

LIVING by the LIGHT

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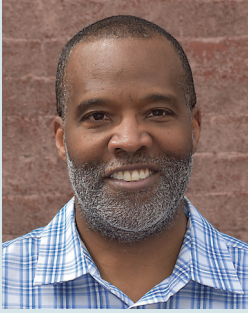


2021 is Here!

2020 Holidays
at Light of Life

A Glimpse into
our History
and Future

Letter from Jerrel



Dear Friends,

2021 is here! Many of us have long awaited the end of 2020 with hopeful expectations for the new year. While 2020 brought many challenges and surprises, we can say that God has not only sustained us, but He leveraged the painful parts of our lives to

make us stronger. Now, we turn our attention to 2021, a new season and a new year that will start with us occupying our new home on Voeghtly Street.

As we look to this year with anticipation, we must remember that our foundational hope remains in Christ, not in government, and not in a building. Through Christ, we all have the opportunity for a new life regardless of our past mistakes. The excitement of a new year and a new beginning is inspiring; when our hope is in Christ, He never disappoints. When we allow ourselves to be distracted by circumstances, we easily succumb to disappointment. God is good, and His plans for us are good.

Ephesians 3:20 says Jesus Christ can do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think.

As I meditate on that scripture, I recall that this year will mark the end of a 25-year season of looking for a new home to serve the homeless and hurting of Pittsburgh. Though the road has been long and challenging at times, God has made this dream a reality, and we have witnessed Him do exceedingly, abundantly more than we ever expected!

For the first time in our nearly 70-year history, we will be able to welcome home women with children who find themselves homeless in the streets of Pittsburgh. Our intervention does not stop with shelter and food. We have the privilege to extend the hope of life transformation through the good news of Jesus Christ and an invitation to belong to our Light of Life family.

Thank you for all the ways your partner with us to make it possible for us to welcome the homeless through our new doors!

Together In His Grip,

Jerrel T. Gilliam, Executive Director

Holiday Outreach Recap

The holidays may have looked different this year due to COVID-19, but it didn't stop homeless and hurting men, women, and children from receiving food, hope, and healing. Check out our holiday outreach recap below to see the impact of this season. Thank you so much for your support! None of this would be possible without the time, talents, and treasures that you give to Light of Life.



Thanksgiving Meal Outreach

On Thanksgiving Day, we **served almost 1,000 individuals** at our Thanksgiving Dinner Banquet! Homeless men, women, and children with nowhere to go for the holiday dined with us outside in our heated tent were provided with a hot to-go meal. Music played throughout the day and each guest received a hygiene kit.

In addition, **volunteer teams delivered hot meals to 9 local senior high-rises in the area.** Though this year we couldn't fellowship with the individuals there, we were grateful that they had a hearty meal and knew that they are cared for.



Thanksgiving Dinner Box Outreach

The Monday before Thanksgiving, we worked with over 40 local organizations and dozens of volunteers to pack and distribute **Thanksgiving meals to over 1,800 local families in need.** Each box included a turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, pie, and more!

One mother that received a Thanksgiving Dinner Box for her and her family wrote, **"I just wanted to say thank you so much from myself and my family for the Thanksgiving Box we received! This was our first Thanksgiving in Pittsburgh and it was awesome because of you!"**



Christmas Outreach

You helped us serve **more than 900 meals** during our Christmas Outreach Celebration on Friday, December 18th and give away **more than 1,500 coats and cold weather items** for those in need this season. You also provided **1,500+ Christmas gifts** to women, children and men in our Programs and to our guests.

It was a great day of fellowship at Light of Life. Many families came by for a Christmas meal. Parents were given a gift card and children received a toy or stuffed animal. **One little girl was so excited about her gift that she cried happy tears!**

A Glimpse into Light of Life's History



Programs Director, Sherry Rorison, recently celebrated 30 years on staff at Light of Life. In lieu of her 30 years, and in honor of this historic time at the Mission, we interviewed Sherry about the history and future of Light of Life services and programs. Sherry started as a Case Manager 30 years ago in the Women and Children's Program because she wanted an opportunity to work with those in need for extended periods of time and be able to see and inspire life change.

According to Sherry, Light of Life was very new to working with women and their families when she started. When the previous manager left only 6 months into Sherry's employment, she took over as the Women's Manager. At the time, there were only 15 families in the program all in scattered-site housing paid for by Light of Life. Today, there are 30 families in scattered-site housing, 15 women in the Sister's Recovery House, a Women and Children's Shelter, and a Day Center open daily. We also keep in touch with over 150 alumni through direct communications and annual events!

Sherry took over as Programs Director in 2019 and has started to restructure the entire program to have the same offerings for men and women. Historically, the two programs were separate and distinct with different processes. Now, even though they remain separate, they follow the same structure that has worked in the Women's Program for years. Sherry's heart is to structure the programs so that they address the trauma that these men and women have faced and help them heal from the inside out.

The programs at Light of Life center around what we call a Continuum of Care (CoC). The CoC starts with Outreach, Meal Ministry, and Emergency Shelter, and walks alongside clients through graduation and alumni relations. It is designed to help us meet each individual where they are and guide them through case management and recovery programs specific to them, as they set goals and find internal healing. This, in turn, helps them get back into society in a healthy and productive way, and many times reunite with their families.

LIGHT OF LIFE Continuum of Care



Outreach



**Meal
Ministry**



**Emergency
Shelter**



**Long-term
Recovery
Programs**



**Alumni
Programs**



She says, "What is really cool is when you first meet these individuals, they are really dependent on you. Then, as they get comfortable and get their basic needs met and settled in, they can hear about how good God is and what God can do and start to depend solely on Him. That's the best part of the job. I want the men, women, and children that we serve to know God and to have so much enthusiasm about Him that they want others to know God too." Sherry has hired multiple alumni as staff members and does so because she sees in them the ability to understand those in our programs and a heart for leading them to Christ.



Stepping into the Future

Our new building on Voegtly Street opened in the beginning of February and is now serving men, women, and children daily through meal ministry, emergency shelter, and day center programming!

The new building brings dignified space to serve more than ever before in a brand-new Day Center and Women and Children's Shelter. Sherry says that these are the two most exciting aspects in her opinion!



The new Children's Playroom at Voegtly Street.

She says, "The Day Center now allows us to share the love of Christ with both women and men! We've never had appropriate space for our team to sit down and fellowship with those coming off the streets and now we will have a dignified space where people can get warm, feel safe, and connect with resources." We are also planning to bring in outside agencies and partners to this space during the day to offer additional help to those in need.

“We’ve always had to tell women calling about shelter that there is no room at the inn for them and their children, but now we can welcome them here.”

Sherry, Programs Director

“The Women’s Shelter has been a need in our city for years,” says Sherry. “In the past, when women would come to us out of rehab clinics, we’d practically have to start over in their recovery to help them get a foundation of Christ. Now, we are going to be able to build the foundation from the start of their recovery to build something that can’t be broken. I believe with all my heart that to have long sustaining recovery, you must have a foundation in Christ. We’ve always had to tell women calling about shelter that there is no room at the inn for them and their children, but now we can welcome them here and that brings me so much joy,” she says.

All of this wouldn’t be possible without the financial support, time, and prayers of our community. Our relocation project is only halfway finished. As part of Phase 2, we are working on renovating our Ridge Avenue building to house our long-term programs and Administrative and Development offices. While the road has been long and arduous the past 25 years since starting this journey, life change happens here every day through the transforming power of Jesus Christ, and we believe that the best is yet to come! **If you’d like more information about the relocation and Capital Campaign, visit www.lightoflife.org/opendoors or call Philip Spina at 412-803-4152.**

Hear from Our Clients

What is it like to have your family back together?



Every year, many men and women in our programs are reconnected with their families and in 2020, 21 families were reunited! Here's what some of the moms had to say about having their families back together.

"It is probably biggest gift from God and from recovery."

- **Chelsey J.**

"It feels like coming home."

- **Nicole R.**

"It's the biggest blessing and I thank God."

- **Melissa K.**

"I gained a new family in recovery and it is a blessing"

- **Lucia C.**

"Just a blessing in the journey of getting my children and family to know me as I get to know the new me."

- **Yolanda B.**

"It is peaceful and comforting — it keeps a lot off my mind, knowing that they are there and that brings peace."

- **Kayla S.**

"It's a blessing having family back; I'm still fighting for custody of my children, but I have family supporting me."

- **Samantha W.**

"I always had support, but Light of Life truly has been a blessing."

- **Jewel H.**

"It is amazing"

- **Cindy L.**

"It is a treasure, like winning the Lottery only better than money."

- **Michelle C.**

"I feel whole again."

- **LuAnn M.**

"It is the reason why I stay clean. Means everything."

- **Paradise**





Events Update



The new Rescue Dogs food truck, benefiting Light of Life!

A New Venture— In Fall 2020, with the help of friends of the Mission, we launched Rescue Dogs, a food truck benefiting Light of Life. The food truck helps raise awareness and funds for the Mission. Serving up locally sourced beef hot dogs and French fries, Rescue Dogs is available for private events, church functions, and community gatherings. **For more information about Rescue Dogs, or to book the truck for an upcoming event, please call 412-258-6182.** You can also visit the Facebook page @rescuedogsfoodtruck for the upcoming schedule.

Special Thanks We'd like to give a special thanks to Vic Tonas for providing the funding for our first social enterprise, Rescue Dogs Food Truck! Thank you, Vic, for your generosity and support of the Mission!



Urgent Volunteer Need— We are in urgent need of volunteers to serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner at our new building on Voegtly Street. For more information visit www.lightoflife.org/volunteer.

▶ Next Up:



More than a Meal Gala, April 20, 2021— Our More than a Meal Gala will be held online only this April. We are looking forward to sharing stories of impact with you, as well as giving you opportunity to participate in our silent auction! Stay up to date with the event details by visiting lightoflife.org/gala.

Pittsburgh Marathon, May 2021— Light of Life Rescue Mission is an Official Charity for the Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon in May 2021 and we would like you to join our team and run to support Light of Life! Learn more at www.lightoflife.org/marathon or contact Amy at ametz@lightoflife.org.

Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless, Summer 2021— Each summer we pack the Great Lawn in the North Shore for Tunch & Wolf's Walk for the Homeless. This event traditionally includes a free BBQ, fellowship, and a 10K walk. We're hoping to be together in person in some capacity this Summer, but we will keep you updated as the event approaches.



MISSION STATEMENT

Light of Life transforms lives through the love of Christ by providing food, shelter, and hope to men, women, and children experiencing homelessness, poverty, or addiction to restore them as healthy members of our community.

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