

THE

MISSION

Stories of the Lord's provision through you in Tarrant County

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026



**Union
Gospel
Mission**
TARRANT CO

**Marissa's Best
Years are Ahead**

*Thanks
to You!*

You Gave Marissa a New Beginning



Marissa was a devoted, stay-at-home mom and loved every minute of it. But a growing addiction to drugs landed her on the streets as a missing person.

For over two years, Marissa lived on the streets in multiple states. She was scared to stay in one place for too long, walking city streets for 18 hours at a time before falling asleep from sheer exhaustion. In the winter of 2024, Marissa was sleeping outside in the snow wearing just sweatpants and a hoodie beside an apartment complex swimming pool.

During an especially desperate night, Marissa cried out to a God she barely believed in. "I had never talked to Him before, but I was so deep into this rut," she recalls. "I got arrested a week later, and everything changed for me in the best way." While in jail, Marissa learned that she had been a missing person for over two years and was able to reconnect with her concerned mother. She was introduced to Union Gospel Mission of Tarrant County through drug court and joined the residential program.

"I knew it would be a blessing, just because I wouldn't be outside," Marissa tells us. "But it was so nice! And my first impression has just grown from there."

Marissa discovered that the God she cried out to loved her unconditionally. "The Alpha class was such

a good experience," she says. "I'd never worshipped before. It was beautiful, going to chapel every day to praise God. Now I talk to Him all the time."

The UGM-TC Economic Mobility Pathways Program gave Marissa the opportunity to pursue her passion of cosmetology. Through the EMP Program, Marissa earned her cosmetology license and hopes to land a position at a Med Spa or a high-end hotel. Right now, she enjoys her job at a warehouse where she was recently promoted from quality control auditing. She saved enough money to purchase a car and has moved into her own apartment.

More importantly, Marissa is working toward reunification with her three children, who have been living with their father in Kansas City. "He's been amazing, caring for them and loving them while I've been so lost. He believes in me, and I'm thankful for that," Marissa says. Today, she has a great relationship with her mother, and they talk almost every day.

"Coming to a shelter isn't a step back in life," Marissa says. "It's a couple of steps forward away from old ways, tragedy, and sadness."

Thanks to you, the best times are just around the corner for Marissa and her family.

Volunteer Couple Makes Connections with UGM-TC Kids

Fifteen years ago, Allen and Lisa Dunckelman first lent their time and talents to Union Gospel Mission of Tarrant County. Inspired by the book *Same Kind of Different as Me* by Ron Hall and Denver Moore, they started small, serving an occasional meal, participating in craft days, and donating goods. Then Allen became more deeply involved, teaching Alpha and eventually becoming a tutor for our Therapeutic Children's Enrichment Program (TCEP).

Lisa's free time was limited, as she cared for the couple's daughter with special needs, MacKenzie. But when MacKenzie passed away three years ago, Lisa had an empty space in her heart that only service could fill. She joined Allen and says, "I got hooked. The kids healed me as much as I helped them."

"We've made great connections with the kids," Allen says. "They're in a tough situation, but they're very open to us and let us love on them. It's fun to see their faces light up."

Lisa says, "They're a part of us." Now she and Allen want to share a very special part of their lives with the kids: bringing the service dogs they train to TCEP. "These kids don't have pets of their own, so it's going to be great for them."

Our thanks go out to the Dunckelmans for continuing their journey of service for so many years!



Become a Volunteer

No matter your skills or schedule, you have what it takes to change the lives of our unsheltered neighbors. Volunteers aren't just helpers — they are hope-bearers, encouragers, and a vital part of a community that transforms lives through Christ's love.



Apply Today

Last Chance! Sign Up For Our Annual Ladies Luncheon

**Don't Miss Our Special Guest
Grace Valentine**

When: Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2026
11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Where: Will Rogers Memorial
Center Round Up Inn
3401 W. Lancaster Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76107

Please email event@ugm-tc.org for more information.



Grace Valentine is an author, blogger, podcast host and speaker. She is working toward her Masters of Divinity at Asbury Seminary. Her readers love that she is so relatable. They say her fresh voice helps them navigate their own faith lives, helping fulfill her mission to show others that Christianity is an adventure worth living. After growing up outside New Orleans, Louisiana, Grace attended Baylor University, graduating with a degree in journalism. She now resides in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Mission Newsletter

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Charles M. Wolford II
President/CEO

New Year, *Transformed Lives*

Dear Friend,

What new beginnings will 2026 bring? Some of us might change jobs or move to another home. Chances are, we'll celebrate weddings, births and graduations. And we'll undoubtedly meet many people who will have an impact on our lives.

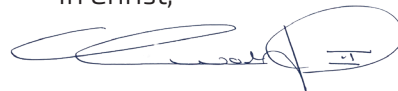
It's the same for residents at Union Gospel Mission of Tarrant County. And even if you never meet them, you will definitely play a part in changing their lives in the months ahead! Because you care, they will be graduating from our programs, launching new careers, moving into places of their own and even starting families.

As I see these transformed lives unfold, I'm deeply grateful to Don Shisler for his service as CEO Emeritus. I don't think we could even begin to count how many men, women and children were blessed by his 30 years of dedicated leadership. I'm confident that, with your partnership, we can keep this momentum going for many more years.

And as things change in the years ahead, some truths will remain the same. Like Marissa in this issue of The Mission, many of our residents have learned that it takes going through hard times to get to the best times. I have faith that more of our neighbors in crisis will be made new at UGM-TC this year.

Keep praying for our residents, that the coming months will lead to the best years of their lives. Your generosity leads our hurting neighbors on a path to lasting transformation. Thank you!

In Christ,



Charles M. Wolford II
President/CEO

**You crown the year with Your goodness, and
Your paths drip with abundance.**

— PSALM 65:11, NKJV

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