she says. "It's just been an awesome opportunity for me as well."

Part of what has made it so good is that Megan has chosen to use her gifts and talents — and her own story — to help others.

"I was in a domestic violence relationship, and having somebody who had walked through that previously coming into my life and helping me to deal with the shame made a real difference in my life," she says. "After about seven years of my own work, God really just put it on my heart to help other women to start understanding that they don't have to stay where they're at and show them how to move forward."

Megan has a background in healthcare and coaching and is using those skills to help teach classes that women like Victoria attend.

"We work through false narratives and limiting beliefs," Megan says. "That way we can have more awareness to our unhealthy ways of dealing with things that come up in our life that most of the time are a result of traumatic experiences from childhood. By recognizing that those things aren't working for us, we have the power to choose to do something different . . . Really learning more about who God says you are and who He created you to be so that you can develop those strengths and accomplish what He created you for."



During one of the class sessions, Megan helps the women create dream boards and works with them to take steps to make those dreams come true.

What are the gifts and talents that God has given you? We'd love to help you find a way to use them here! To find out more about volunteer opportunities, visit ugmportland.org/volunteer

The Journey Home Campaign Update

The Journey Home campaign to build a new home for women and children escaping homelessness, hunger, addiction, and abuse continues to make good progress. It is exciting to see the building take shape. The roof, masonry, windows, and siding have all been added and we are making good progress on our outdoor playground, parking lot, and landscaping.

We look forward to this new building allowing us to double the number of women and children we serve each year!

To stay updated on our progress and to learn more, please visit: ugmportland.org/journeyhome





Be a Life-Changer!

Jesus doesn't tell us to share His love and offer LifeChange to vulnerable women and children when it's easy. He says to do it all the time.

With your help, we are. But the summer comes with its own set of challenges for the families we serve.

With kids out of school for the season, there's a bit more joyful noise around and things are busier because kids aren't at school during the day. The Mission hires more staff and plans more activities to keep the kids having fun while their moms focus on counseling and taking their classes.

Mothers often wait until summer break to apply for LifeChange because they know it will be less disruptive to their children's education.

Not many of us can afford to cover the cost of the entire 18-month program for a woman and child. And we're not asking you to. But could you do what you can?

At just \$17.64 for a complete day of meals, shelter and essential Christ-centered care, could you do a day or a week?

If we all do what we can, even more homeless women will get the help they so desperately need, more children will have the chance to have a beautiful future and more lives will be forever changed.

Will you change lives by sending a generous gift today?

Scan here to give online.



Heart of Hope  Partner

WANT TO MAKE AN EVEN BIGGER IMPACT?
Become a Monthly Heart of Hope Partner

When you sign up to give monthly, you'll know you're changing lives every day while saving postage and administrative costs and making sure that vital Mission programs keep running.

To sign up or find out more, call 503-274-4483 or visit ugmportland.org/heart-of-hope

LIFECHANGE LETTER

A PUBLICATION OF UNION GOSPEL MISSION

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



3 NW Third Avenue | Portland, OR 97209 | 503-274-4483 | ugmportland.org