

# NEWS

APRIL 2024

## → MINISTRY UPDATE ←

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# UPDATE



Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! There is power in no other name in God's kingdom. So glory and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. His power

and love is beyond our comprehension, and the unveiling of it is closer than we think. There has been an explosion of spiritual rebirth and desire for God's truth that has not been connected to any church organization or authority. Politicians have realized this and will try to use it for their own purposes. Could it be the coming of the Lord is near? Let the earth rejoice in Him, for He is great and greatly to be praised!

I see a spiritual transformation in our own organization. Our men and women are experiencing a desire to do something for Him. While we wait on money to do more physically, money does not control the Spirit of God and His righteousness. I watch with rejoicing and waiting on Him.

The farm is progressing. It is producing plants to sell, and one greenhouse will be producing strawberries

before long. Aquaponics are used in another greenhouse, and this greenhouse will be producing vegetables and tilapia fish before long. Four other greenhouses will soon be ready for planting vegetables. When it stops raining so much, we will finish making eight beds available and start working on building apartments. We have plenty of work for volunteers if you have a calling to do that.

Concerning the other locations, we are making progress on the year's lack of maintenance on mobile homes and travel trailers. It may take all summer to get ahead of it. Lack of money slowed us down for a very long time, but God supplies our needs.

Debra McCullough is in the process of renewing our website. She will also be our grant writer. We are always ready for improvements in all areas. We have just begun.

One thing I feel we should ask for is new or used lumber. We use a lot of lumber, and we need tons more. We also need electrical and plumbing supplies. Any building supplies you are not using would be welcome. Our clients pay for our operation, but money or other donations help us make more beds for the homeless.

We get to see people change all of the time, but the only way we have to share it with you is the testimonies in our newsletter and on our website. We will try to improve this over time. We appreciate your prayers. We always have men with cancer or other horrendous problems, and we ask you to include these men on your prayer list.

-David Nichols

## Testimonies

I was born in Las Vegas in December of 1992, and I am the youngest of four children. We moved to Oklahoma eight months after I was born. My parents didn't go to church. I went to a Baptist church with my grandmother, and this is how I was introduced to Christianity. As a child, I didn't take my faith too seriously, but a friend invited me to church in high school. I really got into this church, and I was truly seeking the Lord. However, this church's legalism affected my relationship with God. I had bitterness toward my family, and this affected my relationship with members of the church. I began to withdraw and isolate myself, but I was still participating in church activities.

I wanted to surrender myself completely to the Lord, but I was still holding onto hurts and pains. I wasn't studying the Bible daily, nor was I praying like I should. I was just going through the motions, and I began making bad decisions. I felt condemnation and shame all of the time. All of this emotional turmoil and my struggle with lust led to me committing my crime.

I turned myself into the police, which is what my pastor recommended. I spent five days in the county jail, and then I bonded out of jail. I fought my case for a year and a half. I took a blind plea, and I received a sentence of five years in prison and fifteen years of probation. I started attending a Bible study in prison, and my whole view on Christianity transformed. I began to see my identity in Christ and know I am forgiven. My relationship with God found depth.

My case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I came to Hand Up immediately after I left prison. I am grateful for a place to live, and I am

grateful for the strong, lifelong friendships I have made here. I appreciate the church services and the fellowship with the men here. I have grown in God at Hand Up. The church services and the godly leadership have helped me in my relationship with God. I have had the same job for two years, and I was able to save money for a car. I participate in the worship team at Hand Up, and I have twice gone to Arkansas to perform praise music and testify at the church pastored by David Nichols' brother. There are many challenges ahead, but I know with *accountability and faith I will be alright*. I thank God for everything. He will see me through it all. Thank you.

-Joseph Dodge

I was born in Hialeah, Florida in 1949. When I was five, I went to live with a foster family on Long Island. My foster mom was afraid she would lose custody of me to my biological mom. My foster parents wanted to adopt me, but they would have had to involve my biological parents. My friends and I built a tree fort. My foster parents were Roman Catholic, and they raised me as a Catholic. I can't say they didn't have a Bible, but I don't remember seeing one. I didn't understand the Catholic Mass, because the *liturgy was in Latin*. During my senior year of high school, I dropped out of school before I was kicked out.

I went into the Marines when I was 18, and I went to Viet Nam in 1969. I was a radioman, and then I was trained to make maps, so I wasn't in combat. I went to Iowa after I left the Marines. I met a stripper in 1972, and we got married in Kansas. I went to *truck driving school in Omaha*, but I didn't finish. We moved back to Iowa, and we got divorced in 1975. I went to prison for bad checks in Iowa in 1976, and I spent 18 months in prison. I came to Oklahoma in 1984, and I lived with my ex-wife.

I became a Christian in 1984. I went to Dallas, and I got a job as a painter. I spent six years in Dallas. I started drinking again when I was in Dallas. I went to North Carolina, and I spent three years there. I came back to Oklahoma in 1994, and I have stayed in



Oklahoma since then. I stayed with my daughter for a while when I returned to Oklahoma. I went to prison in 1998, and I got out of prison in 1999. In 2002, I was arrested for failure to attend the counseling class I was required to take. I was released from prison in 2004. I came to Hand Up Ministries in 2006.

Hand Up gave me a place to live. I worked for Hand Up off and on for two years, and I started drawing Social Security in 2007. I wanted to be a good Christian after I came to Hand Up.

-Paul Best

I grew up with a loving mother and an abusive father. My father would get drunk and beat up on me and my mom. He was okay when he wasn't drinking. My mother was loving and caring. My parents took me to church when I was nine years old. We all got saved. My dad stopped drinking, and he became a preacher. Our lives changed for the better, but, when I was 14 years old, we stopped going to church. My dad started drinking again, and the abuse started again. My parents divorced. I started drinking and doing drugs when I was 14, and I gave up on God.

I married at the age of 20, but I continued to drink and use drugs. We had three children, and we divorced when I was 33. I had a breakdown, and I attempted suicide for the first time. God saved me from death. I went to prison when I was 34 years old. I found God again in prison. I was 36 years old, and I served Him until I was 45. My mother passed away when I was in prison. I got mad, and I blamed God for not answering my prayers and allowing my mother to die.

I turned my back on God, and I began to use drugs again in prison. I left prison after 16 years and nine months of incarceration. I hit the street, and I did more and more drugs. I also started drinking again. I tried to commit suicide seven more times, but each time God saved me. I was homeless for eight long years. I was admitted to a mental hospital when I was 58 years old. I was having problems with

anxiety, panic attacks, depression, no sleep, and nightmares. My hospital counselor told me about Hand Up Ministries. I applied to Hand Up, and I was accepted.

I have been at Hand Up for about two months. I have a home, and I am alcohol and drug free. I have God in my life again, and I am building up the loving relationship I once had with God. I still have problems, but daily I am growing stronger in all ways. One day at a time. God and Hand Up have given me back the life I tried to take away so many times. If it wasn't for the grace of God, and the love and concern of Hand Up, I wouldn't be alive now. Praise God.

-Otis Cole

I grew up in small country towns. We moved a lot because of my dad's work. He wasn't my real dad, but he was all I knew. My real dad died before I was born. I had a good childhood. Dad worked all of the time in the oil field, so Mom raised my two sisters, my brother, and me. I am the baby of the family. We played outside all of the time. We didn't have much, but we were happy. Now days, it is all about money. Times sure have changed.

I have worked for as long as I can remember. The one I called "Dad" died when I was 13, and Mom married a man who beat us often. That was when I started staying gone all of the time. I was working cows, breaking horses, and building fences. I started roping and riding bulls. I moved out when I was 15. I got my own place, and I started doing drugs and drinking all of the time. I started cooking meth when I was 16. I was in a bad wreck when I was 18, and I was on crutches for almost two weeks. I went to my mother's house for Mother's Day when I was 19, and my mother fell to the ground and cried because of how bad I looked. I stopped

doing that drug, and I have not touched it since.

My friends and I went to church on Wednesday, but it was mostly just to hang out. We went to church when we went to our grandmother's house, but I didn't know the Lord. I went to prison in Texas when I was 20. I worked on ranches after I got out of prison. My stepbrother got me a job on a ranch near Ardmore, so I moved to Oklahoma in 2006. The people there were asses, so I quit. I went to work on a farm near Wynnewood.

I had a kid in 2010, and I got to see him here and there when his mom needed something or wanted to go party. I was locked up in August, 2012, and I haven't seen my son since. I was arrested for having sex with an underage girl, but I didn't know her real age. Now I am a sex offender for the rest of my life.

I learned about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison. I needed a place to go when I got out of prison, and now I am at Hand Up. I am unhappy about the fact that I can't hang out with family and friends because they have kids. I am trying to get closer to God. Hand Up has helped me get a job, and Hand Up has also given me a roof over my head. Attending church on Sunday helps me get closer to God.

God has given me the life he wanted me to have. Thanks to Hand Up for everything this ministry has done for me.

-Deke Roberts

I was born in Oklahoma City in 1952. I was an only child. My dad worked for the State of Oklahoma, and then he worked in construction. My mom worked for an insurance company. She attended Church of Christ, and we attended church three times a week. My dad moved to California

to work, and I spent seventh grade in California. I returned to Oklahoma after seventh grade, and I went to John Marshall High School. I graduated from high school in 1970, and I went to Central State University (now called University of Central Oklahoma) for five years. I earned a degree in Business Administration.

I managed a convenience store for about a year, and then I got a job at Southwestern Bell. I worked at Southwestern Bell for 21 years. I got married for the first time in 1978. I had one child, and we got divorced in 1985. My I got married again in 1987, but this marriage lasted less than three years. I remarried in 1991, and I have two children from that marriage. My first wife and I attended church regularly, and my second wife and I did the same. I also went to church with my third wife.

I was arrested in September, 1998, and I was incarcerated until October, 2009. I attended chapel regularly in prison. I heard about Hand Up Ministries when I was in prison, and I came to Hand Up in October, 2009. I worked for Hand Up for about a year, and I worked for Labor Ready for over three years. I retired when I was 62 years old. I would have been homeless if not for Hand Up, because I had no place else to go. I appreciate the weekly church service at Hand Up.

-Jay Fortune

Matthew 6:14-15

**14** For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

**15** But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

**We appreciate all our partners and donors. It is your support that enables us to assist individuals back into society as new brothers and sisters in Christ.**

