



Aswad's inspiring journey from despair and addiction to new life in Christ

## "I MET JESUS CHRIST AT PGM BECAUSE OF YOU."

With patience and love, the staff at Pacific Garden Mission mentors, encourages, and teaches each person here. We meet them where they are and share with them what God can do in their lives. In this month's issue, Aswad shares his testimony of how Jesus Christ and the Pacific Garden Mission changed his life and those around him.

We will hear first-hand how the choice to walk with God and be fully committed to Him can truly transform a life, bearing witness to others that change is indeed possible—and it is never too late with God! We thank you for being a

faithful supporter, partnering with PGM to continue this legacy of changing lives and spreading hope through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### ASWAD

"I first tried heroin when I was 19. In the beginning, it was an addiction, but it wasn't overbearing. I was able to be what you would call a functional heroin addict. After a while, it became dysfunctional, and in that dysfunction, I couldn't keep a job, and the little money I did have went to my addiction.

"Downtown Chicago seemed like the best place to hustle for money to



**“The great thing about Pacific Garden Mission is that you can see the outcome of those who are faithfully walking with Christ and those who aren’t, and you can decide here which way you want to go.”**



feed my addiction, and one day in 2002, I walked by Pacific Garden Mission. I didn’t know what it was. I just saw there were a lot of people in there. I noticed a homeless person go in. I was curious about what it was, so I went in to see. I saw that it was a homeless shelter, but I also learned it had a Bible program. Having knowledge of God, I thought the best way to change my life was to join the Bible program, so I joined.

“The first time I joined the Bible program, I think I lasted for about three days because with a heroin addiction, when you don’t have it, you

get sick. And when that sickness came, I just left. I had to go and didn’t know what else to do. I had to go feed the addiction. That cycle continued for the next eight years. One day, sitting in the dayroom in 2009, I came to a conscious decision: This time, I made a vow that if He helped me clear my mind and heart and taught me how to turn myself over to Him, I would do it and walk with Him for the rest of my life.

“During that transitional year in the Bible program, God was transforming me in the image of Christ and changing who I was to establish a relationship with Him by removing myself. That year, that is what I did. I simply learned how to love God, and in loving God, I learned how to turn to Him in times of need. It was like a new birth for me; God was everything He says He is. That was in 2010, and I have been here since, working at Pacific Garden Mission in the kitchen.

“The great thing about Pacific Garden Mission is that



Aswad shares a moment of fellowship with Bible program member David Parker.

**“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”**

**— Romans 12:2 KJV**

you can see the outcome of those who are faithfully walking with Christ and those who aren't, and you can decide here which way you want to go. The Gospel will be given to you when you are here. I don't care if you are only here for three hours. During those three hours, the Gospel will be presented to you. You will hear the Word. And once you hear that Word . . . and God talks to you . . . and you understand what He is saying to you . . . He will work on changing you whether you like it or not.

“God showed me how to live and do things His way, and I haven't been

the same since. My transformation came from being here and seeing for myself what God can do if you give your life to Him without being wishy-washy. The road from 2010 to where I am now has been difficult because even though I wasn't getting high, I still had to grow in the Spirit. I still had to learn how to communicate spiritually. I had to retrain my thoughts and inner thinking of the things I was accustomed to doing.

“During that period, God brought my wife here to Pacific Garden Mission, and we married. I had to change many things in me for the glory of God, but He used my wife in doing so. And in the same process of Him using my wife to change me, He used me to change her. My wife is now a Christian woman. She was baptized two years ago, and we are walking together with the Lord. I have two girls with her, and she had a son, so five of us are in the house. Her son also converted to Christianity simply by watching me. It was God that did these things. I know it wasn't me. I never beat Christianity over their heads; I was just me and did what I was

supposed to do. He used that to change the people around me, and that is wonderful.

“Now Jesus Christ is the head of my life, and I follow Him wholeheartedly. I understand why Christ came and died on the cross. I understand who the Holy Spirit is. I understand the Trinity within itself. In understanding that, I understand there is nothing higher or greater than God. There is nothing I cannot do



Aswad prepares chicken for a PGM Praise and Testimony dinner.



or accomplish through God who strengthens me.”

Nothing shares the power of God more than a changed life that has been transformed through the Gospel. Just as Aswad shared in his testimony, we can see the results of those who walk with God, and it serves as an undeniable testament to His power as living parables to both encourage and warn us. We thank you for providing the resources that allow us to do what we do. Pacific Garden Mission is a thriving example of the power of God in changing lives, and it's a

Aswad shown with his wife, Fatima, and their three children: Moheb, Malia, and Aaliyah.

place where our staff can patiently and lovingly come alongside those seeking God to guide them into a new life of walking with Christ daily.



## “It’s a New Day!”



Not only does Pacific Garden Mission hold three New Life Bible Program graduations each year, but we also hold several New Day Addictions Recovery graduations. We want to recognize those individuals who took the difficult and

courageous step to quit using drugs or alcohol so they could live sober and God-honoring lives. In this photo is our most recent New Day graduating class. Please pray for our graduates and active program participants that they may let God into their lives and learn to walk with Him daily. We are

thankful for your prayers and support of this ministry—lives are being changed with your help.

**GIVE NOW** [pgm.org/donate](https://pgm.org/donate)

Visit our website at [pgm.org](https://pgm.org) to learn more about PGM’s multiple ministries to those in need.



A Word from Philip Kwiatkowski  
President, Pacific Garden Mission

## TWO HEARTWARMING STORIES

**“He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.” —Jeremiah 22:16 KJV**

Often, when we think of those who are poor or in need, we think in physical terms—food, shelter, and clothing. Though this is true, many people’s needs go beyond the physical. Some require emotional help for challenges like estrangement from family, domestic disputes, or abuse that was never addressed.

I was reminded of this recently when a woman who was with us for a number of months was reunited with her daughter. I was standing in the hall when I heard screams of joy and shouts of happiness. A young woman that had been desperately searching for her lost mother was reunited with her mom. This young woman had contacted authorities and searched in different states to find her mother, who had disappeared. She came across a piece of mail with our address on it and thought she might be there.

Upon entering the Mission, she found out her mother, indeed, was a resident, and as she came to meet her, their reunion was heartwarming and enthusiastic. They walked down the hallway arm in arm as the young woman told her mom she was taking her home; she cleaned out her locker and drove away with a happy end to her story.

So many who reside here have needs that go beyond the physical, and I am thankful we have a staff that is sensitive to their needs and willing to spend the time and minister to them. I recently saw a Palestinian man that resides here; during COVID, he was told that he tested positive for COVID, and he thought he was going to die. So he decided to call his son in Israel, whom he had not spoken to in 30 years, and say goodbye. He did call, they reunited, and he did not die. They have a relationship today, and he is so thankful he made the call.

**I want to thank our wonderful Lord and you, our donors, for making PGM a place of hope and a refuge in times of trouble.**



# LIVING OUT OUR CORE VALUES

**This month marks our 146<sup>th</sup> year of operation!** In celebration, we felt it a good time to reflect on Pacific Garden Mission's core values, and we'd like to share them with you. We are dedicated to maintaining these values and ensuring they reflect in our daily interactions and decisions made at PGM.

*Thank you for supporting our ministry and being part of what we do.*

## OUR MISSION

### PURPOSE

To reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ.

### MISSION STATEMENT

We serve with the compassion of Christ and minister with the transforming message of the Gospel.

### VISION

We offer life answers through faith in Jesus Christ, through any season of life, so that our guests become fully functioning followers of Christ.

### CORE VALUES

Faith • The Word • Truth • Love



## THE IMPACT WE MAKE TOGETHER

**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 support us financially, you're not only giving *to* the Mission, but *through* the Mission to people who need your help the most. In July your support made a true difference:

On average, **431** homeless people received aid and Gospel services each day

About **24,670** plates of food were served

**22,000** items of clothing were distributed

**3,154** media outlets around the world broadcasted *Unshackled!*

**32** men and women were enrolled in Bible study programs and provided room and board

**18** mothers with their children who were sheltered at PGM

**61** people professed faith in Christ and became new believers

With your encouragement and support, we minister hope to the homeless, addicted, and brokenhearted.