

# STAR GOSPEL MISSION

The Newsletter of the Star Gospel Mission ♦ Charleston, South Carolina ♦ Fall 2020

## 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

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### **It Was an Epiphany for Me**

By Pastor Christian

*Scott Best was born in Columbia, SC and grew up in Charleston. His father was a career Army man, serving in both Korea and Vietnam. His mother was a housewife and EMS dispatcher. Scott and his two brothers grew up in a Christian family attending church regularly when he was young, although in later years their church attendance became sporadic. Scott graduated from high school but never attended college because he worked hard and always had good paying jobs. Loving the outdoors, he has spent his life working in golf course maintenance, landscaping, and on construction crews; which is where this interview begins.*

### **Have you done outside labor all your life?**

Yes sir, I've always done outside work. Whether it's construction or golf course maintenance, I have to be outside. There's some kind of connection between me and the outdoors. I'm just not happy with a roof over my head all day long.

### **Did you ever marry?**

Yes sir, I married my high school sweetheart. We were together for almost 10 years and, life being what it is, things got rocky and she went one way and I went the other. We didn't speak to each other for a while but now we're the best of friends.

### **Do you have any children?**

Yes sir, my daughter is 33. She was actually down here this past weekend with her husband and my two little grandchildren.

### **What was it in your life that set you back to the extent that you ended up homeless and eventually arrived at the Star Gospel Mission?**

I can actually put my finger on what happened and why it all came about as it did. I was married at 18, got divorced at 28, and never really had a chance to be a young man. There I was, 28 years old and on my own; everything in life was available to me and I simply could not say NO to the wrong things

### **What were those wrong things Scott?**

The wrong things were excessive use of alcohol, having someone else swaying me to change my mind on things just to make them happy, just to keep them around. I wanted to please everyone.

*continued on page 4*



Scott Best

## A Word from the Executive Director



**The Rev. William K. Christian**  
*Executive Director*

The Star Gospel Mission is now in its 117th year of ministry and service to formerly homeless men throughout the Tri-County area. As a transitional housing facility we offer both dormitory style living as well as individual studio apartments in two newly renovated homes located directly behind the Mission on Nassau Street. Both the dormitory and houses offer men the opportunity to experience a new beginning and yet another God-given chance to put their lives on the right path.

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

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this year has dramatically changed the way the Mission performs its ministry. Almost all 501c3 corporations have been hit hard by this plague upon our society and the world. Here we've had to restrict our census, which normally is 22 in the dormitory, to less than half that in order to take the necessary precautions and observe social distancing so as not to transmit the virus. As a result of our due diligence in maintaining a pristine and highly sanitary environment, NO ONE, that's correct, NO ONE has contracted the virus, thanks be to God!

As a result of the decline in our census we've also experienced a rather significant loss of revenue (each man pays a fee of \$110 per week to stay here). Giving is also down across the board. Yet with the wise stewardship and astute fiscal responsibility along with some smart investing on the part of our Board, we've been able to keep our heads above water. Once our society begins to open up more fully once again I believe that our financial picture will improve greatly.

All of this is to say that this is a critical time for us as it is in so many other charitable organizations. Although you may be contributing to several different organizations, I would like to encourage you to consider keeping the Mission at the top of your list for mak-

ing a generous donation this year.

If you have not yet taken the opportunity to make your annual contribution (please know that you can also make weekly or monthly contributions) it is my sincere hope that you will do so very soon. For your convenience you may use the enclosed envelope or make a donation online. Since the Mission is 100% "faith-based", we rely solely on donations from individuals, churches, civic organizations, foundations and grants. We are a 501c3 corporation and also designated as a church in the State of SC, thus making all contributions tax deductible.

I would also ask that you please remember to keep the Mission and its men in your prayers. May God bless you richly for your faithful generosity in support of the Star Gospel Mission!

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. William K. Christian, III

***"For all that has been,  
thanks; for all that  
will be, yes!"***

Dag Hammerskjold



**John Wesley youth group landscaping and cleanup of Mission property on a very hot July day.**



### A variety of groups: F-3, John Wesley UMC, First Scotts Presbyterian and others providing food and preparing meals for the Mission.





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### **So you compromised your values?**

Compromised my values for somebody else's. I put myself and my values lower than somebody else's wants. I had a great job and suddenly I came across someone who I was infatuated with. Her drug of choice was something that really should never even exist. It's one of those drugs that, when it gets you, it grabs hold of you and you see nothing but it and it only. That drug was crystal meth., Methamphetamine. I never used it before I met her. I always said, I'll never stick a needle in my arm! But within a few weeks of being with her I was raring to go just to get that high.

### **Did you become addicted to it?**

Addicted is too small of a word for it. I was using for three and a half years. That's not very long because it doesn't take long for you to lose everything you've got. I lost my job, I lost my apartment, all of my possessions, my tools, my clothes, my truck. At one point we got arrested. We were living in the truck; they impounded the truck and we could not get it out. We lost everything we had. We basically had nothing but the clothes on our backs.

### **So what happened after that?**

#### **Did you stay with her or did you part company?**

We tried to stay together but it just made sense for us to go our own separate ways. She needed to get into a house and at least have a roof over her head. I was ok just being outside. I thought I could rough it for a while but it fooled me and I realized that I couldn't get out of it fast enough.

#### **Did you ever receive any kind of treatment?**

Yes sir I did. I went to the Oliver Gospel Mission up in Columbia for treatment. I went there for selfish reasons so I could get off of drugs, so I could get some clothes, so I could get shelter, but I got so much more than just that. It was an epiphany for me. It made me realize that life is not all about me; that if I'm going to expect better in this world I have to do better in this world.

### **What was the motivation, the impetus for you doing better?**

The impetus for me, the motivational thing that shined for me was, here I am, coming here for me, getting the help that I need, but in order for me to get that help, I had to give it right back to the homeless community there in Columbia. I decided that I wasn't going to get anything for free, and that the more I give the more will be given to me.

***“God threw a ladder down into that hole for me and that ladder’s name was Jesus. I started at the bottom of that ladder and I climbed that ladder straight up to the light of God.”***

### **You used the word epiphany. That’s a very spiritual word. Was there a God component, a spiritual component to this transformation in your life?**

Yes there was! It was a very large God component, very spiritual! During my life I've run the gamut of every religion from Christianity to paganism, witchcraft, Buddhism, agnosticism, atheism and everything you can imagine. I gave anything a try, because I did not understand God. When I got to the Oliver Gospel Mission I got a clarification of God. I saw God for what God really is, and what God really can do, and I embraced it and He wrapped His arms around me and said: “Welcome home son!” I liken my stay at the Oliver Mission to being in a hole, being in a pit. I dug myself a very deep hole; dark, dirty, muddy, rats all over the place, and everything I did just made that hole deeper. While I was there I started to form a relationship with God and God threw a ladder down into that hole for me and that ladder's name was Jesus. I started at the bottom of that ladder and I climbed that ladder straight up to the light of God.

### **Wow! What a profound experience! Where did you go after leaving the Oliver Mission?**

I returned to Charleston. I maintained contact with a girl I had dated prior to the really bad drug use I was involved in. We had stayed in contact and I moved in with her. It didn't work out quite as well as I'd hoped it would. We split up and I was on the streets. When I got tired of living in the woods, behind a dumpster, stealing food and not having anything, I said to myself, there's a God out there who wants better for me and I know of a place downtown where they can help people like me.

### **What was that place?**

That place was the Star Gospel Mission. There's absolutely no denying it, this place is a huge beacon of light, a beacon of hope for people that are in need of God's help! I told my cousin, I'm hoping that the Star Gospel Mission in Charleston does for my homeless problem what the Oliver Mission in Columbia did for my addiction problem.

### **Has it done that for you?**

It has done that in spades! It's exceeded my expectations and it just keeps getting better and better every day. I stayed in the dormitory for nine months. I gave myself a year and after a year I was going to evaluate the situation and see what needed to be done. After nine months I was in such a good position in life, and my life had changed so radically, that I was able to take the next step forward much earlier than I thought.

### **So when one of the Missions studio apartments was offered to you, you jumped at it?**

I thought about it carefully, prayed about it, took everything into consideration and there were no red flags, nothing but green flags, and God said: “son, get on that horse and ride.” It's the best thing that's ever happened to me! I love being able to walk out that door in the morning, turn the key and lock it. Unlock it and walk in after a hard day's work. I've got my own kitchen, my own bathroom, my own bed, I don't have to listen to 21 other guys snoring or talking or fighting

or just moving around. It's my place and it's lovely!

**While you were at the Mission did you grow spiritually?**

Yes I have. It's made me look at other people's actions and not judge them or say; well I don't like him because he's this way or that way. If he needs to change, God's going to change that. It's not my job to change it, it's my job to simply accept it and move on and not let it knock me off course.

**Every Sunday, you're the first one to arrive in church and I always see you sitting there reading your Bible. What does God's word mean to you?**

God's word is magic to me. It's the past, the present and the future all wrapped up in one. There is no situation in life that is not covered in His word. He covers everything you could think of, even things you wouldn't even imagine; He's

got something to say about it. I heard a while back that BIBLE is an acronym for: Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. You've got to believe in that. In my opinion, if you don't realize that this is God telling you how to live your life and how to gain God's kingdom forever, then you just don't have the capacity to realize much of anything. To me it's as plain as day.

**So you're allowing God to be "a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path"?**

Yes sir, most definitely. I prefer to look at it this way. I drove my own bus for a long time and I wrecked it and threw it in the ditch and got in all kinds of trouble. Now I'm still on the bus but I'm letting God drive it. I say, God, just take me where you want me to go.

**Is there anything else you'd like to say, any final thoughts you'd like to convey?**

The Mission is everything right here in one place, all the amenities one needs. In the long term, when you open up your heart to God and to the Holy Spirit, you will find that He flows into you daily in unexpected ways, more than you could ever imagine. Whenever you stop and say I'm not going to worry about myself, I'm not going to put myself first, I'm going to put God first, God says: "thank you child, here, let's see what I have for you." His cup is way larger than my cup and He fills my cup every single day!

***"A man's worst moment is not the sum of his life. Always remember, never look back, keep your eyes on the future and not on the past!"***

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

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## Did you know? A Brief History of the Star Gospel Mission



**Mission personnel providing religious tracts and assistance to homeless men, women and children. Circa 1914**

The Star Gospel Mission has been serving the homeless and disenfranchised in the City of Charleston for 117 years. Our beginnings date back to 1904 when Obadiah Dugan purchased the old abandoned Star Vaudeville Theater on King Street. The theater had been closed in 1902 by the Mayor and City Council because of the undesirable element associated with it. Following a dramatic conversion experience while attending a Billy Sunday tent revival, Obadiah Dugan, a successful furniture dealer, made the decision to devote his entire life to evangelizing and serving underprivileged men, women and children who were experiencing physical, psychological and spiritual needs.

When its doors opened 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 needy and homeless throughout the City of Charleston. He invited them to sleep in the old theater because they had no other place to stay. After continuing his Christ-centered work among the homeless at the Mission for 16 years, Dugan then acquired the Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church at 474 Meeting Street. When hurricane Hugo destroyed that facility in 1989, a new building was built at the same location and dedicated in 1992.

Following Obadiah's death in 1936, his son, The Rev. Ernest Dugan, a Methodist minister, continued to operate the Mission. When Ernest retired in 1973, a third generation Dugan, The Rev. Ernest Dugan, 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 fifth Executive Director. Under his leadership, the Mission has engaged in a new chapter by expanding their influence in the community with the acquisition and development of additional houses to be used to provide independent living for men in transition. In the future seven additional homes will be built on the Mission's campus to accommodate both men and women who are in transition.