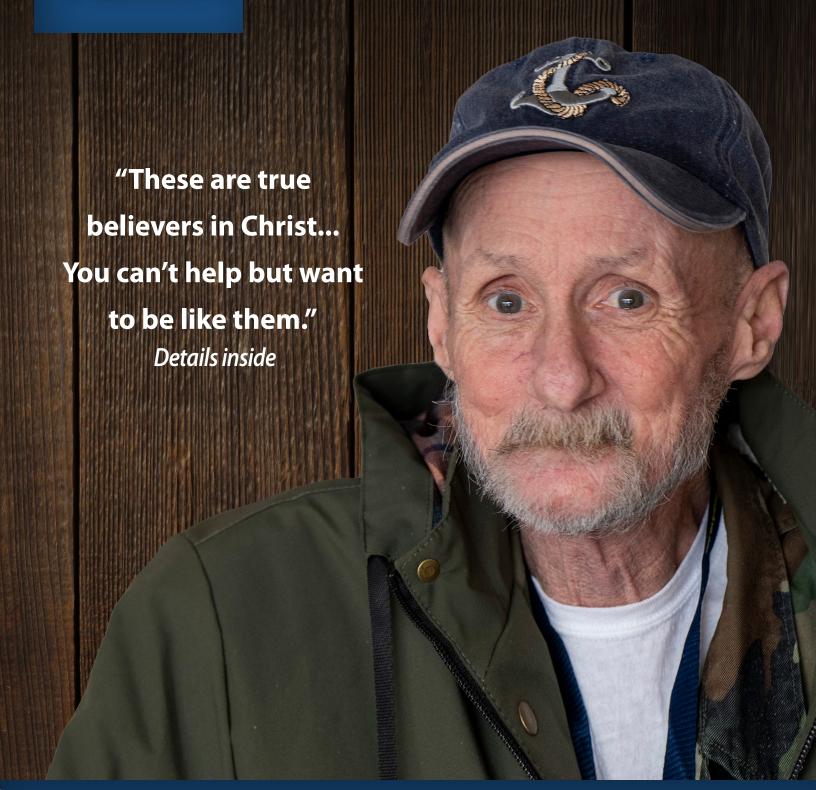
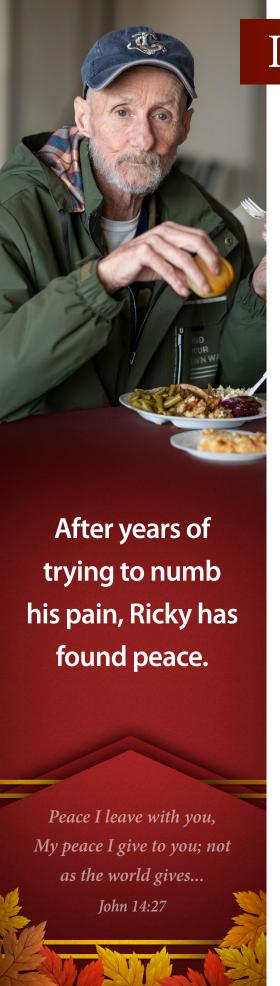
UNION MISSION

MISSION NETWORK

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





I Have Hope for the Future

If Ricky had to choose one word to describe most of his life, it might be pain. Physical pain. Psychological pain. Spiritual pain. Desperate for relief, Ricky turned to alcohol. He started sneaking vodka from his parents at the age of 14, and he never slowed down. "I was never a social drinker," he says. "I always drank to get drunk. I wasn't done till I was falling down."

He enlisted in the Navy as a teen, and served as a gunner's mate on a destroyer off the coast of Vietnam, blowing up enemy submarines. "That's how my PTSD started." After the Navy, Ricky's trauma worsened when he drove wreckers that responded to accidents involving 18-wheelers. He would arrive at crash scenes before they had been cleared, and saw horrors one can only imagine. The more trauma he experienced, the more he drank.

In a 2012 wreck while driving a tractor trailer, Ricky suffered a broken back and had five discs fused together. More pain, more alcohol. He says drinking "almost cost me everything, because I couldn't stop." It ruined his marriage and other relationships. And it almost ruined his life.

In the fall of 2023, Ricky was at the end of his rope, penniless and homeless. He slept on the streets for almost a week, but his back was in chronic pain. Ricky was desperate. He considered committing a minor crime "just to get arrested, so I could go to jail and spend the winter there." But before making that choice, Ricky had a much better idea: He decided to try The Union Mission instead.

"THEY'VE GOT MY BACK"

It's been more than a year since Ricky walked through our doors, a decision made possible by the compassionate support of friends like you. He knew

he needed relief from his physical and mental pain. What he didn't realize, though, was that there was a spiritual emptiness in his life too.

When he got to the Mission, our team began addressing all of Ricky's pain, including the hole in his soul. It wasn't long before Ricky found God. "These are true believers in Christ who work here," he says. "You can't help but want to be like them. You want the peace that they have, and to live the life they're living."

And then more physical pain: Earlier this year, Ricky was hanging a picture in his room when he fell off a chair. "I broke four ribs, punctured a hole in my lung, and ruptured my colon," he says.

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

After emergency surgery, Ricky spent almost a month in the hospital before returning to the Mission, where he continues his recovery. Though the pain has been intense, he has avoided alcohol . . . though he admits he's been tempted. But he's determined. He intends "to whip this alcoholism thing once and for all."

Ricky says the Mission team "has got my back," and he knows you do too. And he's grateful. "The Union Mission is the best-kept secret on the East Coast," he says. "And the people here are extraordinary. They're really here to help you. "They give me a place to sleep and eat, three meals a day. I'm happy here.

And I have hope for the future."



EXTENDING GRACE

Anxious. Hurt. Embarrassed. Afraid. These are all emotions felt by Women who are experiencing homelessness and seeking help at The Union Mission.

What they find is acceptance, kindness, help, hope...and most importantly grace.

"Grace Place" is the new name for the building housing women's ministries at The Union Mission. One definition from Webster's dictionary defines grace as a "disposition to or an act of kindness, courtesy, or clemency." For a Christian, "grace" is the unmerited favor we receive from God through His Son, Jesus Christ – even before we knew Him.

Along with a new name, we are expanding the Women's Ministry programs to more effectively address the current issues of women and children experiencing homelessness. Within Grace Place, there are three different programs: our Women with Children Shelter Program, our Emergency Shelter Program for single women, and RISE, our new transitional housing program for single women.

SAFETY FOR WOMEN WITH CHILDREN

Safety. Stability. Hope. Mothers want these realities for their children. Sometimes The Union Mission becomes a necessary bridge to these realities due to broken families, poverty, job loss, unforeseen expenses, and mental health issues.

Grace Place's Women with Children Program provides women and children a loving place of shelter to heal from the trauma of homelessness and to build hope for tomorrow. Mothers with children get to experience their first good night's sleep in weeks. Seven comfortable, welcoming rooms, a caring staff, and warm meals offer these desperate mothers a new and fresh beginning.

Dena, who entered the shelter pregnant with four daughters and left with 5 girls, expressed her appreciation. "God took care of all our needs at the shelter! It was a huge relief."

Homelessness can leave a lasting impression on children. Their education, health, sense of safety, and overall development is often affected due to homelessness. Overcoming these struggles demands a journey, a journey we desire to walk hand in hand with these mothers and children. These women and children actively learn about our loving Savior, Jesus, who has a plan and purpose for their lives.

REFUGE AND HOPE FOR SINGLE WOMEN

Our Single Women's Emergency Shelter program continues to serve as a refuge for women experiencing the trauma of homelessness. A recent guest, Kayla, described her experience:

"God brought me here. And when He did, the staff welcomed me with open arms. I was scared, nervous, anxious, and homesick. They made me feel loved and definitely made me feel at home. They have seen me go through panic attacks, anger at the world, and they have seen me at my happiest. They care deeply. They always prayed with me and I know they pray for me. Being at The Union Mission is the best experience I have ever had. All I can say is I'm so happy I made the decision to come here."

SUSTAINABILITY AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Our newest program RISE will open early in 2025. It will provide a transitional housing program for women who need more time to stabilize their lives than our Emergency Shelter program can provide. Staying for up to a year, they will save toward housing, complete training programs, obtain disability, gain the skills they will need to sustain independent living, and build their spiritual foundation.

As always, your financial and prayerful support is critical to providing hope and safety as we look to expand the Grace Place women and children's programs.

One of our guests said this when asked what she was thankful for, "I thank God for getting me off the streets and putting me back in His grace." "May [His] grace and peace be multiplied to you..."



844 can make Christmas special at the Mission!

By giving a "Gift of Joy", you help our Men's Shelter guests experience a joyful Christmas knowing they are not forgotten. If you would like to share the love of God in this way, email us at volunteer@ummnorva.org. Then decorate a paper lunch bag and fill it with the following items:



Signed Christmas Card Men's Manicure Set

Men's Wallet

Men's Underwear (M – 3XL)

HRT Bus Pass AND \$10 Fast Food/ **Convenience Store Gift Card** (gohrt.com/fares)

Please do not seal or staple the top of the bag closed.

Bring your completed "Gift of Joy" bags to the Overton Center.

MONDAY-FRIDAY | 9 AM-4:30 PM | BY DECEMBER 17

If you would like to participate, please email us at volunteer@ummnorva.org.

The Miracle of $\Im ESI$

Worship, prayer, fellowship, and a message of God's love – our guests gather to celebrate the hope of Christmas together.

THANKS TO YOU, our neighbors don't have to spend this Christmas alone and on the streets. Your generosity provides a reminder of the true reason for the

HOLIDAY FEAST

You can sponsor a table or a whole meal (160 servings) for our guests this Christmas Season. This Christmas might be the first holiday celebration they have enjoyed in years.





The Union Mission is hiring!

You could join our joy-filled team working in our shelters, our offices, our kitchen or our store.

Job openings are listed at:

unionmissionministries.org/ job-opportunities.











Thank you for your Generosity!



REV. JOHN W. GRAY, JR. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we enter this wonderful time of the year full of thanksgiving, we praise our heavenly Father for the great things He has done. With Christmas right around the corner, we thank God for giving us His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sin and redeem us back to Himself.

I'm so grateful for you, our wonderful supporters and donors. Whether through prayer, donations of items, your time and energy volunteering or finances, I'm constantly in awe of how God uses you over and over again in His work here at The Union Mission.

We are excited to announce a new name for our Women's Ministry Building, Grace Place, which houses our enhanced Women's Emergency Shelter Program, our expanded Women and Children's Program, and the new RISE transitional program for women. A volunteer recently shared that The Union Mission's women's ministry was different than others in the community, because "you can feel the love of Christ in that building and in those people." We have a wonderful opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus through our care of the homeless women and children of Hampton Roads and to share His grace with each of them. John 1:14 reminds us that the "One and Only Son of the Father [is] full of grace and truth."

Happy Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas to you! We are thankful for you, and we ask the Lord to richly bless and reward you for your continued support, prayers, and Christlike love of our neighbors in need.

Beyond Grateful,



CELEBRATE HOLIDAYS

by donating to the Union
Mission in honor of a loved one
or in honor of someone special.
This thoughtful gift shares the joy
of giving as well as your values
of compassion and care. Your
tribute will be acknowledged
with a lovely card.



www.unionmissionministries.org/donate

Rev. Gray, I want to share Holiday Hope with our homeless neighbors in Hampton Roads!										
I've enclosed:	□ \$25	□ \$50	□ \$75	□ \$100	□ \$150	□ \$				
☐ I would like to commit to a monthly gift of \$ My first gift is end										
Method of Payment: ☐ Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express ☐ Discover										
Card Number _					CCV	/ Code				
Expiration Date	<u></u>	Sigr	nature							
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.

11-2024



A ccording to a number of recent studies, the practice of gratitude has a positive effect on our mental and physical well-being, including better sleep, mood, and immunity, as well as decreased depression, anxiety, and chronic pain.

That's good news as we head into a season focused on giving thanks. But challenging things accompany this season too. As we gather with friends and family, emotions run strong and common ground often feels shaky. Practicing gratitude together may just be the antidote, living out this guidance from Apostle Paul: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Remember God's goodness.

Take time to recall shared stories and memories, ways God has shown His faithfulness, and answers to prayer.

to The Ward.

Leaving a gift in your will

God. The Ward.

Ministries is a lasting
a wonderful opportunity to
fall about this with your noise
forward in peace and units.

Here's how you can give thanks and pursue peace in the next few months.

Get active with your gratitude.

Give legs to your thankfulness by serving during the holiday season. Bless neighbors with a meal. Volunteer together. Shared purpose shifts our perspective to the people and causes that truly matter.

Author Ann Voskamp writes, "Thanksgiving is the one thing God asks to be done in everything and always...He knows what precedes the miracle."

IT'S EASY TO INCLUDE THE UNION MISSION IN YOUR GIVING!

If you are interested in make a legacy gift, contact Helen Sommer at 757-627-8686 or email legacy@ummnorva.org. For more information, visit www.unionmissionministries.christianwill.org.

Comments / Change of Address:										
EMAIL										
PHONE										

THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES

P.O. BOX 3203 | NORFOLK, VA 23514 | 757-627-8686 giving@ummnorva.org | www.unionmissionministries.org

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. 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.