

## “Where two or three are gathered...”

*“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* These words spoken by Jesus in Matthew 18:20 became very real when Mark Mendenhall came to the Gospel Center Rescue Mission Recuperative Care Center this past year.

Raised by his mother and father in Stockton, Mark recalls having a wonderful childhood. He grew up with his parents, a brother, and a sister. He was athletic and often dreamed of one day being a football player. The neighbor kids often took Mark, his brother and sister to the Christian Life Center for Sunday School and Church. They enjoyed their friends and involvement in the church youth programs, attending swim parties and other outings such as trips to the bowling alley. He was close to his family, especially his mom. Overall, he had a good life.

When Mark was thirty, his mother had a massive stroke and died at the age of fifty. Depression set in, and Mark’s life took a wrong turn – a turn that would take him on a 20-year homeless journey. He would find work as a handyman and tried to keep busy, but the depression, and the sudden decline of his hearing began to take its toll. From all indications, Mark was never a drug addict or alcoholic, but his mental health and deep depression stopped him from taking care of himself. Because he couldn’t hear what doctors would tell him, he stopped seeking out medical advice, and slowly his life become unmanageable.





## The Devastating Results of Misguided Compassion

**M**any free, homeless regeneration programs like ours have empty beds. As I was preparing to address this issue, I came across this article, written by John Ashmen, CEO of Citygate Network. His organization has more than 300 members made up of North American Rescue Missions which also includes Gospel Center. For those fortunate to attend our 2018 Gala, John was our Keynote Speaker. His comments address homelessness on a National, West Coast and San Joaquin County perspective.

*Faith Radio Network talk show host Carmen LaBerge recently invited me to be a guest on her program, Mornings with Carmen. She read a story about a woman named Laurie Steves who set off from Seattle to find her daughter Jessica in San Francisco and try to save her from dying of a drug overdose on the streets of the Tenderloin District. Carmen wanted me to talk about Fentanyl, now the number-one killer of Americans between the ages of 18 and 25. She asked me to explain to her listeners in ten states the relationship between drugs and homelessness, and why—after politicians have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the problem—it has only gotten worse.*

*I explained that the lives of far too many people are literally being destroyed by policymakers with something I call “misguided compassion.” Not wanting to appear calloused regarding those who have fallen through society’s safety nets, many cities—particularly on the West Coast—have removed any ordinance that gives the appearance that homeless people are being punished, even if many do have a carefree and reckless lifestyle. After all, a lot of homeless people have some form of mental illness. But policymakers have gone overboard. They essentially are telling them that*

*because you are in a desperate place, we will give you extra rights (e.g., allow to congregate/camp anywhere and give apartments with minimal accountability), over and above what housed and working people have, and we’ll not punish you for breaking some of our laws (e.g., petty theft, resisting arrest, selling/using hard drugs, solicitation for sex, public urination/defecation). What’s been the upshot? We have an exacerbated problem that is killing people and destroying the landscape of our cities.*



*Jessica, the girl from the story, living in San Francisco, puts it in plain English: “The city is way too easy for people with nothing to get by. That’s why I’m still here nine years later. You get by with doing drugs and suffer no consequences. I like it here.”*

*Society must get back to making street life uncomfortable for those who choose to be homeless and want to live in a way that threatens the wellbeing and livelihoods of those who are housed, employed, and following social norms. We must elect politicians who will stand against the outcries of the unenlightened and show that this misguided compassion is actually harming homeless people, not helping them. We also must consider institutional care for those with severe mental illness who are dying on our streets every day—not in the way depicted in One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, but with watchful care that includes regular balanced meals, medicine, and other treatment.*

As we continue to pray for God to lead the homeless to GCRM for safe shelter, regeneration and a relationship with Jesus Christ, we pray that we find solutions that encourage them to seek help, while not enabling them to be comfortable on the streets.

### Our Mission

The Gospel Center Rescue Mission is a ministry to the people of San Joaquin County where the homeless and addicted in our community are presented the opportunity for spiritual, physical and emotional restoration through the love of Jesus Christ.

### Donation Request

#### Spiral Hams for Easter

We thank you for any donations.  
For donation drop-off, call (209) 320-2310.

Along with his dog Bubba, they lived in his car in a field behind Collins Electrical, located off Arch Road and Highway 99 in Stockton. Scott Smith, an employee of Collins Electrical, grew concerned and reached out to owner Gene Gini and spoke to him about the man in the field. Scott, Gene and others at the company befriended Mark, keeping an eye on him, and bringing food for both he and Bubba.

Several months ago, Mark was found un-responsive in the field and was transported to San Joaquin General Hospital. There, at age 51, Mark woke up in the hospital, and unfortunately, he found that the doctors had amputated his infected foot. The staff at Collins Electrical grew concerned that there was no place for Mark to go once he healed. As his release date came closer, Gene tenaciously kept in touch with the hospital to make sure Mark had a safe and secure place to recuperate. After three full days of trying to get answers, navigating the options, and making persistent phone calls to shelters that had the services Mark needed, Gene finally connected with Sandra, Director of Recuperative Care at the Gospel Center Rescue Mission. While Mark was still in the hospital, Sandra and Gene kept in constant contact, and began working on a plan together.

When Mark was discharged from the hospital, thanks to Gene and Sandra, everything was in place for a smooth transition to Recuperative Care at The Mission. Immediately upon his arrival the staff realized that Mark's lack of self-care was tied to his inability to hear – and they began working on positive ways to communicate with him. One of the reasons he didn't go to the doctor was that he couldn't hear what they were telling him which left him with no direction. Staff began not only *scheduling* his doctor's appointments, but they also began *attending* them. This included eye and hearing appointments, as well as getting fitted for a prosthetic leg. As he continued to get healthier, the goal and priority was to get Mark connected and comfortable with all the social service resources that are available to him.

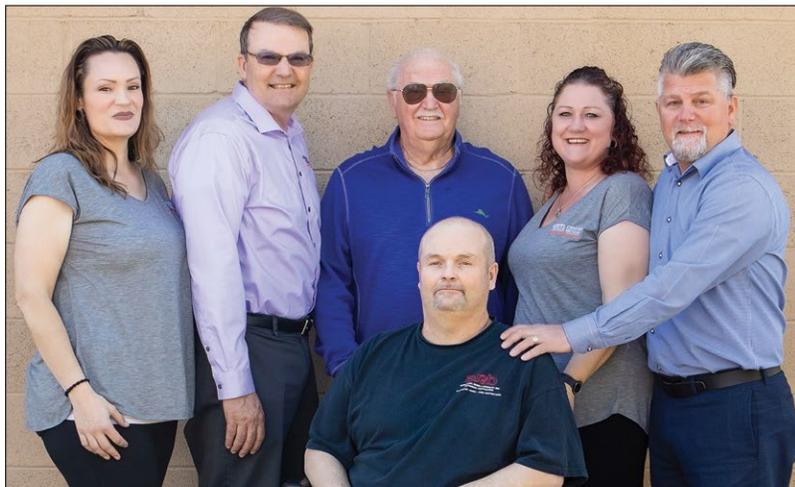
The words of Jesus continue to be true as others began to come together to find solutions for Mark. Throughout this past year – from the time in the field, to the hospital

and Recuperative Care, the Gini family and the Collins Electrical employees – have kept in touch with Mark and the staff at The Mission. On one visit, Brian Gini brought the sad news that Mark's dog Bubba had passed away and the belongings in his car had been ransacked by other homeless people. As Mark's story continued to develop – so many could see that God had and continues to have his hand on Mark. God's love has also filled the hearts of all who have rallied around Mark.



As a patient, and new amputee, Mark is thankful to the Gini family, their staff, and the staff at The Mission. Following his hospital stay, Mark knew he wouldn't be able to live out in that field and realizes how fortunate he is to have people around him that care about his life.

"Together, the people at Collins Electrical, and the Mission staff have helped me in so many ways," said Mark. "Because they worked together, I have a safe and warm place to heal. The Mission has provided me with three meals a day. As an amputee, I have a lot of medical appointments - and they transport me to and from each one. The staff cares so much about everyone." Mark hopes that someday that scientists will invent – and he could be the recipient of - a new bionic foot. When he is healthy enough to leave The Mission, he hopes he will be able to move into a place of his own, have the resources to help him journey through life, and not be homeless on the streets.



Mark Mendenhall. Back Row: Viola Dinkins, Wayne Richardson, Gene Gini, Sandra Maple-Deaver and Brian Gini.

Mark is now a believer in Jesus – and knows that because of Jesus, and the staff at the Mission, and his friends at Collins Electrical, he may have never been found in the field. We continue to embrace the words of Jesus, "Where two or three are gathered, there am I in the midst of them."

# GOSPEL CENTER RESCUE MISSION

*restoring lives since 1940*

445 S. San Joaquin Street  
Stockton, CA 95203  
(209) 320-2310  
gcrms.org

*He is risen! He is risen indeed!*



*A new life in Christ. First Baptist Church of Stockton Pastor Derek Metro, and our own Reverend Wayne Richardson baptized twelve of the GCRM New Life Students on Sunday, February 6th at First Baptist Church of Stockton.*



*Our Mission Kids were blessed with Valentine gifts and balloons from the wife of a Simile Construction employee. Simile Construction is the contractor for the renovation of the New Hope Family Shelter.*



*Held at The Mission, fun times (and really good cake) were enjoyed by staff and students at a surprise birthday party for Sharon Benninger, GCRM Board Member and volunteer extraordinaire!*

## Easter Sunrise Service

(open to the public)



**Easter Sunday**  
**April 17, 2022 at 6:00am**  
**Brown Building Courtyard**

### Message

Mark Maffucci, Senior Pastor  
Quail Lakes Baptist Church

### Worship Music

Lincoln Presbyterian Church

### Prayer

Under the Cross on Sonora Street  
Jon Hathorn, Senior Pastor  
Lincoln Presbyterian Church

**Hosted Breakfast**  
GCRM Dining Room