

Star Gospel Mission

Fall 2008

The Newsletter of the Star Gospel Mission, Charleston, South Carolina

Shining brightly since 1904



STAR GOSPEL MISSION

474 Meeting Street
Charleston, SC 29403

The Rev. William K. Christian
Executive Director
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The Transformation of Willie Campbell, In His Own Words

Based on a conversation Willie had with Pastor Christian on August 5.

On September 2, 2001, Willie Campbell came to the Star Gospel Mission upon release from serving 5 years at Lieber Correctional Institution. Willie was in his mid-50's when he arrived and had already served over half his lifetime behind bars. Willie's life story is not unlike that of other

men who have resided at the Mission. What follows is Willie's story, in his own words.

"It all began when I was 11 years old and stole an apple. Then I stole candy bars and cakes and other things from grocery stores. When I was 12 I was locked up as a juvenile. It was 'ON' then; I liked the excitement and the adrenaline rush. Even before I went to prison I was referred to as: Willie Monster. I didn't take no trash from anyone. I always started trouble and it always ended in trouble. I went from stealing, to strong armed robbery with no weapon, and then I got together with some guys and started doing armed robbery. One

guy ratted on me and I got 2 years. I was on a chain gang when I was 15 years old. Six hours after my release I went over to King Street, beat up a guy, stole his watch, and was back in jail the very same day. My step-father paid the bond and bailed me out. I got a job and one year later lost it.

out before me, but he messed with drugs and ended up getting killed on the streets."

Willie told me that the name Monster made him do the things he did, he felt that he had to live up to that name. "I asked myself, am I really that bad? Men feared me,

especially if there was any trouble. When a guy got in trouble; I took up the challenge. I put a blade in 'em or took a pipe to 'em. I lived in fear everyday I was in prison! Six months before I got out in '81, workin' in the storage room of the cafeteria, one man started talkin' crazy talk, so



Jack Abbott, Willie Campbell and Pastor Christian

I walked off, but the man slapped me. I forgave him. I didn't retaliate because I wanted to go home. This man wanted me to retaliate because he was serving a life-sentence with no parole. "When I did get out, I got a good job with Rucon Construction. We built the College of Charleston gymnasium and the pier on Morrison Drive. 18 months later I went out one night and started

I went back to burglary and got put away for 12 years; that was from 1969-1981. I did what I had to do to survive in prison. In 1975 I got in a riot against some guys from Greenville. I got stabbed in the back. For that incident I got an extra five years. My younger brother got incarcerated in '75 and I chilled out. My brother got

Please see Campbell, page 3



Rev. Christian and Brother Jackson during service.



Craig Weyrick, cook, Pastor Christian, Manny LeGette, night watchman.



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church preparing dinner at the Mission.



Bill Moody, Board Treasurer and Laurie Stullenbarger, Accountant.

A Word from Our Executive Director

As with all not-for-profit organizations in these difficult economic times, procuring the necessary financial resources to maintain a quality ministry and program is not always an easy task. Here at the Star Gospel we are no exception to that rule. With that in mind, I would like to ask for your help.

There are two statements that I often share with the men who live here. The first is: *"The bumps in the road of life are not bumps, they are the road."* Dr. Michel Mirowski. The second is: *"He (God) has the film of my whole life in view and not just the snapshot of my present situation."* W. Trolisch. These two statements are incredible words of encouragement to all those who have experienced a significant setback in their life and have lost a sense of hope and purpose for living. With God's help, guidance, and love, a love that will never let us go, even men who are destitute and appear to have reached the end of their rope can find the inner strength to

carry on, experience a new beginning, and start over again!

Another message that I convey to the men who live here is: *"always remember: never look back, keep your eyes on the future and not on the past."* I encourage them to think in terms of: *"that was then, this is now; and, if not now, when?"* I ask the men to align themselves with people who are more interested in their futures than their pasts. I say all of these things because far too often the men get stuck living in the past, which inevitably prevents them from moving forward into a productive future.

Here at the Star Gospel Mission, we are dispensers of hope, encouragement and the grace of God.

At the Mission, men who have been inspired and motivated by the Good News of God's love in Jesus Christ can experience a real transformation in their lives! God's message to humanity, through Jesus Christ, is that He wants

us to *"have life and have it more abundantly."* At Star Gospel we promote that abundant life through Jesus Christ to men who are discouraged, despairing, and have lost all hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Your continued support and friendship enable us to proclaim a message which encourages men to live into the full potential for which God has created them. Your generous gifts to the Star Gospel Mission will help us fulfill our goal of being a safe haven where homeless men can get back on their feet!

Thank you for your prayers and for your financial gifts which help us serve others in the name of Christ.

Yours faithfully,

The Rev. Bill Christian

"always remember: never look back, keep your eyes on the future and not on the past."
Pastor Christian

Always remember that:
THE PRIMARY BENEFICIARY OF THE GIFT IS THE GIVER.
Please join us in keeping the ministry of the Star Gospel Mission thriving by sending your tax deductible contributions in the envelope enclosed.



Sunday morning service at the Mission.

Willie Campbell, in his own words (from Page 1)

drinkin'. I went to a club, then to a gamblin' house and lost everything. I just started walkin'. At the corner of Ashley and Bee Street I forced myself into a house. I went through a first floor window. I stole a stereo, a TV and a gun, which I sold. I started gamblin' again. I walked home with the TV in my arms and the police stopped me. I made the mistake of telling them my REAL name. One week later I was arrested at work, was eventually tried, and got a 25 year sentence. That was in 1982

I finally got out in 1994. I was now in my 40's. I worked at MUSC from 94-96. I was a floor specialist. I got my own place and worked the graveyard shift. I met a guy named Hammer who had some drugs and a real nice place. A week later I was selling drugs out of his house on Felix Street. I was doin' drugs and drinkin' every night. One night my boss asked me to do two additional floors, plus the floors in the OR. I told him that I wouldn't do it, so he asked him to go home. I found out later that I hadn't been fired but I guess I thought I was, so I never returned."

"From Jan. '96 through July '96, the police kicked the door of our house in three times. One time two guys came to the door and I wouldn't let them in. They pushed the barrel of a rifle through the crack in the door; the rifle wasn't loaded. I got out my 44 Magnum, threatened them, and they left. Two weeks later the police slipped in and hid under the stairs. I was

upstairs where people were partying and doin' lots of drugs. I had an ounce of crack cocaine in my pocket when the house got raided."

Following that incident, Willie went to county jail and lost everything in the process. He was in county jail for 9 months. Scarlett Wilson was the prosecutor at the time and wanted to give him 20 years. His lawyer told him that he could get that reduced to 10 years. When he appeared in court he admitted everything. He said that he was done lying. He told the judge that he couldn't do the 20 years because it would just kill him. The judge gave him 10 years plus five years for additional charges. He only had to serve 5 years before being released. Willie said, "God just had to be lookin' out for me."

While at Lieber Correctional Institution Willie realized that "something was missin'. A guy named Stacey Ford talked me into going to a Bible study. I got involved with Kairos and His Way Ministry. The road to destruction had to come to an end. I knew God had other plans for me. On September 2, 2001, I came to the Star Gospel Mission. I got a job at Labor Ready and shortly thereafter got a job at Glasco Roofing Company. I worked there for six years

before they shut down and I lost my job. By me stayin' at the Star Gospel Mission I was able to save money and I had the time to think about how I wanted to live the rest of my life. I thank God that He gave me another chance to start over again. This time I was determined to get things right!"

At the conclusion of our conversation, Willie told me that "There are no troubles in my life right now because I've got God in my life. I feel His presence with me every day. When I left the Mission I got my own place and started going to church. I met a wonderful Christian woman, Wilhamena, at Springfield Baptist Church. In November of 2002 we were married. In 2007 I lost my job again. Thanks to you (Pastor Christian) and Jack Abbott, I got a new job at the Meeting Street Days Inn. I believe that when one door closes, God always opens another. I do my best to be a man of my word, and my word is my bond. By the grace of God I'm a new person now. What I want to tell everyone, especially the men at the Mission, is this: Just find out who God is! When you find God and He finds you, He will make things right in your life. He sure did in mine!"

**"There are no troubles in my life right now because I've got God in my life. I feel His presence with me every day. "
Willie Campbell**



Youth Dir., David Boudolf and John Wesley youth group preparing breakfast at the Mission.

In Anticipation of and even brighter Future



We are always deeply indebted to the many compassionate individuals, Charleston area churches, civic organizations and businesses which have generously supported the Mission for these 105 years. The Board of Director's is keeping faith with the founder of the Mission, Obadiah Dugan, by providing help for the needy of our community and by sharing the message of the Gospel with those who seek it.



Good Cheer Fund gift card giveaway recipients waiting in line.



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Charleston, SC 29403
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We're on the Web!

www.stargospelmission.org



The Rev. Dr. David Williams giving a check to The Rev. William Christian.

Current Mission Needs

Men's clothing, pillows, twin size sheets and pillow cases, towels and washcloths, paper towels, toilet paper, napkins, meats and canned vegetables, cleaning supplies, toiletries.

Mission financial facts Special Thanks

As a transitional housing facility, each man staying at the Mission pays \$80.00 per week in rent, which includes breakfast and dinner each day, a bed, a locker, a bathroom and shower, laundry facility, lounge with cable TV, telephone, and worship services each Sunday. The additional weekly cost incurred by the Mission for one man to reside here is: \$104.00. Those additional resources come from the generous gifts of supportive individuals, churches, businesses and civic organizations throughout our community.

- ◆ John Wesley United Methodist Church Youth Group (monthly Sunday morning breakfast)
- ◆ St. Stephen's Episcopal Church (financial support and dinners four times a year) SGM is one of five outreach groups that are recipients of the St. Stephen's outreach program.
- ◆ Grace Episcopal Church Tea Room Outreach program
- ◆ John Wesley United Methodist Church
- ◆ First Scots Presbyterian Church
- ◆ St. Michael's Episcopal Church
- ◆ Second Presbyterian Church
- ◆ Bethel United Methodist Church
- ◆ St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
- ◆ The Seacoast Church
- ◆ Holy Communion Episcopal Church
- ◆ St. Johannes Lutheran Church
- ◆ The Exchange Club of Charleston
- ◆ The Saul Alexander Fund
- ◆ The Good Cheer Fund of The Post and Courier (annual grant to help feed the hungry and care for the needy throughout the greater Charleston metropolitan community)
- ◆ Piggly Wiggly of South Carolina
- ◆ Ashley Hall School (collecting over 500 Christmas gifts, toys and clothing for children distributed through The Star Gospel)