Keep on Climbing!

And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. ~ 1 Thessalonians 2:11 (NLT)

Pastor and author, Chuck Swindoll, made a sharp observation, “We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.” I own that one. In every area of my life, at some time or another, I have felt overwhelmed. Believed I was incapable of hitting my giants between the eyes only to see them fall when the size of my God, stretched out next to them, dwarfed them by a mile. So many of my prayers now consist of my looking those 2023 giants in the eye and prayerfully uttering (while pointing a finger towards Heaven) “Him!”

Children, especially boys, are given to bragging and sometimes exaggerating, their father’s strength. “My father can beat your father!” “My Dad is the strongest man ever!” The tallest, the richest, the best looking, drives the best truck... The list goes on. Every kid wants to believe their father can keep them safer than the next kid.

Learning they can rely on their father’s strength is a building block for children. There was a four-year-old at a rock gym here in Alaska and he was high off the floor on his way to the top of the rock wall and not a kiddy wall either. He was making good progress when he stopped, took his eyes off the next handhold and looked down. “Dad,” he called out, “I’m scared!” His father replied matter-of-factly, “I know. Keep going,” and so he did- all the way to the top where he celebrated the victory over gravity and uncertainty. The entire time that boy was on the wall his dad had hold of a rope tied to the harness his son wore. Our small climber had just learned to trust the harness, to trust the one holding the rope and to keep climbing.

Isn’t that how it is with us in our relationship to our Father in Heaven? We have all had our own rock walls and heard an encouragement to keep going when our footing was unsteady or our resolve ebbing away. We were always in His hands.

Our dear souls here at the Mission have to learn to trust the hands that hold the rope. They learn by first trusting us, the body of believers. Trusting our testimonies, our professions of faith, our lives lived before their eyes. They watch how we address the walls in our own walks. They are very observant and what they see will make them climb or fall, trust or turn.

I was never more aware of this than when I baptized six of the men from our program on a Sunday morning and led two of our shelter guests in a prayer of salvation that same Sunday evening. Many folks we help had no one holding the rope in their young lives so we are starting over now to build trust, trust in us and trust in the God we profess. That trust is foundational to developing the maturity needed to become not just climbers but rope holders themselves one day.

As Father’s Day approaches, let us acknowledge the wonderful, trustworthy Father we have received who daily loves, encourages and supports us through many dangers, toils and snares and who is truly leading us safely home.

Don’t look down! Keep on climbing! You’ve got this!

Pastor John LaMantia
**Six Men Baptized**

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ~ Galatians 3:27

I was thrilled on Sunday, May 21st, to baptize six of the men from our program. These men have been digging into the word of God and growing day by day into the lives Christ died for them to experience, lives of freedom, power and commitment. They also completed Baptism classes.

Parents were invited and one of our young men had his parents and brother come to witness his profession.

This is what we are here for and those of you who support us share in this treasured experience. The Lord is calling His own. Thank you to Pastors Jim & Linda Schulz and Crossroads Assembly for hosting and being an encouragement. We treasure your support and partnership. Thank you, Terri Ensign for taking pictures. Thank you, Kathy LaMantia for contributing pastries to snack on in the van.

Thank you, Jesus, for Your marvelous gift.

---

**June Memorials**

"Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart; Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art. Thou my best Thought, by day or by night, Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light."

Memorial for: Brenda George by: Kimberly & Aaron Lorentzen
Memorial for: Wolfgang Hahn by: Frank & Lorraine Starnad
Memorial for: Greg Hamm by: Deb & Pat Seidl
Memorial for: Irma Scavenious by: Sally Hamm and Family
Memorial for: Brenda George by: Linda Landree
Memorial for: Brenda George by: Lynette Harple
Memorial for: Brenda George by: Gerardo & Marilee Rodriguez
Memorial for: Evelyn Mamaloff by: Ione Steele
Memorial for: Brenda George by: Jerry & Henrietta Morgan
Memorial for: Brenda George by: John & Stephanie Long
Memorial for: Brenda George by: Doris Sturtz
Memorial for: Brenda George by: Margo M. Yanagawa
Memorial for: Joyce Barrett by: John & Kathy LaMantia
Memorial for: Neal Givens by: John & Kathy LaMantia

---

**Flowers to Beautify the Neighborhood**

We got a beautiful day to visit the City greenhouse and pick up plants. We have a team that will be cleaning up our neighborhood park and planting those flowers. This is a ritual and a contribution the Mission program men make to our community every year to be good neighbors and to give back.

---

Big shout out to Lisa Aquino CEO of ANHC for sending Kevin Shreve, Chief Information Office at the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center our way. I got to spend a good bit of time with him making arrangements for the center to have space at the Mission to help our clients who have medical needs. What a wonderful group and what a blessing.

I was honored to have been asked to participate and to address the graduates of a special mission centered course offered at Changepoint. This course involves students and individuals interested in exploring all the diverse options available to fulfill a missions calling. There were representatives there from community and home missions as well as international missions. It was inspiring and I enjoyed meeting others who have answered the call of Christ to serve.
Birthdays Matter

Our first Sunday of the month chapel service includes our acknowledgment of everyone who has a birthday in the current month. We had five folks stand to receive a birthday card and applause along with our best wishes.

It seems like a small thing but it is all part of the "blessed ordinary" we try to cultivate at the Mission, that being, the simple everyday actions that offer people an opportunity to feel like everyone else. Some people we shelter have not been wished a "Happy Birthday" in a very long time. Being wished a "Happy Birthday" can be the beginning of not feeling invisible. I loved the messages of these cards.

It is hard to change a life but it gets easier when you just change one day at a time.

We All Pulled Together

We were told that at some point we would have to close our shelter and meal service down for two days to get some transformer boxes moved for the new kitchen. We would not have had any power. That was going to occur just as Sullivan was closing. I couldn’t imagine anything worse than our dear clients out on the street with no options and it was snowing. It can also be something that triggers someone struggling to maintain sobriety to relapse.

I cannot say enough about the Mission staff who all pulled together and created a work-around. Our kitchen made cold meals. We used camp lights. It was primitive but the clients preferred that to the street with its uncertainty and lack of safety.

Our contractor, the electric company and our Facility Manager all pitched in to get our time offline down to less than 24 hours instead of 48 hours.

How wonderful when everyone pulls in the same direction and God gets the glory.

We have applied for our Conditional Certificate of Occupancy from the Municipality and should hear back any day now. There are some finishing touches we are adding and your continued support for the kitchen upgrade is appreciated.

Thank you!

All Dressed Up!

Two of our program men projecting the confidence and self-esteem a relationship with Christ fosters.

Ryan Bailey (L) dressed up and honored his mother for a special outing with her.

Ryan Bush (R) dressed up for his meeting to phase up to the next level of the program.

We are so proud of these guys.

Thank You for the Invitation

I was so pleased to have been asked to speak at Kingdom Life Church on Mother’s Day. They are such faithful supporters. It was wonderful to bless our mothers and to share progress at the Mission.

Food Partnerships Help

The Mission is so grateful to Mountain City Church (formerly ABT) for a generous food donation to our kitchen. This was much needed and appreciated.

Several churches responded to our request for donations and it has been such a help. It goes right back out the door so quickly but with a blessing over each meal and every needy neighbor.

The Anchorage Gospel Rescue Mission makes every effort to honor the wishes of our donors who have directed contributions to a specific area. We do, however, reserve the right to redirect the monies received over and above a specific need, into whatever areas they may best be useful.
It is with a mixture of sorrow and celebration that I share with you the passing of our brother in Christ, fellow staff member and overcomer, Neal Givens.

Neal took a drive after work to enjoy a beautiful day and ended up unexpectedly discovering the source of all the beauty in Creation. He pulled his car over and it seems Heaven came down to meet him. Neal had no idea that would be his last day on earth but he was ready.

Neal was appreciated by our clients, staff, donors and this Director. He was a wonderful man and a blessing to the Mission. It was exactly one year ago Neal shared with us his thoughts about working for God at the Mission in a Facebook post. I include his thoughts here.

Our condolences to Neal's family and friends. We will miss him but we are in full confidence that he is in the arms of the Savior who kept him against that day.

Services are in Idaho.

Pastor John LaMantia

Neal's comments from May 2022:

I have heard people testify that God healed them and simply removed their addiction. That certainly was not my experience. I went through long periods of treatment coupled with Christian discipleship. I needed a program that instilled God's principles into my life and alerted me to my self-destructive patterns. That work has enabled me to possess a stability, motivation, joy and hope beyond what I could have imagined when addiction owned me.

I chose to return to the Anchorage Gospel Rescue Mission to work because it is a place that was foundational to my success. My work at the Mission enables me to be engaged in helping others with their own battles, to help them make sense of what for them is still a struggle. I can demonstrate for them that God is faithful and that there is a way through that very struggle.

Neil Givens, Client Services