HOLIDAY SEASON
A CHRIST-FILLED YEAR!

Because of you and your provision and service, we were able to serve thousands of people over the holiday season, stretching from Thanksgiving to Christmas to New Year’s Day. We wanted to say thank you one more time by including some photos of the people we were blessed to serve.

Some of the highlights included:
- Distributing Christmas presents to over 150 homeless children during the Christmas season. (These toys were accompanied by kid-focused Gospel materials that ensured all the children we served could learn the true meaning of Christmas.)
- Providing thousands upon thousands of meals, nights of shelter, clothing items, hygiene products and haircuts;
- Giving away hundreds of Family Food Boxes to poor, low-income families who needed help to get by during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons;
- Sponsoring over 25 working-poor families so they could celebrate Christ’s birth with their children;
- Helping 10 people find permanent employment and progress toward self-sufficiency; and
- Averaging 50 men and women in our inpatient New Life addiction recovery program.

The amount of people we are able to serve is truly amazing. And while these statistics paint an overall picture, each number is the story of a life impacted by the love of Jesus because of your generous support. Thank you for giving, praying and volunteering. We look forward to restoring even more broken lives in 2016. Enjoy the pictures—they tell the story so well.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

JANUARY 2016 - CHAPEL AND KITCHEN SERVING SCHEDULE

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<td>1 Mt. Olympus Presbyterian</td>
<td>2 Bible Baptist Kitchen: South Valley Community Church</td>
<td>3 Gospel Grace - Chapel and Kitchen</td>
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<td>5 Calvary Chapel of Salt Lake Kitchen: Intermountain Baptist Youth</td>
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<td>8 Hilltop United Methodist Church</td>
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<td>11 Intermountain Baptist Church</td>
<td>12 Unity Baptist Church</td>
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<td>15 Discovery Christian Church</td>
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<td>19 K2 - The Church</td>
<td>20 Capital Church</td>
<td>21 Wasatch Christian Church Kitchen: Capital Church</td>
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<td>22 Midvalley Bible Church</td>
<td>23 Evangelical Free Church of Salt Lake Greg's Church</td>
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ALFONSO AGUIRRE: A Final Chance On Life Pays Off

My name is Alfonso Aguirre and before I came to the Rescue Mission I had tried to kill myself three times. Once, I downed a bottle of Tylenol and ended up in the hospital. Even after they pumped my stomach, the doctors were amazed I didn’t have any organ damage.

When I came to the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake, it was my final attempt to give life a try. If the Mission wasn’t able to help me, I planned to make a fourth suicide attempt. I wasn’t going to make sure I was successful.

Wanting to Live Again

I can joyfully report that, after spending a year at the Mission, I don’t need to worry about suicide because God has changed me. It was just a few days after coming to the Rescue Mission in December, 2014 that I started hearing God’s word again. In daily Bible studies and during the nightly chapel services I began to hear the truths of the Bible like I had at other times in my life. I started praying each day, asking God to deliver me from the depression that I had, and the bad habits I had—the marijuana, the meth, the drugs and the alcohol.

I went to the mission’s prayer room almost every day. I would get down on my knees and ask God to deliver me. I told Him I wanted to live for Him. I wanted to serve Him. I was tired of living for myself. If God would give me another chance, I promised to do whatever it took to serve Him. And after about four months of daily prayer, it seemed like God answered. My hope and joy came back. I stayed sober. I even quit smoking cigarettes.

I started feeling great. I became excited to live again. I learned that there was no other way to have happiness but through Jesus. I went to some great churches where I learned even more about God, but soon I decided to start going to a service in Spanish, which is my native language. Today, I go to a church called Victory Outreach in Midvale. The services are in Spanish and many of the people who go there have struggled with addiction just like I have.

My discipler, Frank, who meets with me once a week and encourages me, is planning on attending church with me and that means a lot.

Wanting to Live Again
One of the most important things I learned at the Rescue Mission is to have hope for the future. I have gone through periods when I had been sober, employed and had a good relationship with God. But it seems like I always turn back to drugs and fall into depression. So when I came to the Mission, I was hopeless. I felt like even if I became sober for a while, I would eventually turn back to drugs or alcohol, just like I always did.

“What’s the point?” I asked myself, “I am just going to relapse anyway.”

But my Rescue Mission counselor, Cassie, kept encouraging me. She always told me that things would be different. Just because I had failures in the past, it didn’t mean I had to fail again. The past, Cassie said, doesn’t determine what will happen in the future. She believed in me, even when I didn’t believe in myself. And her hope was contagious. Today, I agree with Cassie. I believe I won’t relapse. I believe God has truly healed me. Of course, only time will tell, but I feel like God is with me and will not let me go.

**Depending on Drugs instead of People**

I needed people like Frank and Cassie to help me, since I haven’t always felt like I had people I could depend on. I grew up in Mexico and my parents got divorced when I was an infant. So I had a stepfather as long as I can remember. He was very abusive. He used to beat me up for nothing. Sometimes he used to beat my mom in front of me and my brother. I could take care of myself, but I couldn’t stand to watch what happened to my mom. I can still picture my mother falling to the ground and feeling helpless. So I left the house and then ran away from home. I was afraid to leave home, but I was more afraid to stay. I had nowhere to go, so I ended up on the streets. Life was very difficult for me. I remember always being hungry. I started using drugs, drinking and joined a gang, just to have a place to belong.

The by the time I was a teenager, my mother and stepfather had moved to the U.S. and the only family I had real contact with was the family I was with when I ran away from home. So my grandfather called my mom and told her she needed to come get me or the gang life was going to kill me. My mother returned back to Mexico and ordered me to come to the U.S. with her.

I did well for a while in the U.S., but I dropped out of high school in 10th grade so I could start working to help my family. It seemed like I could always find a job doing some sort of manual labor on a construction site or work crew. Still, I never really could stay sober and experienced periods of homelessness. When I was in my twenties, my grandfather and I had two children, a son and a daughter. My girlfriend was also an addict, so we struggled to take care of our children. Eventually, they were taken and raised by my mom and stepdad.

I struggled to stay sober and even entered rehabilitation centers a few different times, only to relapse again. It was two years ago when I really joined a rock bottom. That’s when my mother died of a heart attack. She was 74 and had a long life, but her passing crushed me. I thought of all the ways I had failed her as a son. I wish I could’ve gone back and been better to her. I felt like she had dreams for me which I never received. I fell into depression and started using drugs and alcohol. This is when the Rescue Mission’s New Life Program became homeless on the streets of Southern California.

I was in rough shape. I have a disorder called acromegaly that causes oversized hands and feet. The resulting disease, called gigantism, is due to a hormone issue during adolescence. This condition is painful, but can be managed by very expensive medication that needs to be injected once a month. I was struggling to get the medication I needed and it was causing me a lot of physical pain, even as I tried to numb my emotional pain with drugs and alcohol. As a last resort before I knew myself, I decided to move back to Salt Lake, where I had some success staying sober previously, and give the Rescue Mission’s New Life Program one final chance.

I’m glad I made that decision. The Rescue Mission was able to connect me with the Fourth Street Clinic and now I see a doctor there who helps me manage my condition. The Fourth Street Clinic provides me with the medication I need and the doctors really care about me. After our appointments, my doctor always gives me a big hug and tells me she is proud of my progress.

**Knowing I Still Need Prayer and Support**

Of course, life is still painful. But I believe I am now able to cope with this pain without turning to drugs or alcohol. That belief was tested recently. Two months ago, I learned that my son had died. He was only 23 years old. The autopsy report described the cause of death as a massive, fatal hemorrhage. That was a real wake-up call for me. I still don’t know how he died, but I know he struggled with addiction. Too. I felt guilt like I did when my mother died. I wasn’t a good father to my children and I am a poor provider. I just wasn’t able to be a better dad to them. But this time, however, I haven’t turned to drugs or alcohol to numb the pain or cover the guilt if feel. I realize God is in control and has grace enough to forgive me. Nothing in my life, or the life of my son, happens outside of His control.

Without the change God made in me, I know I would’ve had a really hard time with my son’s death. Even now it is painful, but God’s goodness and love helps me continue to have hope. He really has changed me in so many ways that I can’t help but give thanks to Him. If you remember my story this month, please pray for me. Pray that I would continue to rely on God’s goodness and love even when times get tough. Pray also that God would lead me when I graduate from the Rescue Mission’s New Life Program. I plan to stay with the Rescue Mission’s transitional housing facility, the Terri Timmerman Freedom House, to help make my transition into “real life” smoother. I know I have relapsed many times in the past, but I believe God would keep me close to Him this time. Thank you for supporting the Rescue Mission so that people like me can have one more chance at a new life.

**Editor’s note:** Alfonso’s family has a history with addiction with at least five of his close relatives affected. Please keep Alfonso and his family in your prayers as he overcomes generations of addiction.