

PGMNews

PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION
SINCE 1877, REACHING THE LOST
WITH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

THE CHANGING FACE OF HOMELESSNESS —OUR YOUTH

by STEPHEN WELCH

MAY 2016

WHILE MOST high school students are having the time of their lives there is a population of young people that are lost and forgotten.

The face of homelessness has changed from the wino with a large overgrown beard digging through a dumpster and begging for spare change on a street corner. A new demographic is a diverse group consisting of young people who should be enjoying the best years of their lives. Unfortunately, they are not even able to finish school, and worse yet have nowhere to live in a society full of busy people who seem to overlook the youth of America.

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Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian and African American. Homeless youth finding purpose at PGM. We are making a difference.

Standing, l. to r.: Michael Ellis (18), Corey Long (26), Dustin Blackwell (21), Chance Frohschamer (19), Jarron Childers (19), Darius King (21). Seated, l. to r.: Revon Jones (22), Mohamad Yasin (21), Jamal Knazze (21), Isaiah Vasquez (21), Alexander Liu (22).



"LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH; BUT BE THOU AN EXAMPLE IN CHARITY, IN SPIRIT, IN FAITH, IN PURITY." — 1 T

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Unaccompanied youth, living without a family or guardian, face day-to-day challenges that can cloud their adult lives. They must secure food and shelter, find a job or return to school. Often, they are unclear where to seek help and who they can trust.

Research shows that homeless young people have a range of complex needs that prevent them from progressing into work and independent living. Many of these needs interrelate, causing a complex web of disadvantage.

The neighborhoods in Chicago are changing, and we see an increase in young people's chances of using illegal drugs and having a history of offending. Almost every young person who comes through our doors has had some gang affiliation that made them feel accepted.

We dedicated this May issue to the youth that needs a Saviour first, and then some time to rebuild their damaged lives so they can become productive members of society. Jesus will help them to become fully functioning followers of Christ like He did the disciples. All of the homeless youth I have met have overcome unbelievable odds to be still alive in some cases, and there is no quick fix that many would believe could be a solution to what plagues society, especially in this city of Chicago. Gun violence, drugs, and gangs are the top disrupters that are commonplace and all too familiar for our youth. Shootings and killings by handgun violence are so numerous that we almost become desensitized. January 1, 2016, through March 22, 2016 (day of this writing) there were 653 shooting victims in Chicago. If you are not affected by gun violence, then you will be affected by gang affiliation. Many take comfort in a lifestyle that promises safety and security and financial independence in a gang. However, the promise of freedom ends up in jail or prison or drug addiction or even early death.

Pacific Garden Mission provides a safe place to stay for anyone who walks through our doors of hope. Many who haven't died of drug overdoses find themselves here with no hope and often sui-

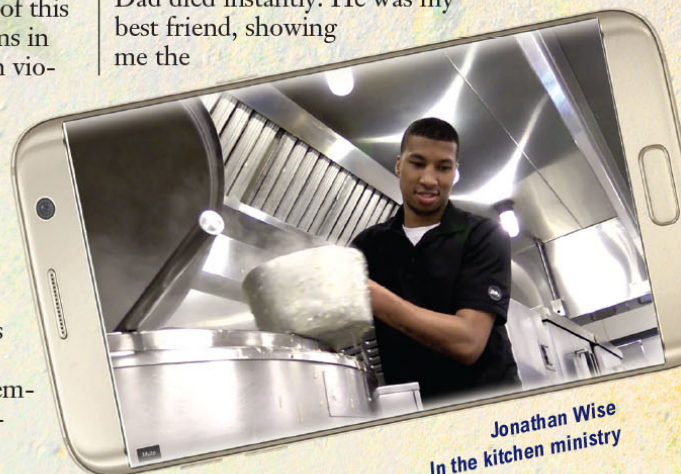
cidal. Many young people are confused about religion and what God to believe in, if there is one. Ninety percent of our residents have used drugs, sold drugs, carried a handgun, been in a gang or been incarcerated. They know that the gang life promises pleasure and delivers pain. Unbearable pain of a lost soul.

Since 1877, we have believed that every life matters to God, and everyone needs hope and a helping hand. We live for Christ and know the only answer to these problems that are plaguing society's youth... and we have a simple answer to every complex problem. The answer for young and old is the same. It is faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and time in our residency programs to let the Word of God wash over these men and woman brings a full transformation in our vineyard. Jesus can bring them to their highest potential in life. And he is every day right here in our New Day and New Life programs.

The following are stories of three young people who came for different reasons and met the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Jonathan Wise

"My Mom and Dad were married 12 years, and had split up. On my birthday, my Dad took me to buy a rim for my basketball court. When we pulled up to the house, my brother was in the middle, I was in the passenger seat, and my Dad was in the driver's seat. My Mom at that time was leaving her boyfriend to go back to my Dad. Her boyfriend came out of the house with a gun, started shooting, and hit my dad twice in the head, one time in the neck; my Dad died instantly. He was my best friend, showing me the



Jonathan Wise
In the kitchen ministry

AMPLE OF THE BELIEVERS, IN WORD, IN CONVERSATION, TIMOTHY 4:12

ropes of his business, but once that day happened, I lost everything. I felt God took him away from me, so I put God to the side. I started hanging out with different friends, and disrespecting my Mom, because I felt it was her fault. I stopped playing basketball, started going to the street, gang banging, toting guns, trying to impress people. I started drinking a lot. I was leaving work, and the police were waiting for me. I had cocaine in the car, and the police tried to block me in, so I hit the front of the police car to get out and ran. I threw the cocaine out and pulled over. I was intoxicated, and I got locked up.

It was the worst 7 ½ months of my life, but one thing I did have was a Bible in the cell with me. At first I didn't read it; it was weird why it kept being in my face ever since I was a little boy, and that was one thing that let me know God was real. When I got out, I called my job, and they told me I could come to work. I had never been on parole before, and not knowing, I went to work. When my parole officer came to my house and I wasn't there, they arrested me. The parole officer saw potential in me, and felt that PGM was the best thing for me. He knew Pastor Green, and said, 'I got a deal for you; instead of me violating you, you can go to PGM, and follow their Bible program. Don't go in thinking it's a shelter, because it's a Bible based program. Go in there and seek God, even if you don't seek Him 100%, give Him 30% of your day, and I guarantee He'll take 100% more steps toward you.' That's when I felt God had a plan for me, because I could have been dead, but He got me here, giving me no other way but to reach Him. I don't need money here, I don't need the material things I had, I don't need a girlfriend, I don't need things that are distractions to me. I've got to make myself available for Him, and that's what I'm learning now. God is putting me through situations where He's revealing Himself to me, that He has a purpose for me in life.

He lifted my heart to let me know that it's okay that my Dad is gone. He's giving me a chance to go to Him so I can meet my Dad one more time. The program is teaching me to carry myself as a man, to walk by



Mohamad is in the PGM Bible Study Program

faith, not by sight, and no matter what, Jesus and God got my back.”

Mohamad Yasin

“Coming from a Muslim family, I was holding on to my religion. I was doing my five prayers a day, and I knew about 75% of the Quran when I was 12. My family had to go back overseas, but I'm an American born citizen. I went to Job Corps, but I lost my money and my housing, so I came to PGM. When I walked in, I saw a lot of crosses. I've been studying the Bible, so I'll learn more; I might ask them a couple of questions and make them feel like they don't know how to answer, like I was always doing as a Muslim. I started listening to the people that preached, and asking questions, thinking I'm trying to get them.

Then I heard Pastor Phil, preaching on a Saturday, and he said: “Why are you blaming God for something that He didn't promise you?” God didn't promise me He'd give me a job, so why am I blaming God? That's what I was going through. I didn't have a job or housing, I'm trying to get some money, I'm trying to go to school, I have no bus card, and I was thinking ‘why are you doing this, God?’ Then I realized when Pastor Phil said ‘why are you blaming God for something He didn't promise you?’, I said, why am I? That's true! No matter what Pastor Phil believes in, he's saying something that makes common sense!

On Saturday, I made my decision, and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. God wanted me to seek Him, to call upon Him, and I did. That night was a miracle night, and I called Pastor Phil, and

said 'you know what, I think I made a decision.' He told me, 'what decision, what are you talking about?' I said, 'I think I'm ready now, and I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and my Lord.' And he said, 'yes, yes, thank God!' I looked at him and said, 'so you were ready for this moment, right?' And he said, 'You know what, Mohamad, all of us pray for you.' One thing I never shared with anybody, but I'm going to share it now. When I was homeless, before I came to the mission, I went to the mosque, and asked for help to find somewhere to stay. Do you know what their response was? 'This is not a shelter, this is a mosque! This is where we worship God!' I looked at him, and I said, wow... I told the mosque leader, I'm sorry, and I left. But when I came to the mission, these Christians were praying for me, they helped me, they accepted me, and they gave me three meals a day and some bus cards to go to school. They told me, Mohamad, anything you need we will help you with; and I wasn't a Christian, I was a Muslim, and they helped me, and they prayed for me too; and I accepted Jesus Christ, my Savior, my Lord, and I realized that Christianity is a religion that is all about love, that this is the right faith, this is the right path. I decided to join the program, and now, here I am, in the Bible study program, and I love it, I really love it."

Christian Mejia

"I was struggling with a lot of things; I was rebellious, I wasn't doing well in school, I wasn't getting along with my parents. One day, after an argument, I just decided that it was time for me to leave. So, one night, without telling my folks, I packed my bags up, cleaned out my room, and boarded a train to Chicago. My first goal was to go to Job Corps, which teaches kids a specific job trade. I went to their facility, but I didn't think things through, I didn't have all my documents when I left home, and I ended up being stranded out in the streets of Chicago. Being from the country, it's a huge change, with so many cars and people. I wandered the streets, trying to find a job somewhere, but I didn't have any credentials. A group of people found me on the streets and led me to the mission. After sleeping in the parks, it was a blessing to be able to

receive a bed, and a free meal, so I just praise God for being able to be here. Two weeks later, I joined the men's Bible program, after seeing people walking around the building, with shirts and ties on, looking like they had their lives together. I decided it was time for me to get more discipline in my life, and not be so rebellious. I didn't know what to expect, I just came out of high school around a year ago. I was very prideful back then; I didn't see myself as homeless. I thought, I shouldn't be here, so when I joined the men's Bible program, my original intent was just to get a GED, in preparation for joining the Navy. But, as I went through the program, I noticed how so many lives had been changed, how people were giving their lives over to Christ, and that really touched me, so right then and there I decided to seriously seek Jesus Christ.

Since then it's been a big change in my life; I've gotten in touch with my folks, I'm talking regularly with them, and they're actually very proud of me for being on the men's Bible program. I have Christ to thank for that, because without Him, I would just be on the streets, with nowhere to go; I wouldn't really be anything. He's given me a new lease on life. I got my GED, which is a very big blessing and a very big step for me, because I never thought I'd be able to get a degree of any sort in education, so I praise God for that.

God has blessed me with a job here at the mission as well. I work in Hospitality with the diverse clientele here; it gives me the chance to share the Gospel with all of our guests. It's been a blessing to not only share what Christ has done for me, but to help minister to the people here as well, that's been a great blessing, and I just thank God for that."



Christian working in Hospitality



A Word from Philip Kwiatkowski

President, Pacific Garden Mission

The Simple Gospel = New Life

The book of Acts is an exciting book; we see the early Church impacting the world—and society noticed. The focus was simple:

proclaim the Gospel, and disciple those that got saved. One of my favorite stories is found in Acts 16 where Paul was locked up in jail, and through a miraculous intervention God caused an earthquake and the doors opened and Paul was freed. The keeper of the prison was about to kill himself,

“But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.” (v.28) The man then asked the most important question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (v.30) Paul gave the simple answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (v.31) When the people of God keep the focus on their calling, proclaiming the Gospel and discipling the saved, God moves in a mighty way.

At the Mission, our focus has been the same since 1877; a report from 1892 states, “Many that have been obtaining a livelihood by preying upon the property of others have been induced to come into the Mission, and while there, by hearing the experiences of those who had been leading similar lives, but had been saved by the precious Gospel, and were now living sober, honest and industrious lives—these testimonies have been blessed to them, in changing their purposes, and often when they were about to commit some depredation, their hands have been stayed and they have been rescued from sin.” This was written in 1892 by the wife of the founder of Pacific Garden Mission, and Praise God the same is true today in 2016.

There was a man by the name of Randy that was on our New Day Program who sought out our Chaplain, knocked on his door and asked “How can I get saved?” Wow! Just like the book of Acts! Randy prayed to receive Christ and is a new creature. How many missionaries travel the world over looking for open hearts, and here they are knocking on our door.

I talked to a lady on our New Day program that stated she was in a drug house and turned on the T.V., heard our preaching and began to cry; she came here because she knew this is where God wanted her. Miracles are happening here every day, just like the book of Acts. Keep us in prayer because we know that this indeed is a spiritual battle.



Marilyn Ellis, 21, and Pastor Phil. Marilyn is here in the New Life program with her daughter Faith. We are praying for a ministry position for her here at PGM when she graduates.



FINANCIAL UPDATE Stephen Welch, Director of Development

Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. —Luke 2:10

We hope you enjoyed reading about a few of the young people who Jesus is taking to their highest potential right here at PGM through our discipleship ministry. As the number of homeless people we serve increases, so do the number of young people. We would love to help more people that pass through the mission, and we know you would too. We have also seen an increase in women and children in the last few years. At the time of this writing, we had over 300 women and children in our building. All of these dear friends (men, women, boys and girls) need special attention for complex needs, which will require more staff, in the immediate future, at Pacific Garden Mission. We face a good problem. People are looking for the answers only Jesus has.

We are simply overwhelmed and understaffed. We are not worried because we have seen God work through people supporting PGM for almost 140 years. Please pray with us and for us, and the opportunity to find God's best to do the work before us. The work is great and so is God. We have carefully studied our situation, and we face the need to increase our staff from 95 to over 150 over the next few years, and that will require resources we do not have. If you sense our burden and feel led to help us beyond your current love gift, please do so.

You may wish to become a sustained monthly partner or increase your current gift to help us with our needs to meet the increasing demands on our fixed resources. We do not expect that all of our faithful donors will be able to help more financially, yet we ask because we know our God is able.

We refuse to take government funding and will continue to reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ. We simply need more laborers to reach more people—and do this effectively. We want to teach more classes and counsel more people. Please consider giving to our general fund so that we may hire more qualified Christians to do the work that will become eternal. Help us make a difference.

WHAT YOUR MONEY SUPPORTS AND PROVIDES

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.

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 (March)

Daily average of homeless receiving aid and attending Gospel services....**803**

Number of men and women enrolled in Bible study programs and provided room and board....**101**

Approximate number of plates of food served....**49,891**

Estimated number of items of clothing distributed or given to other missions....**31,498**

Number of patients treated in our free dental clinic....**209**

Number of persons who professed faith in Christ....**149**

Stations and outlets in the U.S. and around the world broadcasting "Unshackled!"....**3159**

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