

"WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE!"

Three Young Men's Lives Transformed at Pacific Garden Mission

FEBRUARY 2018

*For I am
persuaded, that neither death,
nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,
nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to
separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

ROMANS 8: 38-39 (KJV)

PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST SINCE 1877

ARTICLE BY DANIEL WOOLMAN

Over the recent years, Pacific Garden Mission has seen steadily increasing numbers of homeless coming through our doors. A reflection of national statistics, this may or may not be a surprise to you but what might be more of an unexpected fact is the dramatic increase in homeless women, children, and young adults.

While most 18-20-year-olds are deciding what college to attend, some, through various circumstances, find themselves with no safe place to live. While it may seem discouraging that the number of homeless youth is steadily increasing it also can be a divine opportunity for them to surrender to God and turn their lives and hearts over to Jesus Christ.

How do we define success here at Pacific Garden Mission? First and foremost, it is a lost soul that comes to have saving faith

in Christ. After this, it is the slow and steady growth of a fully functioning follower of Christ. It takes steady discipleship for this to occur. Bible classes, counseling, and Christian fellowship are all part of this. This past year three young men stand out because they not only completed the yearlong men's Bible program but they also have moved forward either finding employment or attending college.

One of the privileges of working here is seeing the unexpected, and from a human perspective, the quite miraculous transformations that people go through. The salvation and spiritual growth of the young adults is especially remarkable. To see a lost young person with little to no foundation, both spiritual and physical (many times lacking basic life skills), come to grow in Christ and learn principles such as responsi-

Young Men Transformed—from page 1

bility and accountability, is rewarding and a testimony to the power of God working through Pacific Garden Mission. What in many cases has been deemed as a hopeless case by frustrated parents or society in general can end up being an inspirational reminder that it is never too late for God to change someone's heart and life.

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

—1 PETER 2:3

Both Michael and Revon came from broken families. At a young age Michael was taken from his biological parents after his younger brother was hit and killed by a car in front of their house. Too young to make sense of what was happening but old enough to experience the severe pain and guilt of losing a sibling right in front of his eyes Michael found himself feeling lost and looking for answers:

MICHAEL

“WHEN I WAS AROUND SIX OR SEVEN I was outside in the yard playing with my siblings. We lost the ball in the street and my little brother went out into the street to get the ball. Seconds later he had been hit by a car that was speeding down our road. My first instinct was to run out there and check on him and call my mama. We called an ambulance but an hour later he died. Knowing that it took a toll on all of us and when

See Michael's full testimony on PGM's YouTube Channel, Episode 141.

You Tube



Michael glows with the joy of the Lord. He has a steady job and enjoys volunteering at PGM.

I was seven I was adopted. I felt responsible for my brother's death and was overwhelmed with guilt and pain. When I got into middle school I started drinking, smoking marijuana, smoking cigarettes and hanging out with the wrong crowd. Losing my little brother and getting separated from my family was really tough.”

Down a road of pain and bad choices Michael eventually found himself getting dropped off at Pacific Garden Mission at the age of 18. Even at a much older age a large rescue mission like PGM can be a tough place to get accustomed to but Michael recounted how when he saw the Jesus Saves sign and cross outside he knew this was not an ordinary shelter.

“When I first got here I knew God but didn't really know Him. I knew I was doing wrong but there was no conviction in me. I was disrespectful, not following rules, and walking in and out of the door wanting to leave. One day though something changed in me and I prayed to God. I was once again wanting to leave but something came into me and I prayed, really prayed, with all my heart. From that time on something changed in me. I felt the Holy Spirit in me and started having conviction from the Holy Spirit.

I started walking around with a lightness in my heart.”

Michael joined the yearlong New Life Bible Program and successfully completed it. After graduating he started working at a local business and also continues to volunteer and live here at Pacific Garden Mission.

Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

—COLOSSIANS 1:6

REVON

REVON, ANOTHER YOUNG MAN who came to Pacific Garden Mission at the age of 19 shared a similar background as Michael. He grew up in a broken family with only his mother and siblings. He found himself taking care of his brothers and sisters and had to worry about finding food for them. It got so bad one time that he had to steal his mom's check book to buy food for him and his siblings because they had no food to eat.

Lacking structure and guidance he started getting into trouble at school, getting suspended three different times, and also experimenting with drugs and alcohol. At the age of 17 he became a father. Through another set of painful and trying events Revon found himself traveling all the way from Texas to Chicago and arriving at PGM seeking refuge.

Revon persevered through the New Life Program and eventually graduated. As Michael did, Revon struggled at first, but through mentoring and structure he was able to mature and grow spiritually. He now works for PGM in hospitality and is also studying finances in order to become a tax advisor.

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

— COLOSSIANS 1:10



Revon has a strong aptitude for numbers. He is pursuing a degree in Finance while working at PGM. Shown here with Pastor Phil and guest.



JONATHAN

WHILE MANY OF THE PEOPLE that join our programs come from broken families, not everyone does. Many were blessed being raised in a Christian family. This doesn't always mean that the children of these families will follow the straight and narrow path Christ speaks of. Jonathan is an example of this. While he was raised with good morals and guidance he strayed away when he got into high school. Being influenced by peer pressure he struggled with issues of lust, stealing, and being disrespectful.

"I grew up in a Christian home. My parents were heavily active in a church. I really didn't care about church or all of those things. I really just did it because my parents wanted me to. The more I grew up the less I cared about God and what I was taught. I was really 'slick' I guess you could say. I would cheat and do all those types of things. I also struggled with anger a lot because I would bottle stuff up and then would lash out. I knew all of these things were wrong and went against how I was raised but I still fell into the 'World's Standards.'"



Jonathan is studying to become a police officer. A busy man, he works in Hospitality at PGM while making Scripture study a priority.

Jonathan found himself being kicked out of his parents' home and he was taken to PGM.

"When I got dropped off here I was kind of in shock but I met a gentleman named Pastor Phil and he introduced me to the Men's Bible Program. I joined the program initially just for a place to stay but as I read the Bible more and prayed more and was influenced by the other people here, including the counselors and pastors, I started to change my perspective. It opened my eyes to what being a true Christian is."

Jonathan recently graduated from the Bible program as well and is now attending college. He is studying criminal justice and plans to become a police officer. He believes he can help change the bad stigma police have by becoming one and sharing the values of Christ with the people he encounters. He closed our conversation by stating:

"I still work here at PGM in hospitality but

I go to college as well. Being in college was a real eye-opener to me because it gave me the ability to practice what I learned in the Bible Program. All of the teachings I received and reading the Word of God has really prepared me to be able to handle college, work and life in general. I continue to pray and ask God to help me stay strong and just stay focused."

MICHAEL, REVON AND JONATHAN could have been deemed as hopeless cases by society but with the power of Christ behind them they were able to transform their lives. What family and friends could not do for them God has done. Many times, the process is not easy and it is a slow and steady walk. Every part of the Bible Program here is prayerfully discussed and implemented to ensure that the seed of faith cannot only take to the heart but also given the time and resources to help it nurture and grow. Here at PGM we are not only casting the seeds of the Gospel but we are also providing a place for them to take root and grow. Your support as donors is the only way this has been possible. God changed their hearts but from there it was a Godly plan and place of structure, Pacific Garden Mission, that has allowed them to grow their deep roots of faith. As the world's storms consistently attack the Christian faith, there are still lighthouses of faith not only preaching the Gospel message of Jesus Christ but also providing a safe refuge.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.

— 2 THESSALONIANS 1:3

Your Ministry of **CHRISTMAS GOSPEL TRACTS**

WE CELEBRATED the birth of our Saviour this Christmas with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Hundreds of friends responded to our invitation to partner with God to reach the lost at Pacific Garden Mission. Thank you to everyone who responded to our mailing by sending the Christmas Gospel tracts in with personal messages, testimonies, prayers and gifts to reach the lost. To God be the glory, great things He hath done.





A Word from Philip Kwiatkowski

President, Pacific Garden Mission

A Heart for the Poor

Winter is here and the dreaded polar vortex is again making its annual

appearance in Chicago. During this past week temperatures were in the single digits during the day and well below zero at night. What many of us consider an annoyance is a matter of life and death to those on the streets.

Many of the most hardened individuals that try to stay outside in all weather are driven indoors by the unbearable cold. Imagine a woman with little children trying to find refuge in such brutal conditions only to be turned away. Many come to us after being turned away by family or turned away by city warming shelters that are beyond capacity. We not only offer heat but the life changing message of Jesus Christ.

Ashley, a 22-year-old woman sits in our day room knitting a scarf for her six-month-old child, driven here by extreme conditions she is now in a warm caring environment listening to the good news about God's love. Perry a 24-year-old was sleeping on various couches but did not want to get caught out in the cold so he came to Pacific Garden Mission seeking shelter—but has found so much more. I think about God's heart for

the poor, Gal. 2:10 "Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do."

As we get busy with our day to day activity let's remember those that are without, those with no resources, let's remember the poor. Prov. 31:8-9 "Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." I read this scripture and it spoke to my heart, many have no one to open their mouth for them, I need to open my mouth and speak on behalf of the poor and needy.

The city of Chicago is a place full of darkness and pain, God has left Pacific Garden Mission as a beacon of hope in a dark world, as many shiver out in the cold looking for warmth let's use their physical need to open their heart to their real need, Jesus Christ. Pray for us as our resources are strained this time of year and let us open our mouth and care for the poor. *Thank you for your support this year.*

As mentioned earlier, one of the privileges of working at PGM is seeing the unexpected, and from a human perspective, the quite miraculous transformations that people go through. The salvation and spiritual growth of the young adults is especially remarkable. As we welcome them to PGM pray that those who walk in from the cold would sense God's warm presence and choose a life that honors Him.





FINANCIAL UPDATE Stephen Welch, Director of Development

The Pacific Garden Mission's budget is completely donor funded. (We receive no government funding). We are eternally grateful for the individuals, businesses, churches and foundations that make it possible for PGM to serve thousands of homeless men, women and children each year. More importantly, everyone hears the Gospel of Jesus Christ and has the chance to respond.

At the time of writing this update we have not closed December 2017. However in the first six months of our fiscal year we did see an increase in giving and are very grateful for the response to our mailings, which is how we pass the offering plate. As we end the 2017 calendar year, we are excited to report that the mortgage balance has declined to slightly above \$3.5 million dollars.

We still face many challenges in the winter and we continue to pray for God to move as we seek His blessings so that our ministry staff can take care of and reach the record number of people who need Jesus.

Last night, the temperatures on the streets dropped below zero and with the wind chill factor, it felt more like -15! Our Men's, Women's, and Mother's and Children's Divisions have been at capacity. Right now, *even more people are coming for help and a refuge off the streets* where frostbite and hypothermia are a tremendous threat to our community's homeless.

Please ask God what you can do to help us. We are serious about demonstrating our stewardship, and we invite you to learn more by contacting us for our annual audit published November 2017.

WHAT YOUR MONEY SUPPORTS AND PROVIDES

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When you come along side of us financially you're not giving to the mission, but through the mission to the people that need your help the most. We are serious about demonstrating our stewardship, and we invite you to learn more by visiting Pacific Garden Mission, where lives have been transformed since 1877.

Here are just some of the ways your giving is measured (DECEMBER)

Daily average of homeless receiving aid and attending Gospel services....**589**

Number of men and women enrolled in Bible study programs and provided room and board....**83**

Approximate number of plates of food served....**58,998**

Estimated number of items of clothing distributed or given to other missions....**33,383**

Number of patients treated in our free medical/dental clinic....**140**

Number of persons who professed faith in Christ....**315**

Stations and outlets in the U.S. and around the world broadcasting "Unshackled!"....**3,089**

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