

HELP US MEET OUR DECEMBER MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE

You Helped Bless so Many this Thanksgiving

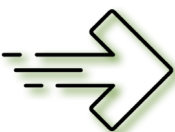
It was a great Thanksgiving (check out the pictures on the right) at the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake. Here are some highlights:

- We served over 1,400 meals in three hours, including delivering meals to homeless camps, where people were encouraged to leave the camps behind and come to the Mission for help.
- Our homeless and low-income neighbors received winter clothing and hygiene products, along with gifts for parents to give to their children on Christmas.
- Utah Gov. Spencer Cox and Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson helped serve the meals.
- Five local churches provided vans and drivers to assist with shuttling people to and from the banquet.
- Taylor Andrews Academy was on location giving haircuts to our homeless neighbors.
- Community support, donations, and prayer played a crucial role in making the event successful.

Christmas Outreach and Needed Support

With an awesome Thanksgiving behind us, we are in the throes of Christmas outreach. More people join the New Life Program during the Holiday Season and cold winter months than any other time of year. The Mission encourages people to join the New Life Program for the long-term support needed to get off the streets and into faith, sobriety, employment, and housing. More important Christmas news:

- Preparation is underway for our Annual Christmas Banquet serving up hot food and gifts to those who may be without a home or family for the holidays.
- A supporter has pledged a \$25,000 matching gift challenge, doubling donations in December.
- Plans include providing 15,000+ hot meals during this Christmas season, and distributing family food boxes, winter clothing, and other essentials.



Give now. Please help us meet our December match challenge by donating today and double the pledged \$25,000!

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RESCUER

DECEMBER
2024

The Monthly Newsletter of the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake



RescueSaltLake.org

After fleeing difficult conditions in Venezuela, I came to the U.S. for a better life, only to find myself hopeless, homeless, and addicted a few short years later.

My husband and I started a family in Venezuela, but soon realized it was no place to raise two young boys. There was rampant crime and death. There were no diapers and little food.

In 2011, we managed to get into Panama with our two young boys. We spent three years there and established residency before my husband gained a student visa to attend a university in Idaho. In 2015, we had another son and I fell into postpartum depression. I felt alone in a new country.

I grieved the loss of communication with family back in Venezuela and was burdened by trauma I had experienced. With three small children at home, I couldn't shake my depression. A year went by before I decided to take my life. My husband intervened and I recovered at the hospital, but when I returned home, I still had thoughts of suicide.

Despite being in a religious family, I was upset at God for leaving me in this depressed state. I told my husband I was leaving our family. We divorced, and I encouraged him to find a new wife who would be a good mother to our children. He did, and I am happy that my sons have a stepmother who cares for them.

When I left, I wanted to end my life but before doing so, I decided to try living in the fast lane. I started partying and using drugs. I even remarried to the man who supplied me with drugs. However, during the pandemic, the fast lane dried up. We couldn't get drugs, and the party stopped.

Depressed and ashamed, I again decided to end my life but wanted to say goodbye to my boys. When I traveled to see them, a police officer tried to pull me over. I resisted arrest and was charged with several crimes. I spent five months incarcerated in Idaho Falls before being moved to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in Eastern Washington. They wanted to deport me, but because the U.S. has no direct diplomatic relations with Venezuela, I couldn't be sent back.



After facing severe depression and addiction, Maria Medina has a new life with Jesus. She works to support herself and has a good relationship with her three boys.

Please see "Maria" on page 3.

GOD WANTS TO FILL THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS

December marks the beginning of the Advent season, and while Advent observances take many forms, one of my favorites is reading a chapter of the Gospel of Luke each day.



There are 24 chapters in Luke (a coincidence?), which is just enough to read one per day, starting on December 1 and ending on Christmas Eve. As I write, I recently finished the first chapter of Luke and was struck by how it helps illustrate the Rescue Mission’s ministry.

Luke 1 focuses on two people. One is Zachariah, a priest and John the Baptist’s father. The second is Mary, the mother of Jesus. They were both told extraordinary things by God through an angel. Zachariah was told his wife, who was old and barren, would have a son. Mary was told she would give birth to the Son of God.

To Zachariah, the idea that his wife, Elizabeth, could be pregnant was preposterous. Because of his skepticism in God’s promise, he was made mute. Mary, by contrast, believed that she could give birth despite her virginity. “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word,” she said. (Luke 1:38). Later, in her song of praise to God for choosing her, Mary noted that God “has filled the hungry with good things.” (Luke 1:53).

Join me in considering two things from Luke 1.

First, most of the people who come to the Rescue Mission are more like Zachariah than Mary. Their

encounters with God and His promises do not initially produce belief. Instead, they are skeptical until God shows them rock bottom (for Zachariah this was being mute, for many of our homeless friends this can be addiction, homelessness, poverty, and suffering). Yet, God does eventually bring His people to Himself (just like he did with Maria, who shares her life story in this month’s *Rescuer*). Like Maria, Zachariah came to believe God’s promises. When both did, they were healed, physically and spiritually. (Luke 1:64).

Second, God desires to “fill the hungry with good things.” Whether a person is physically or spiritually hungry, God’s heart is to fill them. Your support of this ministry helps fill people physically (through three daily hot meals, family food boxes, and special events like our Christmas Banquet) and spiritually (through chapel services, biblical education, bible study, and connection to solid Christian churches).

Thank you for supporting this ministry. I see first-hand how God uses your support to “fill the hungry with good things” and bring those who initially miss the message, like Zachariah and Maria, to Himself. It is a blessing to see God use your gifts to accomplish His purposes.

Merry Christmas,

Chris D. Croswhite
Executive Director

MARIA: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

While in jail and later detention, God began working on my heart. A ministry group came to jail, and I started reading the Bible. I came to believe in God again and started seeing Him working in my life.

One thing God did was lead me to a phone number at the detention center. The number connected to an organization that helped people get out of detention. I called, and within a few days, they raised my \$10,000 release bond.

Back in Idaho, I bonded with a Christian organization that helped people get back on their feet. A few months later, I became a follower of Jesus, beginning a personal relationship with Him and receiving forgiveness for my sins and was later baptized.

But after years of trauma and scars, I knew I needed more tools to stay straight for the long haul. My boys and their family had moved to Utah, and I wanted to be near them, so I contacted the Rescue Mission of Salt Lake.

At the Rescue Mission, I learned the importance of community. Yes, the first and most important relationship anyone can have is with Jesus, but I realized relationships with other people are a key too. I couldn’t live an isolated life but needed healthy relationships that would encourage me and through which I could encourage others. Today, I am actively practicing community here at the Rescue Mission, at my home church, Capital Church, through serving with a nonprofit organization, and helping at another church in the valley.

I have a pro bono immigration attorney who helped file paperwork that would allow me to work in the U.S. While I will never be able to achieve citizenship because of my criminal record, I can apply for some employment and residency exceptions, as allowed by the immigration court.

Today, I am working and ready to graduate from the New Life Program. I have a good relationship with my boys, and they visit me on weekends. We go out to eat or stay around the Mission and play card games (they love Uno!).

As I look back, I can see that through all the hardship, God was in control and protecting me the whole time.

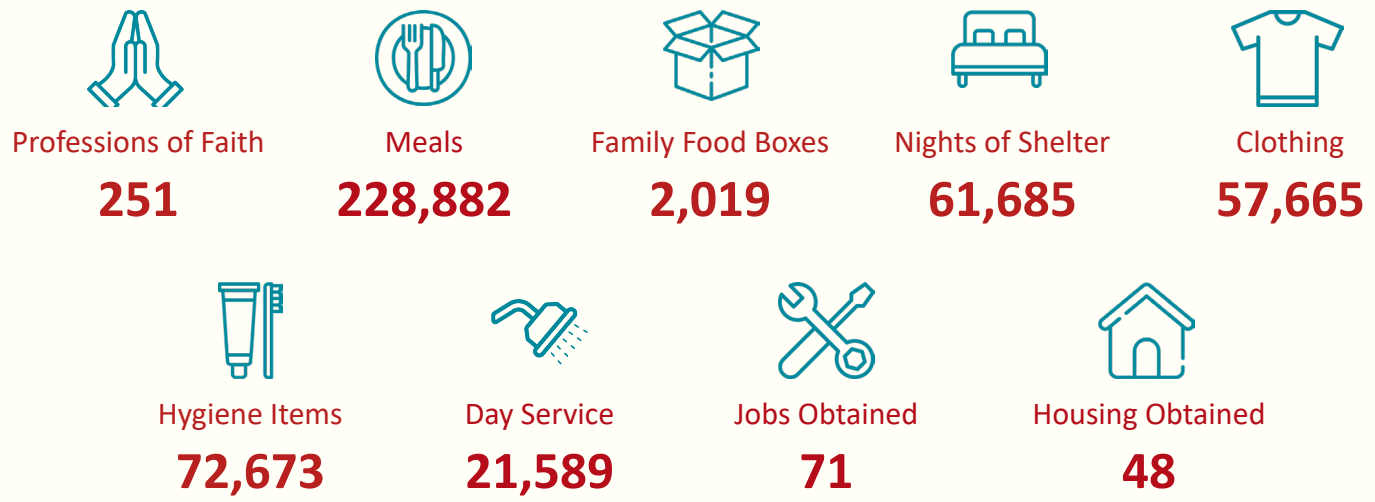
Growing up in Venezuela seemed bad, but God shielded us and eventually led us to the U.S. When I suffered severe depression and tried to take my life, my husband was there. One reason I wanted to divorce my husband was so my children could have a mother who would take good care of them. God provided for my children by giving my husband a new, caring wife who has been a great mother. Through my husband’s marriage to an American, my two children who were born in Venezuela have become U.S. citizens.

God even used my drug abuse, arrest, and incarceration to help me learn the truth about Him in jail. He also provided a way for me to leave ICE detention and has given me pro bono legal help to create a path for me to stay and work in the U.S.

Most importantly, He has provided forgiveness of my sins through His Son Jesus and led me to the Rescue Mission, where I found the spiritual support to build my faith, overcome depression, find employment, and stay sober.

Please pray for me as I move to the Mission’s transitional housing unit, Hope House, this month. Pray also as I work with my pro bono attorney to meet immigration requirements. Thank you so much for supporting the Rescue Mission. It has made a lasting impact in my life and the lives of my children!

HOW YOUR GIFT HELPS: OUR YTD STATS THROUGH OCTOBER



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