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Light of Life Rescue Mission names Jerrel T. Gilliam as new executive director
67-year-old organization prepares for pivotal transition under new leadership

Pittsburgh, Pa. - Light of Life Rescue Mission is pleased to announce Jerrel Gilliam as its new executive director. Gilliam is no stranger to the organization, having served as a volunteer, program coordinator, program officer, director of programs, director of discipleship and, most recently, as interim executive director.

For the past thirty years, Gilliam has spent his career working with ministries, including a recent position as lead pastor of Shiloh Church in South Park. In the '80s after a short stint working as a local paramedic, Gilliam realized he wanted to help rescue people before they "go over the waterfall" and turned back to his childhood roots - the ministry.

Gilliam was first introduced to Light of Life by his parents, who were also pastors of Shiloh Church, when they volunteered in the '70s when Gilliam was a teenager. Fast forward years later, Gilliam was hired as a business consultant through his company, Mosaic Sound LLC, which provides consulting services for churches and faith-based organizations. Impressed by his work, Light of Life asked Gilliam to oversee its programming with the goal to build a new service delivery model - one that encompassed a grace and love-based approach. Under his oversight, the nonprofit organization quickly became known as a safe place for healing, creating a demand for services.

"Growing up as a pastor's kid, my life has always involved helping those who are vulnerable with love and respect," said Gilliam. "I've always had a passion for helping people in need and affirming everyone's unique value as a child of God - in Christ, your history is not your destiny. As Light of Life works towards building a loving, grace-based healing environment, I'm honored to share my ministry and business experiences as I lead our new efforts as executive director."

As the organization prepares to overhaul a new property located on Ridge Avenue in the North Side - a project started by CEO Craig Schweiger eight years ago - Light of

Life's board of directors felt it needed an additional leadership member to concentrate efforts on enhancing and expanding the mission's services. Schweiger was named executive director in 2011 and has focused his efforts on finding the organization a new home and building strategic community partnerships. He was promoted to CEO and will focus his efforts on the capital campaign.

"We're lucky to have two outstanding executives with a long history of improving the organization," said Glenn Graner, chairman of the board of directors. "After a national search, we realized that our new executive director had been serving the organization since he was a child. He's the perfect candidate for driving what our organization is working to achieve - a place where life transformation can take place for even the most desperate individual."

As executive director, Gilliam will begin working on a strategic plan, which will encompass plans for the new building and growing two initiatives - street outreach and intervention. Light of Life has strived to meet people where they are, be it a homeless camp under a bridge or at the home on the verge of losing everything that is important to them. From street outreach, shelter and meals to mentorship, training and mental health services, Light of Life's purpose is to shine the light and hope of Christ onto all who need to see it.

In addition, the organization will amplify its continuum of care, a differentiator amongst other shelters and homeless service providers. Homelessness and addiction are responses to traumatic events, and the opioid epidemic has shown that no one is immune to addiction or hardships. Light of Life embraces a trauma-informed care model, one built around understanding, recognizing and responding to the effects of the underlying issues that have led to homelessness and addiction. The goal is to create a safe environment where guests can experience authentic, meaningful relationships which become the foundation for life transformation. Instead of creating rules to modify outside behavior, Light of Life encourages people to be honest, open and willing to change, in order for transformation to happen from the inside out.

A native of Bethel Park, Gilliam's heritage has deep roots in Pittsburgh urban communities. His parents and grandparents hail from the Hill district and Homewood. Gilliam now lives in Forest Hills with his wife Shannah - they have seven adult children. Earning a bachelor's degree in religion and music, Gilliam attended Arizona College of the Bible. After graduation, Gilliam worked within the faith community at a number of ministries and worship organizations, including serving on the pastoral staff at Covenant Church of Pittsburgh. Prior to Light of Life, Gilliam spent 13 years serving as President at Mosaic Sound, where he specialized in church ministry strategies, special events production and oversaw artist development and recording.

About Light of Life Rescue Mission

Established in 1952, Light of Life Rescue Mission is a Christian nonprofit organization providing life-changing recovery programs and food and shelter for Pittsburgh's poor and homeless. Men, women and children are provided case management and programs

designed to meet diverse needs, including recovery from substance addiction, help for mental health issues, and educational courses to prepare them for careers and independent living. The Mission is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. No one is denied services based on race, creed, religion, gender, age or national origin. Light of Life is supported largely by private donations. To learn more, call 412-258-6100 or visit lightoflife.org.

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