

The
**UNION
MISSION**

MISSION NETWORK

Restoring Lives of Homeless Neighbors by Caring Like Christ

MARCH 2026

**“When I got here,
I was like a little girl.
Now, I’m a stronger
woman.”**

Details on page 2



INSIDE: Now I'm a Stronger Woman | Shelter, Hope and Purpose
How Can I Make a Difference? | Camp Hope Haven

Now I'm a

Stronger Woman!



“She told me that I’m a beautiful soul and that it’s okay not to be okay. She told me that God loves me no matter what.”



Raised in a household marked by domestic violence, fear, and instability, Catina learned early how to survive. Home was not a place of safety, but a battleground. As the oldest child, Catina carried a burden no child should bear, believing it was her responsibility to hold everything together. Yet through God’s faithfulness and the support of a caring community, her story has become one of healing, hope, and peace.

Facing the Wounds of Childhood

Growing up, Catina witnessed constant conflict between her parents and experienced abuse herself. She describes her childhood home as a ‘war zone,’ a place where fear replaced security. School became her refuge, and church became her anchor. Even as a young girl, she felt called to break the cycle of pain that had passed from generation to generation. Though she blamed herself for the chaos around her, her faith quietly took root, preparing her for a future she could not yet see.

Turning Pain into Purpose Through Art

Art became Catina’s lifeline. Drawing, painting, and later cooking allowed her to process trauma and express emotions she could not put into words. Creativity became therapy. Years later, during a particularly low season, God used a simple moment at the beach to speak peace into her life.

While praying, Catina noticed a small crab approach her hand. Expecting pain like so many other times in her life, she braced herself—only to feel the crab gently wrap around

her finger in a hug. In that moment, she saw a picture of unconditional love. God met her not with harm, but with tenderness. That experience became both a work of art and a living testimony.

Choosing Help and Life

After years of loss, financial hardship, untreated depression, and overwhelming stress, Catina reached a breaking point. Facing suicidal thoughts, she prayed for God to take away her anger and despair. Instead, God led her to help.

Following hospitalization, Catina’s social worker suggested that she call The Union Mission’s Grace Place. Catina remembers, “She told me that I’m a beautiful soul and that it’s okay not to be okay. She told me that God loves me no matter what.” At Grace Place, Catina found structure, faith-based care, therapy, and a community of women walking similar paths. Slowly, stability replaced chaos. Healing replaced shame. ‘When I got here, I was like a little girl,’ Catina says. ‘Now, I’m a stronger woman.’

Restored with Hope

Today, Catina is rebuilding her life with renewed faith and confidence. She is sharing an apartment with a friend. She continues to create art, and encourage other women. She speaks with deep gratitude for those who support missions like Grace Place, knowing firsthand that generosity changes lives. Her story stands as a powerful reminder: brokenness is never the end of the story. When compassion meets faith, restoration and peace can be found even after the deepest pain.

For more about Catina’s and Liam’s journey, see Stories of Hope at unionmissionministries.org.

Shelter, Hope, and Purpose

When Liam was just 17 years old, his life was changed by a friend's invitation to a church youth group. Liam learned about Jesus and yearned to know more so he followed his mentors and enrolled in Bible College. After two years there, he transferred to Regent University, where he graduated with his Bachelor's Degree in Theology in May 2025.

Liam was excited about stepping into a new chapter of life with a job mentoring young people that also provided housing. But when that job fell apart, with nowhere else to turn, he spent five long weeks living in his car. "I was sleeping outside Planet Fitness, covering my windows, trying to make it work," he recalls. "I'd just graduated. I had three jobs. I didn't want to leave the area, but I had nowhere to stay."

Then a professor told him about The Union Mission. Liam showed up early one morning, exhausted but hopeful. "Even though I'm not here a lot because I work so much, this place became my home base," he says. "It was the first safe bed I'd had in a month." Your generosity opened that door for him.

God's Provision in an Unexpected Place

Now age 24, Liam expected embarrassment when he arrived at a homeless shelter. Instead, he found compassion, structure, and the simple miracle of people who cared. "I know some people say bad things about shelters," he says honestly. "But this place came into my life at a dark time. Everything you all do really means a lot to us."

After several months of sharing a shelter dormitory room with ten other guys, working hard and saving steadily, Liam was able to move upstairs to a single room in the RECLAIM program. In this transitional program, he pays a monthly program fee and has his own quiet room, a place that feels like a stepping-stone to something better. "It's clean. It's peaceful. It's a place I can take care of. I can save money and focus," he says gratefully.

A Heart to Help Others

While Liam juggles two jobs, he still chooses to lift others up. He gives rides to men who need to get to work or the pharmacy. He visits his 76-year-old former roommate, now a dear friend, in the

hospital. He looks out for others because he knows what it's like to be in need.

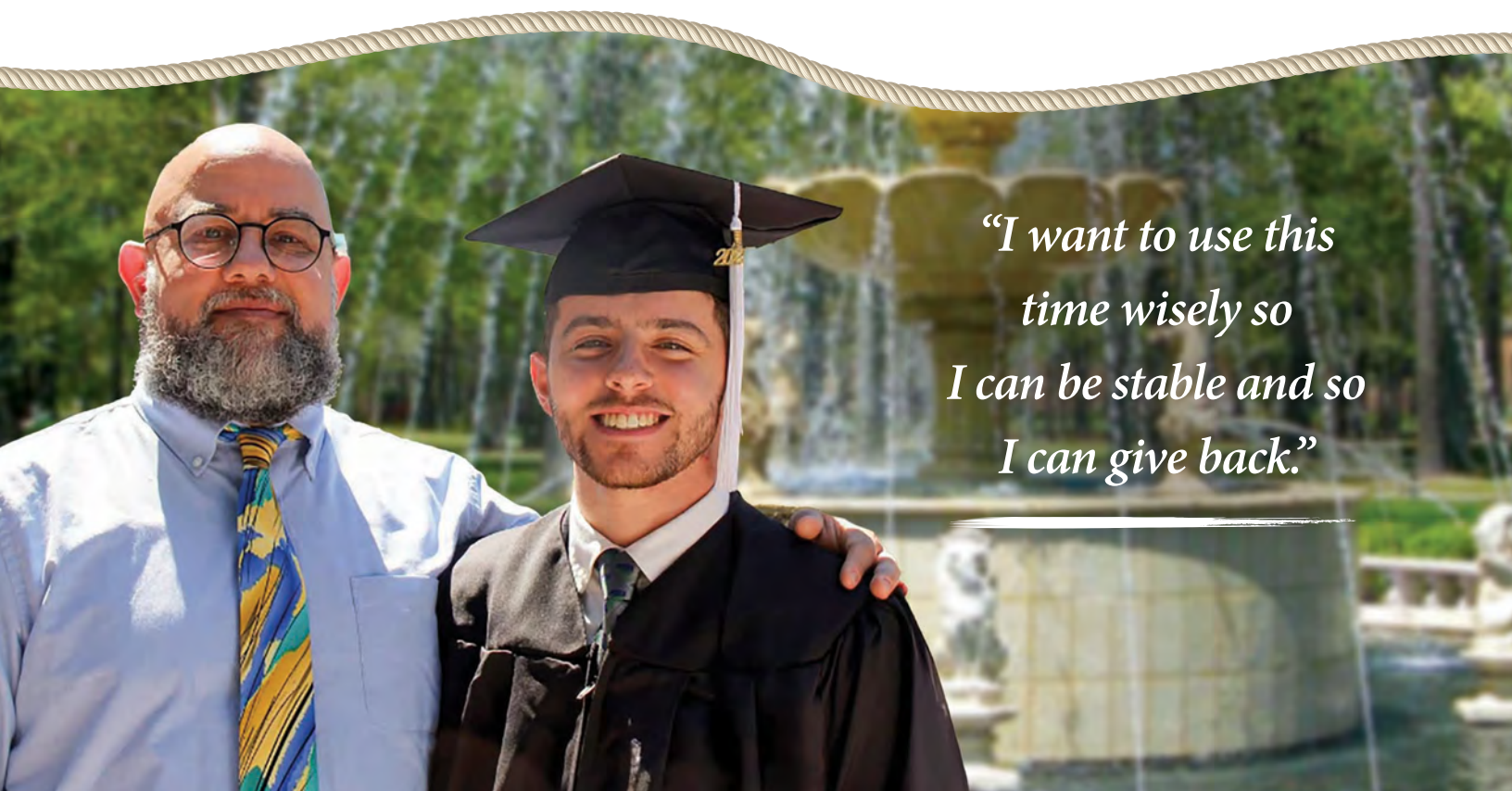
"I never met more homeless people than when I became homeless," he says. "But charity is about our character. I give when I can. And one day, I want to help even more."

Through long hours at CVS and financial pressures, one thing has kept him going: purpose. "Everyone needs a reason to get out of bed in the morning," he says. "That's what I've been working toward."

Looking Toward a Brighter Tomorrow

Liam dreams of continuing his education, building a career that helps people, marrying his girlfriend, and one day owning a home. Because of your generosity, those dreams no longer feel out of reach. He says. "I want to use this time wisely so I can be stable and so I can give back."

Thank you for making stories like Liam's possible. Your prayers, your gifts, and your compassion build a bridge from crisis...to hope...to transformation. You are helping men like Liam experience not just shelter, but dignity, purpose, and the love of Christ.



"I want to use this time wisely so I can be stable and so I can give back."

How can I make a difference?

Snack Attack Bags

With dinner at 5 pm, our shelter guests need a snack in the evening before bed and items for our breakfast bar. This is a great project for children and school classes.

If you plan to participate, we will send you a list of suggested items. Just let us know at

volunteer@ummnorva.org



Christmas is Over, But You Can Still Sponsor a Meal!

It's easy to sponsor a meal for our shelter guests! You can simply cover the costs, personally cook (in a licensed kitchen) and deliver your culinary creation, or cater a lunch or dinner.

About **160 portions** will cover both shelters, or choose just one shelter for a more manageable size.



We Love Our Volunteers

We love our volunteers and can not serve our guests without your help! Our Volunteer Engagement Coordinator is planning a

VOLUNTEER ICE CREAM DROP-IN

Thursday, April 23 | 5:30-6:30 PM
Craig Center

Mark your calendars, and if you plan to drop in, rsvp to Melissa Gray @

mgray@ummnorva.org

Register a Child You Love Today!



Registration is open now for Camp Hope Haven's fun summer and spring experiences! Give a child you love the gift of unforgettable fun and faith!

For more information, visit the links provided below.

2026 SPRING DAY CAMP

April 6-10, 2026

for boys and girls ages 8 to 12

www.hopehavenvb.org/spring-camp/

2026 SUMMER CAMP

Beginning June 22, 2026

for boys and girls ages 8 to 12

www.hopehavenva.org/our-services/camp/

Join Us to Change Lives! Maybe Even Your Own!

The Union Mission has job openings at our shelters for case managers, guest services coordinators, and an overnight security guard. Look at our current employment listings or apply 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

As Easter approaches, I find myself reflecting on the incredible truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" This verse is not just a beautiful promise: it's something we see lived out every day because of your generosity.

When someone walks through our doors, they often carry the weight of brokenness, fear, and despair. But because of you, they encounter something different: hope. You make it possible for us to offer a warm meal, a safe bed, and a listening ear. More than that, you help us share the life-changing message of Jesus Christ, the One who makes all things new.

This Easter, as we celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, I want you to know that your generosity is making an eternal difference. You are part of every story of every life restored and every soul renewed at The Union Mission.

May your Easter be filled with joy and the assurance that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work today, bringing hope and new life to those who need it most.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Easter Blessing

Through His grace, your prayers, and faithful giving this Easter season, our struggling neighbors will receive meals, refuge, and Christ-centered programs opening the door to lasting transformation.

Please consider a special Easter gift today.

Give online at
donate.unionmissionministries.org
or contact us at
giving@ummnorva.org

Rev. Gray, I'm grateful to be able to share my blessings with the Mission's homeless guests.

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.

A Legacy that Blossoms

EVERY SPRING, millions of people attend the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C. There's a rich history behind this event and the trees at its center, marked by values that span generations. Consider your story and the legacy you'd like to leave behind.

This story begins with **GENEROSITY**. In 1912, Tokyo donated 3,020 trees to Washington, D.C., as a gesture of goodwill to honor the growing relationship between the United States and Japan. That generosity had its roots in a small group of people who worked to generate interest in Japanese

cherry trees by raising money, giving away saplings, and advocating with government officials. What causes are important to you?

RELATIONSHIPS are central to this history. The friendship between Japan and the U.S. motivated the original donation. The relationship grew with our government's return gift of flowering dogwood trees to the people of Japan in 1915. Over the years, the cherry trees have continued to be symbols of goodwill, including Japan's recent gift of 250 new trees in honor of America's 250th birthday. What relationships have shaped who you are?

With relationships often comes the need for **RECONCILIATION**. After World War II, the National Park Service sent budwood from the original trees to restore trees in Tokyo that had fallen into decline during the war. In turn, Japan gave the U.S. a stone lantern as a rededication of friendship. The National Cherry Blossom Festival opens each year with the lighting of that lantern.

How has the reconciliation you have through Christ changed your life?

IT'S THE SEASON OF RECONCILIATION AND REBIRTH.

This Easter, consider leaving a legacy that can offer new life and hope.

For more information, contact Melissa Gray at legacy@ummnorva.org or (757)627-8686.

Comments / Change of Address:

EMAIL

PHONE

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.

THE UNION MISSION MINISTRIES

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