

The  
**UNION  
MISSION**

# MISSION NETWORK

*Food, Clothing, Shelter ... and so much more!*

JANUARY 2023

**"I'm going to let  
the Lord decide  
what He wants  
for my life now."**

*Details on page 2*



**INSIDE: Painting the Path to Purpose | Trauma on Trial  
Tax Tips for Great Giving | Mastering Their Money | Anchors of Hope**

# The Trials of Trauma



Jacob's life was conceived in trauma. Born in 1978 into an incestuous family in Michigan, his childhood was confusing and chaotic. "It all started with my grandpa, who was also my father." Jacob, sadly, was not alone in the circle of abuse.

As an infant, Jacob was taken from his mother and raised by his aunt and her husband in the Navy. The seeming stability of their military life was just an illusion, and the family "bounced

around." Jacob's learning disabilities kept him in special-ed classes and behind in school, and "I never had real friends."

And life got worse when his "dad" was away on deployment. "The woman I thought was my mom also wanted me to act as her husband when he was out to sea. I was getting sexually and physically assaulted when I was about 6." She also forced Jacob into drinking and

drugs with her by the age of 9: "She gave me liquor, either vodka or rum," and marijuana and oxycodone. Jacob often had nightmares and flashbacks about the violence. He learned martial arts to defend himself, but the cycles of abuse remained a secret.

Predictably, Jacob's adult life went off track early. After high school, he and a classmate had a daughter, but custody was a challenge with the realities of alcohol, drugs, and homelessness. By his mid-20s Jacob was living on the streets. He still managed to hold responsible jobs, but they often "didn't last because of my disability."

Jacob first came to The Union Mission in 2011, and was able to get clean and sober, immerse himself in chapel, work part-time, and save his money. But in 2014 he met his future (now ex) wife online and they started living together. Jacob soon found he had reentered a familiar life of drinking, drug abuse, and dysfunction.

By 2021 he was homeless again—and still a magnet for the vices that had ruined his life. He'd returned to the Mission briefly, then moved in with a "friend" from work who stole his savings and tried to molest him. Jacob cashed his final paycheck and stayed in a tent commune with other homeless

For more about Jacob's journey, see [Stories](#)



people behind a 7-Eleven, pawning belongings to supply his addiction. When a trusted Mission shelter supervisor learned where he was, he went to go get Jacob.

“When my AA/NA sponsor kicked that bottle away, I had to man up.” Back at the only safe home he’d ever known, Jacob “got himself straight. And ever since then, I’ve been here.”

*“Have the courage to speak up and be honest! When you tell your story, that moment of freedom can change your life!”*

Our Wellness Team evaluated Jacob’s health and coordinated medical care for his anxiety and PTSD. And his case manager recommended that he join the new Trauma Workshop led by Dr. Eiesha Williamson and Glasgow Health Services. It marked the first time

Jacob, now 44, had openly discussed the painful experiences of his childhood.

“All my life, I thought I had done something wrong. I was always asking, ‘Why me?’” But in the classes “I was actually able to express everything that happened to me in life. Before then, nobody listened to me deeply.” Now Jacob better understands his mistakes, misguided relationships, misplaced trust, and misspent years: “I chose the path of drugs and alcohol to try to hide my feelings all these years about being raped when I was young.” Sometimes it was hard to open up, but “I was ready to be done with it! To move on!”

At the Trauma on Trial finale of the workshop, Jacob and his brave classmates shared their horrific histories and their hopes for a healthier future. His message was powerful. “Have the courage to speak up and be honest! When you tell your story, that moment of freedom can change your life!”

“I’m going to let the Lord decide what He wants for my life now. Once you start going to the Lord, He opens up the way and guides you along. He’s there!”

# A Work in Progress

Like our lives, this new mural on the second floor of our Bashford Men’s Shelter isn’t completed quite yet, but grows more beautiful with every brushstroke.

Artist Trevor Lucas of Anomaly Art Studio accepted Rev. William Crawley’s commission to bring our shelter’s living spaces to life with an encouraging message of hope in our guests’ temporary home. A self-described “troubled teen” and former graffiti tagger, Trevor found his future in painting and in the Lord. “Different by design,” he seamlessly engages in faith-filled conversations with those who stop to watch his transformation of a vanilla wall into an inspiring reminder of God’s grace.

“The greatest gifts we are given are time, opportunity, and talent, and the gift we give back is what we do with it.” Trevor hopes his art will motivate our homeless guests to discover and live their God-given purpose.

of Hope at [unionmissionministries.org](http://unionmissionministries.org).

To see Trevor’s finished mural at [AnomalyArtStudio.com](http://AnomalyArtStudio.com) or Facebook / Instagram / YouTube





## Your Year to Volunteer!

If you're interested in helping out at The Union Mission or Hope Haven, or arranging a collection drive or fundraising event, touch base with Christina Geisler, our Volunteer Engagement Coordinator.

She has great ideas on how you can get involved. Contact her at x 415 or at email [volunteer@ummnorva.org](mailto:volunteer@ummnorva.org).

# A Fresh Start on Finances

Finances are foundational to your future. That was the theme of Master Your Money 2022, a seven-week "financial future series" held in our Bashford Men's Shelter.

Michael Marshall, Program Director for RECLAIM II, wanted to forge a financial empowerment pathway for the dozens of men in our transitional housing and life-recovery community. He partnered with two trusted resource providers to create a curriculum to address the key financial needs of our homeless residents hoping to build a successful, independent life.

He worked with Anita Wyche of Bank On Hampton Roads, which offers a free, in-depth financial literacy program, and Karen Munden of the Virginia Cooperative Extension, which offers money management training for families. Together they selected the topics that those fighting homelessness would find most helpful.

Thirteen men completed the two-hour sessions every Monday evening for six weeks. Wyche and Munden co-led each class and served as personal coaches. Their first session focused on how to survive financial crises such as living paycheck to paycheck, being behind on bills, and eviction or bankruptcy. And weekly homework gave the men next steps to take to continue managing their money better.

Two sessions covered the basics of savings, budgeting, and spending plans. The men learned about the benefits of an

emergency fund, low-cost banking, and debt reduction, as well as the dangers of predatory lenders. RECLAIM resident Don, a former real estate appraiser who survived three strokes, said he'd always been responsible with money, but "without savings, you can't achieve your goals. I was going along great... then boom! Look what happens!" He appreciated the new take on 'paying yourself first.' "A lot of people think that means buying whatever you want, but the teachers stressed that it really means making a down payment on your future."

The two classes that focused on the importance and implications of good credit most interested Franklin, a disabled longtime trucking owner-operator. Years ago, thanks to a dishonest employer, he'd had an eviction, repos, and a bankruptcy, later followed by serious health problems and hospital bills. Plus he kept getting phone calls from debt collectors for college and car loans he never took out. His chance to review his credit reports confirmed that his financial record is accurate and there's been no identity fraud. Now he is strategizing ways to rebuild his credit for a better future.

The course concluded with a resource fair and awards ceremony. All of the participants said the pilot program made them feel more confident in making sound financial decisions—and each beamed as he displayed his certificate of completion. "I was glad for this class!" Franklin said.

## virtuous

This Spring, we'll be starting to use Virtuous, a more robust and interactive customer relations management system. If you are registered as a volunteer or donor, you may receive emails from Virtuous or VOMO with instructions on how to begin setting up your profile. If you have questions, just let us know.

## A Paycheck and A Purpose

Are you looking for meaningful employment this year?

The Union Mission Ministries is hiring both shelter workers and ministry support staff. Take a look at our current job openings online at

[unionmissionministries.org/job-opportunities](http://unionmissionministries.org/job-opportunities)



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Thank you  
for Your  
Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By the grace of God and your faithful giving, we have finished 2022 strong! Your partnership and your prayers have sustained our ministry—and for that we are immensely grateful! This January, we are ready to see how God will bless our shelter guests with the new beginning of the new life that they’ve so long desired.

I imagine that you feel the same way about a new year. As I opened my blank 2023 calendar, I could not help but think “fresh start.” Our guests feel this especially keenly. Being homeless is not easy—life has tossed them around, up and down, and often it’s left them alone and wondering if anyone cares.

That’s where we come in to help them navigate a way out of the storms of life. That’s also where YOU come in. As a supporter of our ministry, you, too, help them rise above the waves that have battered and broken them. Together, we offer a lifeline that keeps them from going under and guides them safely to a better, more hopeful future.

We are thankful for every donor, but our **Anchors of Hope** hold a special place in our hearts. They sustain our ministry with their dependable monthly gifts. Just as our needs are ongoing, so is their support—a perfect alignment with God’s call to care for the most vulnerable in our community. And their predictable giving is vital as it helps us with budgeting, planning, and stewardship to wisely invest our resources to help others.

Already, hundreds of faithful donors have become Anchors of Hope. I hope that 2023 is the year that you’ll become one, too!

## ANCHORS of HOPE ...

As a faithful monthly donor,  
you are changing lives!

*“The donors have done a wonderful job providing everything needed for all the people at The Union Mission. I’ve benefitted greatly from your help. My life is coming together. Thank you very much!”* —Laurence

*“The Union Mission gives me hope, encouragement, and confidence in myself that I am somebody worthy of God’s grace and love.”* —Demarcus

*“When I was desperate and had no hope, The Union Mission took me in. The staff have been exceptional in guiding me through the process of getting my life back on track. Thank God and bless all those who support this ministry!”* —Chris

## BECOME AN ANCHOR OF HOPE TODAY!

Sign up online at  
[donate.unionmissionministries.org](https://donate.unionmissionministries.org)  
or contact us at  
[anchorsofhope@ummnorva.org](mailto:anchorsofhope@ummnorva.org).

*Rev. Gray, I want to help The Union Mission give hope to others!*

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I’ve enclosed:  \$25  \$50  \$75  \$100  \$150  \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to commit to a **monthly gift** of \$\_\_\_\_\_. My first gift is enclosed.

**Method of Payment:**  Check  VISA  MasterCard  American Express  Discover

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ CCV Code \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to **The Union Mission**. To make an online donation, go to [donate.unionmissionministries.org](https://donate.unionmissionministries.org).



Please complete this slip and return it to The Union Mission with your generous gift. Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. We will send a receipt for your records.



# Navigate the **TAX CODE** to Change Lives

Sometimes a little misunderstanding can lead to a big laugh. One mom in North Carolina posted online: “My 8-year-old daughter told me that last summer at camp she met a girl named ‘Internet.’ I told her, ‘No way! That can’t be her name,’ but for almost a year my daughter has been adamant. Today I found out her friend’s name is Antoinette.”

But not much is funny about the complicated tax laws in the United States. Did you know?

- The U.S. tax code is over 74,000 pages long!
- The tax code has been amended more than 4,000 times over the past 10 years.
- Taxes confused even Albert Einstein! “The hardest thing in the world to understand is the income tax,” he told his accountant.

**Understanding current tax laws can open a whole new world of generosity for you—and can compound gifts for the ministries you support. Here are a few tax-wise giving strategies to consider:**

**GIVING FROM YOUR IRA**  
 When you are at least 72 years old, you can donate your required minimum distribution.

**GIFTS OF STOCK**  
 When you donate stock that has appreciated for more than one year to a nonprofit, you can avoid capital gains, deduct the fair market value, and increase your impact.

**DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS**  
 When you contribute to your DAF, you are generally eligible for an immediate tax deduction, and your funds grow tax-free.

Giving tools like these make it easy to reduce your tax burden AND provide a simple way to convert your passion for the work of The Union Mission into tax-smart giving. Exploring and understanding the implications of current tax law can even reveal some creative and mutually beneficial results. We can help you identify the tactics that make the most tax sense for you. Just contact us to learn more.

## **IT’S EASY TO INCLUDE THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES IN YOUR GIVING!**

To include us in your estate planning or change lives with a legacy gift, contact Helen Sommer at 757-627-8686, x 504. To create a will that reflects your values and blesses others, visit [www.christianwill.org/umm](http://www.christianwill.org/umm) or email us at [legacygiving@ummnorva.org](mailto:legacygiving@ummnorva.org).

### *Comments / Change of Address:*

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No person is denied service based on race, creed, gender, disability, or national origin.

Photos are representative of actual Mission clients.

If you would like to donate much-needed supplies, please see [unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/give-goods](http://unionmissionministries.org/ways-to-give/give-goods). Thank you!

In the event contributions exceed expenses, extra funds will be used to feed, shelter, and care for the hungry and homeless throughout the year.

Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-807-2214 or 888-830-4989 for NC residents.

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