

STAR GOSPEL MISSION

The Newsletter of the Star Gospel Mission ♦ Charleston, South Carolina ♦ Fall 2019

SHINING BRIGHTLY SINCE 1904

Transforming hearts and lives through Jesus Christ



STAR GOSPEL MISSION
Providing Over a Century of Christian Service to Charleston

474 Meeting Street
Charleston, S.C. 29403

www.stargospelmission.org

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It Was a Miracle

By Pastor Christian

This year's lead article is based on an interview with a former resident of the Mission who wishes to remain anonymous. He is a 68 year old man named Ken. Ken was born and raised in Charleston. Along with his parents and four brothers and sisters, he attended Catholic schools growing up. He served as an altar boy attending Mass every Sunday with his family. His father was a contract glass manager and his mother was a housewife who also wrote a column in the Post and Courier. Ken attended USC with the intent of becoming an engineer. He joined the U.S. Army and then the National Guard where he served for 6 years. He worked with his father and became a glazier. Ken was married three times, has no children but raised two stepsons.

The following is Ken's amazing life story...

In the midst of your career, did you ever experience any serious crises, difficulties or setbacks?

Yes, when I was 23 I married for the first time and we moved to Miami. It was a time when drugs became very prominent, and I got caught up in the cocaine craze. That was my first experience with drugs. I was able to handle it but eventually it took its toll on me, in that I started doing it more and more, and it was a significant factor which contributed to my divorce.

Would you say that you were addicted to cocaine?

Well, let's just say that I was doing a lot more than I should have; I felt like I wanted to do it all the time. So it certainly was an addictive behavior.

Did your habitual use of cocaine convey into the next two marriages as well?

It did not because I stopped using. I stopped for over ten years.

So at some point or another you began to use again, is that correct?

In 1993 my second wife and I went through some bad times; she was a functional alcoholic. We were married over ten years before I even realized she had a serious problem. We went through a separation and then a very bad divorce and I became clinically depressed.

When did you marry your third wife?

That was in 1998.

Were drugs or alcohol involved in that marriage?

No, not at all, and I was married to her for five years.

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Newly renovated circa 1835 home
at 83 Nassau Street
Dedicated November 2019

A Word from the Executive Director



The Rev. William K. Christian
Executive Director

The Star Gospel Mission is now in its 116th year of ministry and service to homeless men throughout the Tri-County area. We are a transitional housing facility that offers both dormitory style living as well as individual studio apartments in two newly renovated homes on Nassau Street. Both our dormitory and the houses offer men the opportunity to have a fresh start, a new beginning and yet another God-given chance at putting their lives on the right track.

Here at the Mission we take in all sorts and conditions of men from all walks of life. Here they can begin to modify their actions, behavior, conduct, attitudes and speech. By the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, they can experience a significant transformation in their lives.

The most exciting news I would like to share with you this year is that the renovation of our circa 1835 home at 83 Nassau Street has finally been completely renovated!

This home has been under construction for the better part of two years (see photo at right), and was dedicated just a few days ago on November 19. The home and its four studio apartments are absolutely beautiful and will make several former guests of the Mission very proud to have a place they can now call their own. The Board is also engaged in the planning stages of an additional seven homes to be built on our campus in the future.

Our Board of Director's has gone through several transitions this year. Our Board Chairman, Dr. Tom Cook, who has served us very faithfully for the past four years has stepped down and a new Chairman has taken his place. David Ingle, well-known to many Charlestonians, has accepted this position and it's our hope that he will serve us faithfully for many years to come. David Garner, and Reid Patrick have become Emeritus Board members.

We've also added two new Board members, Ellen Cole and Greg Rollins (see page 7). Ellen is the daughter of former Board Chairman, Furman Cole. She is the first female member of the Board since its inception! Quite the milestone for the Mission and for her! She will eventually be assuming the position of Treasurer.

If you have not yet taken the opportunity to make your annual contribution (you can also make weekly or monthly contributions) it is my sincere hope that

you will do so prior to the end of the year. Please use the enclosed envelope or do so online. Since the Mission is solely "faith-based", we rely completely on donations from individuals, churches, civic organizations, foundations and grants. We are a 501c3 corporation and all contributions are tax deductible.

May God bless you richly for your faithful generosity. Please remember to keep the Mission and its men in your prayers!

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. William K. Christian, III



83 Nassau Street under construction



First Scots Annual Cleanup Day
March 2019

Volunteers from F3 - Fitness, Faith and Fellowship, as well as members of John Wesley United Methodist Church preparing and serving breakfast at the Mission on the second and fourth Sundays of each month.



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So, can you tell me about 2003 and beyond?

My baby sister got diagnosed with stage four terminal breast cancer. MY mother was diagnosed with terminal COPD. I was living in North Carolina at the time and I moved back to Charleston to take care of my mother. Since 1993 I'd been treated for depression. I relapsed and I started using cocaine seriously again. In my second marriage I had become very successful in the financial services industry. I retired from that in 1998. In 2006 I decided to go back into the food service business, which I had been involved in when I was in college. I was 60 then. I was in the restaurant business on Folly Beach and lived there for six years.

Were you using drugs at that time?

Yes, I was. Both cocaine and crack cocaine.

An expensive habit. How did you make enough money to maintain that?

I had a very good job in the restaurant industry.

So then, how did you happen to end up at the Star Gospel Mission?

In a nutshell, I was in a motor cycle accident in 2017 which prevented me from working for three weeks. I got behind in my rent and my landlord gave me an eviction notice. I got an attorney and we tried to negotiate with the landlord. We fought the eviction for four months and ultimately failed.

And when that failed?

I was evicted and had nowhere to go. I lived with some friends on Folly Beach. My pastor allowed me to stay in the parish hall for a little

while. The pastor at Folly Beach Baptist Church told me about the Star Gospel Mission, and I made that phone call. I came down here one afternoon, met with you, and at that point I was completely out of money and you referred me to Tri-County Family Ministries and they gave me what I needed to get in.

How long did you actually stay at the Mission?

30 days. I was very depressed during the entire time I was at the Mission because I wanted to work and my efforts to find employment were not going very well, so I left the Mission and became even more seriously depressed.

What happened with all your personal belongings that you'd left on Folly Beach?

You and Andre took me out to Folly Beach with the van and we got all my things and put everything into a storage unit I'd rented.

Where did you stay when you left the Mission?

I stayed in the storage unit for six days and that's when everything really went to hell! When they found out about it, they told me "you can't do that!" So I spent a couple nights with some friends. I was so depressed; I just started binging on cocaine. After five days I had determined that I just couldn't take it anymore, and that the only way for me to get out from under the drug abuse was to end my life. I started having suicidal thoughts. I got on my motorcycle on Sunday morning, the day before my birthday, and I rode downtown. I started thinking that what I would do would be to get my motorcycle

going as fast as I could and run into the first stationary object that I saw.

What prevented you from doing that because obviously you're still here?

It's giving me chills thinking about it Pastor. I was in total despair thinking I would never be able to overcome this problem. As I was riding downtown, I was crying and I didn't know what to do, my addiction came into play and said, "look, you've got a hundred dollars in your pocket, go buy some dope". I believe that's when God intervened!

**Thank you God
for knowing us
so well and loving
us still!**

Tell me more.

I believe that God was doing for me what I couldn't do for myself. The voice told me, something told me, you don't have to do this, go check yourself into the medical university. So I got on my motorcycle, parked it, locked it up, and went to the ER. Just as I was getting ready to go into the door, the addiction overwhelmed me again and said, "you've got money in your pocket, go and get high." I was torn as to what to do, so I went into the main lobby, I found a comfortable chair, and I fretted as to what I should do. I became so distraught that I began sobbing out loud. I cried and cried until my eyes were so full of tears that I couldn't even see. Then the miracle happened.

Can you describe the miracle?

I felt this tap on my shoulder, I didn't even look up, and I heard this voice saying "it looks like you need help, will you let me help you?" I said yes, and the next thing I know, somebody was handing me a Klenex and I felt another hand on my other shoulder and it was three young women from Guatemala. They told me that God loved me and that all I had to do was to reach out to Him and that things would be alright. They consoled me and convinced me that I needed to check myself in to the hospital. So I did and I was in the hospital for three weeks. From the very next day, I was eager to change my life.

I met some guys who were attending the AA and NA meetings and they told me that they were from an Oxford House. They told me that I would need \$450 to get in. I didn't know what to do. And here's where another miracle occurred. I told the Guatemalan ladies that I was in need of some financial assistance they said: "I think we can help you." A couple days later one of them told me that she had gone to her church and told them my story and they collected \$450 to get me into this house.

Quite the miracle indeed!

Someone I'd only talked to an hour! I immediately went to the Oxford House after being discharged from the hospital. Things started happening right away. I started looking for employment. In a few days I went to work for Crazy Dutchman Catering where I became a production chef. That was a year ago. I really love what I'm doing.

Has this job helped you get back on your feet financially?

Absolutely. I work a lot of hours, make good money and I save my money.

Any slips during this time?

None what so ever. I have 15 months of sobriety.

Where do you live now?

I live in West Ashley. My sobriety has afforded me everything I've ever dreamed of. I'm happier than I've ever been in my life. I bought a car. I have a great job. I met somebody who loves me and accepts me for what I am; we love each other tremendously and have a great life together.

“I was welcomed with open arms by everyone I was introduced to.”

Tell me, what influence did the SGM have upon the start of your transformation?

From the very first night I came here I was so distraught and when I walked through that door, I was welcomed with open arms by everyone I was introduced to. I felt overwhelmed with kindness and love. That changed my attitude about everything. I really believed that nobody gave a damn prior to coming here. But you did!

Several times in this interview you mentioned “a miracle, it was a miracle.” Do you believe that these miracles were from God?

It is absolutely God! The third of the 12 steps is that we turn our will and our life over to the care of God as we understand Him. And when I took that step when I was in the hospital, my life changed, and I rely on God for everything today. I pray as soon as I wake up in the morning. I pray throughout the day. God answers my prayers. Whenever I'm struggling with anything, I put it in His hands and He takes care of me. And I believe, people told me when I was using, that God had a plan for me, but I didn't believe them, but now I know that He did! Everything that's happening to me today is part of that plan. I love to talk to people about it!

So you're sharing the Good News of God's love with others in terms of how you experienced it yourself.

Absolutely! We're to help others as we have been helped and to carry that message to other people. And we can only keep what we have by giving it away.

How can God's love through this Mission assist others to experience the kind of transformation that you've experienced?

Here they have a place where they can regroup and gather the strength they need to take the step to better their life. It was a stepping stone for me; it was

a very humbling experience which is something I really needed. Once again, the care and the love that was shown to me here has stuck with me and given me the incentive to want to give back!

Postscript:

Ken's work with The Crazy Dutchman Catering Company allows him to give back to the Mission in a significant way. His manager allows him to donate excess food from catering events to the Mission. Ken is now delivering some wonderful food to the Mission on a weekly basis.

There's absolutely nothing we can do to make God love us any more than He already does, and absolutely nothing we can do to make Him love us any less!

Good Cheer Fund Food Gift Card Giveaway - November 2018



Volunteers at gift card giveaway



Line of recipients waiting to receive gift cards

Photo courtesy of Brad Nettles, Post and Courier



Paper products from St. Philips annual collection for the Mission.



Ashley Hall Juniors and Seniors collect new clothing for Mission guests at their Christmas assembly.

“I know not what the future holds, but well I know WHO holds the future.”
 German Theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer



St. Philips Church outreach committee tours Mission facility.



Local Police support for Food Card Giveaway event.



Volunteers serving Sunday breakfast at the Mission.



Ellen Cole

*New Member & Treasurer Elect
Mission's Board of Directors*

Ellen attended Queens University of Charlotte, graduating with a degree in Business Administration.

While she enjoyed Charlotte, her first love was her hometown, Charleston, South Carolina. She has been working for Baldwin & Associates, LLC since 2010, and as a licensed CPA since 2014, where she loves working with clients and solving the intricate puzzles that tax work involves. When she's not crunching numbers, she enjoys getting involved with the community, spending time with family, boating, and riding horses. Ellen's father, Furman Cole was Board Chairman for 20 years prior to his passing several years ago.

I'm quite pleased to say that Ellen is the first woman ever elected to serve on the Mission's Board of Directors and is our Treasurer elect.



Greg Rollins

*New Member
Mission's Board of Directors*

Greg was born and raised in Charleston, attended public schools on James Island, and graduated from the University of South Carolina with a degree in Finance and Insurance.

He is currently VP of Commercial Insurance for Taylor Agency, an independent insurance agency, and Past President of the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of Greater Charleston. Greg currently sit on the board of the SC Windstorm and Hail Underwriting Association and Southern Mutual Church Insurance Company.

He is a member of Harbor View Presbyterian Church and an Ordained Elder. Greg has been married to wife Karen for almost 36 years, and has two grown children, Blake and Laura.



Board of Directors - May 2019

Many thanks to those who provide regular support to STAR GOSPEL MISSION

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St. Philips Anglican Church
St. Michael's Anglican Church
John's Island Presbyterian Church
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Did you know? A Brief History of the Star Gospel Mission



Obadiah Dugan conducting a revival.
Circa 1920.

The Star Gospel Mission was established in 1904 in the old Star Vaudeville Theater. The theater was closed by the city fathers in 1902 because of the undesirable element associated with it. Following a dramatic conversion experience, Obadiah Dugan, a successful furniture dealer, determined to devote the rest of his life to serving people who needed spiritual, psychological and physical help. He founded the Mission after petitioning the mayor to let him use the theater as a shelter for homeless persons. On April 24, 1904, more than 500 people came to the Mission for its first worship service.

Dugan's heart went out to the poor, the homeless and disenfranchised men and boys of the City of Charleston. He invited them to sleep in the old theater because they had no other place to stay. After continuing his mission work among the homeless at the Star Theater for 16 years, Dugan acquired the abandoned Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church at 474 Meeting Street, which is where the Mission has been located ever since.

Following Obadiah's death in 1936, his son, The Rev. Ernest Dugan, a Methodist minister, continued operating the Mission. When Ernest retired in 1973, a third generation Dugan, Ernest, Jr., also a Methodist minister, became its director. Ernest Jr. retired in 1986, bringing the Dugan family's 86 years of leadership to a close. Under the direction of a Board of Director's and the leadership of J. Douglas Donehue, the work of the Mission continued until his death in 2006. In 1989, Doug was instrumental in assuring the Mission's survival and reconstruction in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo.

Upon Doug's death, The Rev. William Christian became the Executive Director. Under his leadership, the Mission has begun expanding their influence in the community with the development of additional transitional housing on the Mission's campus. Currently two houses have been renovated and seven more are in the developmental stages.