

The
**UNION
MISSION**

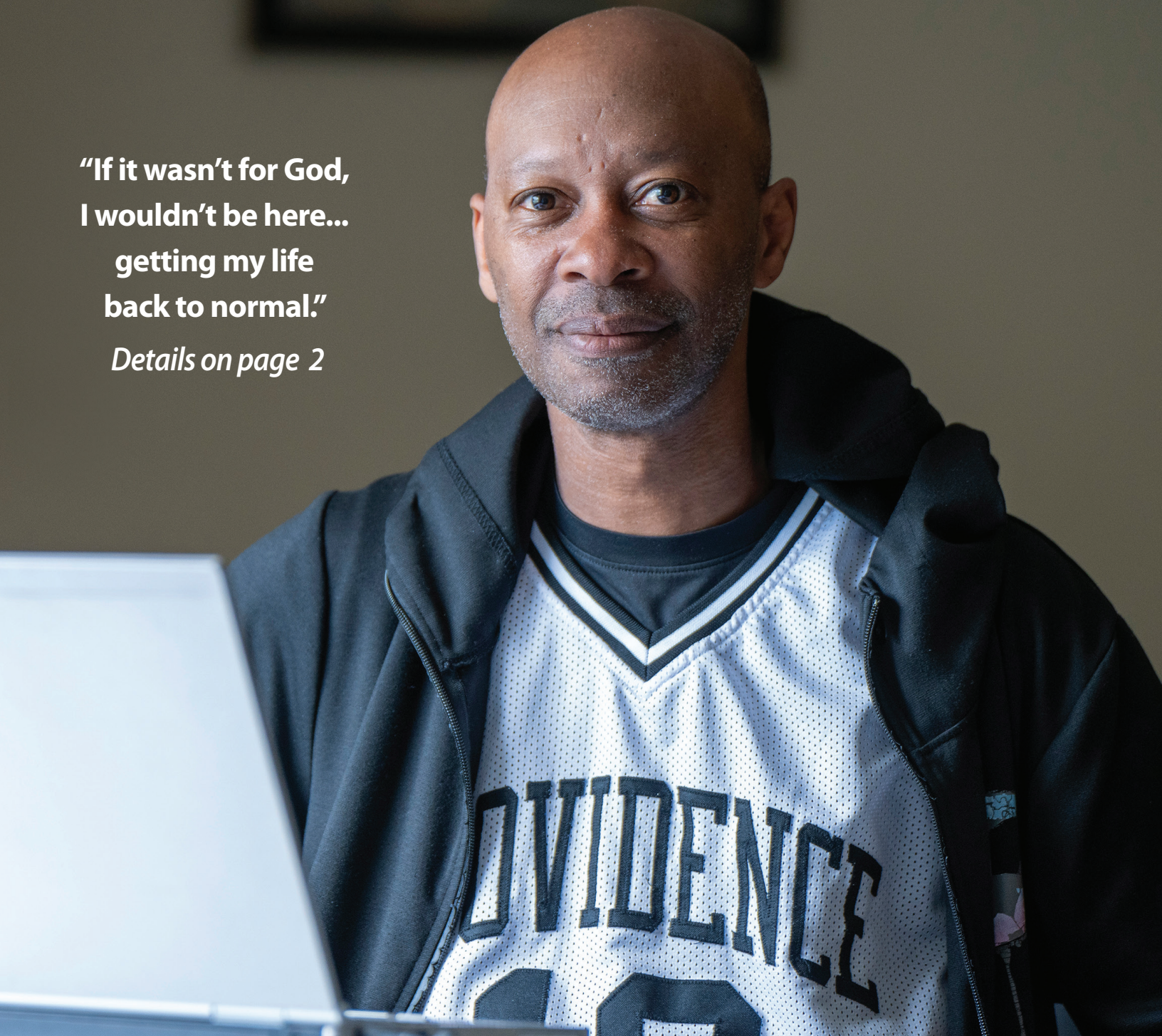
MISSION NETWORK

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

JULY 2024

**"If it wasn't for God,
I wouldn't be here...
getting my life
back to normal."**

Details on page 2



INSIDE: New Faces in Shelter Leadership | Getting Life Back Online
Make a Will Month | Camp Hope Haven: Preparation for Christian Service

What's Not to Like About This Place?

**I wasn't doing the right thing,"
Shannon admits.
"I was different back then."**



Shannon doesn't like talking about his late teens and early 20s. "I've left that life behind. Looking back now, I must have been insane!" When pressed for details, the quiet 51-year-old shares little more: "It wasn't drugs, but I didn't want to become another statistic."

Having his son at age 20 motivated him to "get away from that environment" and "get a real job...a better lifestyle."

And so he did. At 26, Shannon moved from Hampton Roads to South Florida. Over the next 20-some years, he had steady work as a certified forklift operator. He studied computer information technology. He was married for a while and helped raise his daughter. "I was doing a lot better in life."

Eventually, Shannon returned to Virginia to be closer to family, including new grandchildren. All was going well until he fell on some icy steps, hitting his head hard on the way down. He doesn't remember how many stairs there were, "but apparently I hit all of them." His brain was visible through the crack in his skull. "It was really, really bad. I was in a coma for weeks!"

Shannon suffered a traumatic brain injury, nerve damage, and back pain. "My doctor at the hospital told me I was 'lucky,'" but Shannon knows he's a walking miracle. Afterward, though he was able to hold warehouse inventory jobs, he began having chronic seizures that kept him from working.

Facing homelessness, Shannon wasn't sure where he'd turn. Then he remembered riding by The Union Mission, and immediately did an online search. "It seemed like a nice place," he says. "And I've been here ever since."

The obvious priority was Shannon's health. "My first night at the Mission I had three seizures back to back!" he says. Our Wellness Team worked with the onsite Sentara clinic to update his diagnoses and get him on the right medications to stop those episodes. "Just one pill every 12 hours and I haven't had a seizure since."

***"I feel like I owe
the Mission for all
they've done for me."***

Shannon welcomed every resource his Case Managers recommended: Glasgow Health sessions on overcoming trauma, chaplain-led art therapy sessions, Sentara's Optima HEAL Program.

Legal Aid helped him reapply for Social Security Disability Insurance, which finally was approved late in May. With a modest, but steady income to come, Shannon will qualify for a rent-subsidized apartment for low-income residents in Norfolk.

The Mission also gave Shannon a part-time job in our computer lab, where he volunteered, helping other homeless men complete online tasks like applying for jobs, housing, benefits, health insurance, and more. When the shelter guests are "trying to get a birth certificate, an ID, or a Social Security card, I just assist them with that." Shannon hopes to continue his work with the men even after he moves out. "I'm committed to the Mission."

"What's not to like about this place?" Shannon asks. "They've given me food and shelter. They've given me a job. And they've given me a different outlook on things."

That new viewpoint includes rediscovering his faith. Shannon attended church as a child, so he appreciates the Mission's worship services and Bible-centered workshops. He says it all fits into God's great plan. "If it wasn't for God, I wouldn't be here...getting my life back to normal."

Once he's moved into affordable housing, Shannon plans to focus on his health, his savings, and his bright new future. He "definitely" wants to purchase another car, something he hasn't had since 2019. And he smiles at the prospect of visiting his mother in Baltimore for the first time in three years, perhaps along with his son and his two grandkids.

"The Union Mission provides me with everything I need," They've done so much for me! ... There's no shame in having stayed here at the Mission. This is just the beginning!"

For more about Shannon's journey, see **Stories of Hope** at unionmissionministries.org.

Jason Banks

Director of
MEN'S
Ministries



Keisha Bachelor

Director of
WOMEN'S
Ministries



Introducing Our Shelters' New Leaders

After a prayerful and extensive executive search, The Union Mission welcomes two new leaders for our shelter ministry programs. "These dedicated, godly professionals and their expertise will help us create synergy between our shelters to improve and increase the care we can offer to those experiencing homelessness in our community," says Douglas Preston, Senior Director of Programs, to whom both report. "I am confident that each will enable us to attain next-level efficacy and excellence in serving our unhoused neighbors and will help empower them to live transformed lives in Christ."

Rev. Jason Banks assumed primary management of our Bashford Men's Shelter in January, bringing a wealth of experience from his careers in both the police force and the pulpit.

After graduating from high school in his native Detroit, Jason honorably served for four years in the United States Marine Corps. In 2003, he joined the Chesapeake (Va.) Police Department, fulfilling a lifelong dream to become a law enforcement officer.

Recognized for his organizational, community relations, management, and investigative skills, Jason quickly advanced. After an especially challenging stint as an undercover vice and narcotics cop, in a time of professional and personal crisis, he became a Christian dedicated to his faith and serving others.

A few years later, he felt called to Christian ministry and soon was ordained. Since 2016, Jason has served as a pastor and currently ministers at Faithway Community Fellowship, in Virginia Beach, in the preaching ministry, personal mentoring, and public outreach.

Jason's education includes criminal justice studies at Saint Leo University; supervisory, command, and executive leadership training with the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and completion of the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command. He also has numerous certifications and trainings in personnel management, drug abuse, interviewing, and biblical worldview.

In 2023, after developing a special unit for recruiting, onboarding, and staffing, Jason concluded his law enforcement career as a highly awarded Detective Sergeant. Now he uses his proficiencies in team building, coaching, operations, and pastoring here at the Mission, helping those who are most vulnerable and least valued by society.

"The Lord has a heart for both justice and mercy," Jason says. "It's refreshing—and humbling—to be a part of His work with such a great Kingdom purpose: seeing lives transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Jason and his wife of 25 years, Renyatta, a nonprofit executive, have five children and two grandchildren and live in Chesapeake.

Keisha Bachelor, LCSW began leading our shelter for homeless women in April. A gifted clinician and respected team builder, she is eager to help our staff best serve each guest and to enrich and expand our services to unhoused women and mothers with children. Keisha also is excited to be able to share the life-transforming hope that comes through a relationship with Jesus.

Growing up in New Jersey, Keisha came to Christ early in her life. Her faith blossomed at Norfolk State University, where she earned her B.A. in Sociology in 2007, and her Master of Social Work degree in 2015. Volunteer outreaches with her longtime church home, New Life-Kempsville, increased both her faith and her capacity to serve.

Keisha has extensive vocational experience serving individuals who struggle with mental health, addiction, homelessness, and other traumas. Her wide-ranging background includes work as a group home counselor, independent living skills coach, in-home intensive counselor for at-risk youth and families, and outpatient therapist. As a community-based counselor, she focused on mental health skill building to reduce clients' risk of hospitalization or homelessness.

For nearly a decade, Keisha has supervised or directed clinical care teams. Though her passion is to provide personal help to those who are at risk, she gained valuable insights working with insurance companies and managed healthcare programs. A lifelong learner and problem solver, Keisha's expertise is enhanced by her 2018 qualification as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

"I truly believe my steps have been ordered to bring me to The Union Mission—it's by God's design that I am here," Keisha says. "I am new to the shelter world, but I'm definitely not new to the causes of homelessness and the traumas and transitions that our guests are undergoing. Together, we will create meaningful and effective ways to see 'more neighbors thriving' in every area of their lives."

Keisha is a dedicated outdoors enthusiast and the founder of Cyclique, a social bike group promoting mental health and wellness.

Camp Hope Haven

A Training Ground for Ministry

Discover how working summers at Camp Hope Haven helped two staff members prepare for future Christian service.



"Camp Hope Haven is a unique place. It is a place where kids are radically loved, accepted, and pointed to our Savior and the cross. It is a place where the lost are found and where Christians are held accountable and called to step up in their leadership.

"I love this place because I have seen the hand of God touch my life while I have worked here the past two summers. The first summer I worked at Camp, the Lord tore down the walls in my heart and called me to start taking my faith seriously. I was called to repent and to surrender my wayward soul to Christ. The Lord saw me, in my rebellion and doubt, and poured out his love and compassion on me. Camp provided the community I needed to truly invest in my faith, and it also has been a place of opportunity where I have been able to use my gifts to glorify God.

"Camp is a family of passionate people who pray for revival and who seek God in their every day lives. May God be glorified this summer as we seek to reap the harvest (Luke 10:2)."

—**Isabella Luther** | Counselor 2022, Bible Teacher 2023, Girls Lead 2024



"Working at Hope Haven prepared me for the current ministries I am involved in by giving me an environment where I was able to learn how to speak and act graciously toward people. Working at Hope Haven also prepared me to enter challenging situations with a lot of prayer. These tools have been invaluable to me in my walk."

—**Phineas Tan** | 2019-2023 Counselor, Lifeguard, Guys Lead, Lead Program Manager

OPERATION HYDRATION



Every summer, we need more bottled water for our ministries. Help us by donating cases of water bottles (any size) or unopened water cooler jugs.

We will be happy to accept your water donations Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. at

DONATION DROP-OFF
THE UNION MISSION
5100 E. Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk

HOPE HAVEN
3000 North Landing Rd., Va. Beach

Mission Golf Tournament

FRIDAY, SEPT 27

Ocean View Golf Course, Norfolk

Tee up with some friends to benefit The Union Mission at our upcoming golf tournament. Early registration is open at \$100 per golfer, and event sponsorships are available.

See unionmissionministries.org/getinvolved/events for more info.


The UNION MISSION MINISTRIES
5100 E. VIRGINIA BEACH BLVD.
NORFOLK, VA 23502
757-627-8686



Thank you for Your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Though many people's lives slow down in the summer, that's never been our experience here at The Union Mission Ministries. Homelessness continues year-round, and this year with higher prices on everything from food to gas to rent, we're hearing from more people in desperate need. We are dedicated to assisting as many homeless men, women, and children as our shelters can serve. And we are delighted to welcome new ministry leaders for our shelters to help us fulfill our mission of offering help and hope in the name and love of Christ.

We are also sharing that love with kids and teens at Camp Hope Haven, now in its sixth decade of service. This ministry is close to my heart since I was first a camper and later a college-aged counselor at our rural Virginia Beach campus. I know first-hand the joy these girls, boys, and teens experience as they attend a week of Camp filled with fun and focused on faith. And as every camper hears the good news of salvation, we pray that each one will start a personal relationship with the Lord and grow in Him!

Thank you for being a blessing to The Union Mission Ministries and to those we serve. Your selfless generosity makes our ministry possible! Though charitable giving is often lower in the summer, I am grateful that we can continue to count on you and your ongoing support, in both financial partnership and prayer. May God multiply His blessings on you as you faithfully serve Him!

In His service,



with a week at CAMP HOPE HAVEN

For many kids, a week of summer camp is a treat their family cannot afford.

BUT FOR JUST \$150, you can sponsor a child for a week at Camp Hope Haven. This summer they'll enjoy nature walks, swimming, sports, team games, and, of course, Bible lessons on our beautiful campus in rural Virginia Beach. Introduce a child to the joy and love of Jesus.

Give to
transform
a life!



SCAN TO GIVE ONLINE
unionmissionministries.org/Camp

Rev. Gray, I want to provide help and hope through The Union Mission Ministries!

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.



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.

07-2024

5 Questions

to Ask Before Making Your Will

If making or updating your will is toward the end of your to-do list, you're not alone. A 2024 Caring.com survey shows that only 32% of Americans have created a will, but it's one of the most important ways you can bless your family. A will helps you care for your survivors, spare your family unexpected expenses, and communicate what's most important to you. Ultimately, your will is an act of worship that honors the Lord and cultivates a legacy of generosity.

It's easier to get started than you might think. As you pray that the Lord will "establish your plans" (Proverbs 16:3), consider these questions to guide your decision making.

How do you want to be remembered?

This big question doesn't need to have a complicated answer. Start by choosing three key attributes and build from there.

What are the most important lessons you've learned?

Your wisdom is forged in the experiences that have shaped you. Sharing what you've learned will inspire future generations.

What stories do you want to share?

Include some family history, fun anecdotes, and your personal testimony of how God has been faithful throughout your life.

What values do you want to pass on?
Document this beautiful part of your legacy: the principles that guide your decisions and why.

What people or organizations embody your values?

These comprise your best options to serve as your executor, guardian of your children, or the ministry beneficiaries of your estate.

AUGUST IS MAKE A WILL MONTH.

We've got more resources to help you create a will or plan your estate giving at unionmission.christianwill.org/get-a-will.

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.unionmission.christianwill.org or email us at legacygiving@ummnorva.org.

Comments / Change of Address:

EMAIL

PHONE

No person is denied service based on race, creed, gender, national origin, or disability unless it is beyond the scope of our care.

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. Thank you!

In the event contributions exceed expenses, extra funds will be used to feed, shelter, and care for those experiencing homelessness 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.

THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES

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