

MISSION GATE UPDATE

Turning Lives From Crime to Christ Since 1985

APRIL 2026



Rick Mathes, Founder, Prison Minister



Rick and Trish Mathes

Faith, for His purposes, is beyond our grasp. What I mean is this: when we say, "I can't" He says, "I can" and if we act on that faith in Him, it is called belief and we have stepped out of the boat. It's all about Him while we grip his hand and walk with Him.

The most obvious inquirer is the questioning unbeliever. What a blessing to have someone approach you and ask, "What must I do to be saved?" Now they may not use those exact words, but the message is the same. We all want to be loved, and we aren't to our satisfaction until we believe and are loved by Jesus. Our love for each other is self-gratifying while our love for each other through Christ is self-denying. The less we have of I, me, and my the more we have of He, Him, and His.

"Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

John 11:40

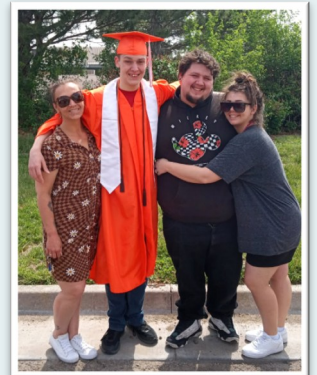
Sara Rollison- Only God can make this happen

As a woman who has always felt that I was strong in my faith, well educated, and empowered in the world God had built for me, I had no idea how the enemy would attack and take me out for a time. My three children were growing up on me and becoming more independent, leaving me feeling like I wasn't needed anymore. Then my dad, my rock, passed away in 2018 from heart complications leaving me with a feeling that I just wanted to go away. I didn't make it home from his funeral that night and I continued numbing the hurt and quieting the thoughts, but darker ones grew causing paranoia. I felt like everyone was out to get me and I had truly lost my sense of direction; my children knew something had changed. Then I got news that shook me all over again. My oldest son, 24, had developed Hodgkin's lymphoma, so I ran for the bottle to cope with what I couldn't understand.



Before

Soon came the day, Praise Jesus, our Lord, I felt the full shame and guilt crush me, and He broke me free of my self-sabotage. I prayed for God to draw me to Him; He called for me, I said "Here I am!" And through one trial after another, He revealed a path forward, which led me to Mission Gate. He has given me the tools to rebuild the bonds that held me and my family together and to find my true self, a daughter of the Most-High King. The Lord has blessed me with another chance to be the best mother and grandmother He placed me here to be. After chemo, radiation, and countless prayers, my son's last scan came back normal, Praise God.



Sara and children

Eric Vandiver, Fort Good Shepherd Program Coordinator



"This is the best day of my life, Dad!"

That is what my son Kandon said when he found out that he was staying with me at Fort Good Shepherd for spring break. We have been praying before we eat and reading the Bible every morning. He has been able to see what it is like to have a servant's heart and what it means to serve the Lord. My wife, daughter, and son are excited for the opportunity to move into our own place here in Cuba, where I can continue to work at Mission Gate and we can all be under one household again, healthy and growing in our Lord.

"But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers." - 1 Timothy 5:8

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Ross Washburn– “18 years ago and still remembering...”

Going back to Mission Gate’s Fort Good Shepherd, after graduating over 18 years ago, was an emotionally overwhelming experience. Rick is still the same - one of the strongest God-fearing men I have ever met that won’t heed to anyone’s excuses. Trish is still doing everything she can to help people see the vision for their future with God in it, and Larry Walker is still doing what Larry does best - being an inspiration. It is amazing to see the new leaders rising up in the ministry. Not to mention all the horses, dogs, and the place itself; it was beautiful.

When I first showed up to Mission Gate’s Fort Good Shepherd 18 years ago, I was broken. I had no idea how to live life, no license, nothing to my name besides the clothes on my back and a Bible in my hand. All I knew is I was done with my old way of living and wanted a different outcome for my life. I gave my life over to the Lord and firmly believe His way is better than mine; I stayed for 18 months, learning and growing mentally and in faith.

I was so grateful for the opportunity to visit last month and witness God at work in so many people’s lives. It changed my life! I have been married to my beautiful wife going on 10 years; I have 2 daughters, ages 6 and 8. I own a construction business in the St. Louis area with nearly 40 employees. None of this would have been possible without my start at Mission Gate and with my foundation in Christ.

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” Proverbs 12:15

Shawnya Blankenship– Jane presents hope at our women’s homes

Jane Wiese blessed the ladies at Promises of Hope and Hannah’s Ranch, centering her powerful message around “hope.” Using God’s Word to confirm that when our Lord is involved in any situation we face, He will show up and show out. Much like the widow in 2 Kings, many of our



Promises of Hope

ladies face immediate trials that come to them when trying to get their life back in order. Having to catch up on past debts, child support, court fines, and probation and parole fees can seem daunting and like it isn’t possible. But letting them see what our Lord does with little gives them the hope to press forward. Soon, before they know it, He has helped them pay off

those debts and have abundantly more when they continue to stay steadfast in what He calls them to do.

“I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you !” 2 Kings 20:5



Hannah’s Ranch

Meet Michael, our new Volunteer Coordinator

Mission Gate would like to introduce our new Volunteer Coordinator Michael Oelze. Here is what Michael says:

“I am so grateful to be working with a ministry that has helped change my life. I have been associated with Mission Gate for over ten years, am a graduate, have been a house leader, and helped lead classes at Fort Good Shepherd for the last two years. Mission Gate is a major reason for the man I am today and the growth that I’ve had with my personal relationship with the Lord. For me to be able to give back and work with our volunteers is a blessing. Mission Gate couldn’t go on without the love and support from our volunteers, local churches, and community. I look forward to working side by side with you to further this ministry and to continue to turn lives from crime to Christ.”



Some of you have heard from Mickey Sandford, but he has accepted a new employment opportunity. We wish Mickey the best and we are glad he wants to now volunteer with Mission Gate.

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” 1 Thess. 5:11