

Urban Christian Outreach (Ottawa)

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Update #50

A Financial Appeal

March 2009

Matthew 25:40

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' (NIV)

As I write to you during this most holy season of Lent, I am grateful for the privilege of serving our Lord Jesus Christ on the sidewalks of downtown Ottawa. With your prayers and financial support, Urban Christian Outreach has been serving the poor in Ottawa for over sixteen years. You have been very generous, and our offerings have increased in the past year. However, due to staff changes and to the loss of a large anticipated donation, we face the possibility of having to suspend our operations. Therefore, the UCO Board is making a special appeal for financial support at this time.

Our client base continues to grow during these difficult financial times, and we anticipate that more and more people will need our help in the weeks and months to come as many lose their jobs and their homes. Our total expenses are just under \$4000 per month. Currently, we are operating month to month. As we celebrate 16 years of serving the poor on the sidewalks of downtown Ottawa, it is our goal to raise 16 months of operating expenses, in order that we might have a solid base on which to continue to build. Certainly, our Lord is our foundation, and so as he provides, please prayerfully consider supporting us for

one week or one month of ministry expenses, or joining with others at your church or small group to support us. We would be delighted to speak to your congregation or small group about the ministry work of UCO, and would welcome referral letters.

Scripture tells us that we will always have the poor among us, and we are commanded to care for them.

Deut 15:10-11

10 Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land. (NIV)

I would like to share a story with you, one that is common among those whom we serve. 'Robert' (not his real name) suffers from alcoholism and other addictions. These addictions led to the breakdown of his closest relationships, and he now feels lonely and isolated. This didn't happen overnight, rather slowly over a number of years. With my ongoing help, it is my hope that Robert will begin to rebuild a support system and establish new relationships and friendships. Robert has begun to put his trust in Jesus, as his prayers are slowly being answered, one by one.

Please pray that Robert will enter an addictions treatment program, gain the necessary understanding about his disease, and receive the counseling that he needs. I am in the process of making these arrangements for him. Please pray that God will open doors for Robert, heal him and deliver him from his addictions.

Many of those whom we serve suffer as Robert suffers. Paul is without permanent housing; Mary suffers from an addiction to prescription drugs; Sam would like to work, but struggles with a personality disorder that causes him to clash with co-workers; Julie suffers from mental illness and is very uncertain about tomorrow, often stating that she just doesn't know what to do. She needs our ongoing reassurance that Jesus loves her, and that he is in control. Recently, she gave me a gift of used clothing; she thought that I could use a new pair of slacks. Tears filled my eyes, and God gave me the grace to receive them. We have much to learn from the poor. Scott has begun to attend church services in his area; however his lack of literacy skills prevent him from following the liturgy. I am teaching him how to navigate the church bulletins, and how to locate hymns in the hymnal. Scott has much to teach us about how we worship, lead liturgy, and welcome the poor into our church families.

Many of our clients have experienced physical or sexual abuse in their lives. Many deal with ongoing verbal and emotional abuse from others. Some are bullied and labeled with hurtful words. When we hear the personal stories of our brothers and sisters whom we serve, it is easy to understand how they arrived at this difficult place in their lives. **It always makes sense.** When I am serving a client I am reminded that it is Christ whom I am serving. There are no short term solutions. We need to continue to minister in the coffee shops, drop-in centres, parks and on the sidewalks of downtown Ottawa now more than ever and share the hope that we have through a relationship in Christ Jesus. As the current economic crisis continues to grow, so do the number of individuals who need our help.

We need to be advocates for the poor, to speak out and lobby for their rights and to work to find solutions. A UCO supporter has generously sponsored me to attend a three-day conference presented by StreetLevel: The National Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness, to be held in Ottawa later this month. This conference, titled *A Legacy of Justice*, will bring people together from across the country to brainstorm solutions to poverty.

There is much work left to be done. There is much pain and suffering on the sidewalks and in the shelters, drop-in centres and coffee shops where our clients spend their days, and it is my hope and prayer that you will enable me to continue to serve Christ here, to bring the good news of Jesus Christ, to offer hope in the midst of suffering. I thank God for you and for faithful partnership in the ministry work of Urban Christian Outreach thus far and I would truly appreciate your help at this time. May God bless us all with a holy Lent and joyful Easter.

Acts 20:24

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.
(NIV)

In Christ's Service,
Jill Wilson
Executive Director

Message from the President. When I began my term as President last June, I did not imagine that we would face the possibility of suspending our operations in 2009. We do not believe that it is God's will for UCO to cease its work at this time. Therefore, we are relying on him to help us meet our financial targets. I will be using my tax return to support UCO this month, and I respectfully request that you consider using a portion of your return for the same purpose. Most importantly, please pray for us.

Sincerely,
Janice Fiamengo.