



Urban Christian Outreach (Ottawa)

P.O. Box 77033 RPO Ottawa South

Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5N2

613-233-6633 jill@uco-ottawa.ca www.uco-ottawa.ca

Charitable Registration #13776 1938 RR0001

Update #77

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, during this beautiful season of Thanksgiving!

In our March update, I shared a story with you concerning one of our homeless friends, "J.J." (not his real name) who struggles daily to survive. J.J. suffers from mental illness. He has asked me if UCO would be willing to tell his story. The following is in his own words, as dictated to me from his hospital bed:

"Hi, my name is J.J. I was born [many years ago] out in the country. As a kid, things happened to me by different people that I don't talk about, which I will leave it at that, the way it is. I will say this, though, that I was sexually, physically and verbally assaulted. Yes, sexually, physically, and verbally abused as a kid. And that went on for a number of years, starting when I was just 4 years old. After the first time, he got me drunk and continued to abuse me.

I should have spoken up and told someone. When I started school, I became a loner. I would hide in the cloak room, or sneak into the gym. In kindergarden, I would go into the yard by myself and pick daisies, and say, 'She loves me, she loves me not; she loves me, she loves me not', just to use up the time.

When I was in Grade 4, a kid told the teacher that I stole 2 books from the school, and the teacher hit me 4 times in the back of my shoulder and accused me of stealing. All the kids called me a thief but I never did it. I found them [the books] in the garbage and they were stamped by a Christian school down the street. Then, as a teenager, I started drinking and stealing to cover up what I had experienced. And then, I started getting into the crowds, and drinking and partying, and stealing and doing everything that all my other friends were doing, 'cause we were all in the same boat, like the same shoes. We were all doing the same things together.

“We didn't talk about our past or nothing, but you know, we all just had the same feelings about things and about life and so on. I have been in and out of jail my whole life, and I'm not proud to say that at all. You know that's all I ever talk about, is the times that I have had when I was in jail. I met a lot of good friends in there and a lot of good people who treat me like family. After you spend so many years in there, you become like family, you know?”

'Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.'
Romans 5:1-5



“I've been out now for [awhile] and it is good to be free, but I still talk about the jail at times, because I remember a lot of good times, and good friends. But I always teach the young people not to think of ex-cons in a negative way, to be positive, because if they go down the path that I have in life, they will have nothing to show for it and that's no fun. They could have a wife, kids, and be married by now, if they hadn't acted up a long time ago. I think of my friends who never made it, who have passed away now, who are dead or somewhere out in the woods because the cops won't leave them alone and I tell you, I have a demonstration [that I want] to do someday in a high school.

“When I first went to jail, and when I came out, I came out with a bigger chip on my shoulder than what I did when I first went it. And eventually, I became institutionalized, and that's why I've been in and out of jail since the age of 16 and I am [much older] now. It started with a B&E [breaking and entering] and for stealing chocolate bars and pop. I got one year of probation. I even got into more trouble later for pulling a knife during a robbery. I got a 7 month sentence. I also stole a truck and a bike. I got 5 years and 7 months for a more serious crime, and then was convicted of 2 counts of attempted murder when I was 19 years old. It took me 5 years to forgive myself.

"I didn't want to hurt anyone. My pain and life experience got the best of me. I couldn't control my anger. I was in a lot of pain and hurting.

"I've only been on the streets for 10 months at one time, which I'm not proud to say that at all. And what I've been teaching young people nowadays is 'be who you are and not who you are not' and look out for yourself only and not no one else and if anyone offers you more than marijuana, then they are out to put a knife in your back, cut your throat and send you down a road that is not a good path at all.

"They will just bring you down a road of hell that will cost you very much grief and unhappiness. And so what I say to young people is 'do the best you can, get an education, take it one day at a time, and if you have problems, talk to anyone, even if it is a total stranger at school, whoever. As long as you get help for whatever problems that you have, and for the time being, I will let this be as it is for now. If anyone has any questions so far, about my life or anything, you can call me and talk to me through my friend, Jill, and I'll answer anything I can. If you are having problems at home right now with a family member or someone who is not a family member, or if someone is doing something wrong to you, go get help right now. Go to the cops even and tell them what is going on.

"If you are being sexually, or physically, or verbally abused, don't take it. Put a stop to it right now and don't just think that you are responsible for it, because you're not, and have them charged, whatever; they deserve it. That's about all I can say for now except that I now have freedom at last because of Jesus, and no booze and no drugs. Have a good life and take care. I hope for all the best for you. Goodbye."

My eyes filled with tears as J.J. so generously shared his story with me. I thought about him as a little child, so vulnerable and alone, and in so much pain – pain that he has carried throughout his life. Urban Christian Outreach is J.J.'s only visitor in the hospital. We listen to him, pray with him, encourage him, and try to be the hands and feet of Jesus, as we are able.

We thank God for J.J., and for his courage to share his story. He is our dear friend in Christ. Please pray for J.J., for our Lord's healing, and for the Holy Spirit to fill him with joy and peace. It always makes sense, doesn't it? When we consider those who fight back, those who are downtrodden and marginalized, there is always a reason for their situation. May God give us renewed compassion and understanding for those who struggle to survive. May He remove any judgement from our hearts. May he give us discernment and love for our fellow men and women, even before we come to know their story. Praise be to God!

Will you please prayerfully consider helping us to achieve our goal to be faithful to our calling, which is to be a church on the streets for those who may otherwise not hear of the saving Grace of Jesus? We are praying and asking God to bless you in abundance - that out of His abundance you may be able to help us to continue to serve the poor, the homeless and the marginalized of Ottawa.

Thank you most heartedly, dear friends, for your support and for your prayers. What we do together is life-saving. To God be all the Glory!

Together With You on the Journey,
Jill

***'For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.'* John 1:16**

UCO's Praise Report

We are giving thanks and praise for the gift of Jesus and for the ministry work of UCO. In anticipation of **UCO's 25th Anniversary** next year, we have been working to produce a brochure which will outline UCO's vision and needs. We are also thanking God for those who have responded to our financial needs. Please continue to pray for our ministry work, and especially for the poor.

UCO's Urgent Needs:

1. **Finances:** we continue to humbly appeal to you to consider our needs at this time. Our needs are urgent.
2. We are in urgent need of a **Treasurer** as our new Treasurer was not able to fulfill the role.
3. **25th Anniversary Planning Committee** Members needed to meet once a month from October 2017 until April 2018.
4. We are in need of a **scanner** for our classroom at the Royal Ottawa. Our scanner has broken down and there is no money in the budget for a new one. We use the scanner to scan and then print educational materials for our students, from publishers who have generously given us copyright privileges.
4. **Monthly Supporters:** We still need your help in order to meet our monthly ministry expenses. Donations can be made via monthly post-dated cheques, or through our P.A.R. program (Pre-Authorized Remittance through FaithLife Financial) or online by credit card through Canada Helps, which can be accessed on our website at www.uco-ottawa.ca
4. **Supporting Churches:** Would your church consider supporting us, and/or inviting us to speak? Please contact Jill at 613-233-6633 or jill@uco-ottawa.ca Thank you.
5. **Bus tickets**, and Tim Horton, etc. gift cards for the poor.

UCO's Quarterly Update:

2017 Year to Sept/17:

Actual Income: \$ 25,261.88

Actual Expenses: \$ 31,178.62

Deficit \$ 5,916.74