

Urban Christian Outreach (Ottawa)

P.O. Box 77033, Ottawa, ON K1S 5N2

Tel: (613) 233-6633

www.uco-ottawa.ca

Update #60

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Dear Friends in Christ,

When my oldest daughter (who lives and works overseas) recently surprised me with a visit, I was absolutely delighted and overcome with joy! It had been nine months since I had last seen her, but it felt much longer. It was time to celebrate!

I miss her so much when she is away. As parents, we never fully embrace the idea of our children living in different cities or different countries, and yet we learn to adjust and to bring our sorrow to God. We learn to live with the highs of 'hellos', (and the reunion stress that can accompany it) as well as the lows of 'goodbyes' (and the separation anxiety that can ensue.) I always weep when we have to say goodbye.

And so now, as I prepare myself for her parting tomorrow, feeling grateful for her unexpected visit, and yet sad to see her leave again, I am wondering if Jesus feels the same way about us. As in the parable of the lost son, we too wander away from our Father, turning to the ways of the world and to our own desires and choices. He must feel that same wrenching pain in his heart when we turn away from Him. As a parent misses a child, how He must miss us. How he must weep!

“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. Luke 10:38-39 ESV

But how much joy God must feel when we return to him! Like the father in the Parable of the Lost Son, how He must want to celebrate - to dance for joy and to embrace us, forgive us and bless us.

In parks, drop-in centres, shelters and coffee shops, I encounter many who suffer from a distant relationship with Christ. Sometimes, in the midst of hardship and pain, they have lost hope, and don't know where to turn. Fear paralyzes them. Still, others have never heard of Jesus, or perhaps they have heard, but have forgotten. Some of our clients struggle with the disease of mental illness, and through no fault of their own have come to put their faith in people, and systems that often fail to meet their needs.

By the grace of God, as He has sent us to share the hope that we have in Christ with the poor, the homeless and the marginalized among us, they are empowered and encouraged to carry on. When they choose to put their hope in God and not in their circumstances, and allow God to be in total control, miracles happen and peace is found.



Through our ministry work, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can be still in the midst of the chaos, and be used by God to facilitate moments where our clients can sit at the feet of Jesus, and receive his beautiful peace. Like Mary, and only by God's grace, we choose to do the right thing, and say 'yes' to our Lord. In the midst of the noises around us, we are able to experience the life-changing power of the presence of God and find new hope. Suddenly our problems are put into perspective; our fears melt away, if only for awhile, and we *know* that we are loved.

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”
Romans 10:14 ESV

We all need to be encouraged, because sometimes we lack the courage to face people, situations or perhaps even another day. This world can be so cruel, and critical, and for our clients who are suffering with many challenges, it can be overwhelming. Their pain is real. Most of them don't feel comfortable in a church setting. Many of our clients feel judged, and fear becoming another's 'project', someone to be 'fixed'.

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV

I recently had the privilege of meeting a young Christian man downtown, who was reaching out for help to stay sober. I was able to encourage him and to refer him to a wonderful Christian 12-step recovery program. As we sat drinking our coffees, the Lord showed me the burden of shame this young man was carrying. I asked him about this, and joined him in crying as he shared his agonizing guilt and remorse. I was able to remind him of God's Word that tells us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). This young man, plagued with guilt, was set free from the chains of shame. I was able to open my Bible, and point him to life-giving words from Jesus, words that reminded him that Jesus loves him, and that He came to set the captives free! Jesus remembers his sins no more, and therefore he could walk out of that coffee shop a free man, free to start his life over again.

All the while we sat together, I was aware of the middle-aged woman sitting near us, smiling, and seemingly delighted to be witness to a beautiful moment of authenticity in the midst of what may have been just another hum drum day for her. The Holy Spirit moved me to say a quiet prayer for her. What a privilege it is to seek our Lord in these moments, and to witness Him minister to those who seek Him.

At Urban Christian Outreach, we are blessed to be the hands and feet of Jesus on the sidewalks downtown. We are called to introduce the lonely, the hurting, the outcast to Him, and as the Holy Spirit leads, perhaps to gently say, "Do you know Jesus?" When we testify to His love, and share the amazing stories of what God has done (and continues to do) in our lives, we grow in faith. Those who hear, grow in faith. We are lifted out of this world and into the presence of God, where there is hope to face another hour, another day. Even in the most difficult of circumstances, when there seems to be no solution, we can turn to Jesus. He is the solution.

Whether I am meeting with a client in person, or over the telephone, I know from experience that if I try to fix their problem, or even offer encouraging words, this will be only temporary. When we depart, it might not be very long before they forget the encouraging words that God gave me to speak, and they will again despair. But when we point them to the One who wants to have a relationship with them, and they respond to His offer of grace, this relationship endures.



At UCO, we want to be good stewards of the gifts we receive from our supporters. Sometimes this involves helping with practical things. We recently helped a senior to secure in-home supports; we are working with lawyers to help two clients victimized by fraud; we are helping a gentleman to get supportive housing and to put his legal affairs in order, a task too daunting for him, as he suffered a brain injury when dropped on his head as an infant. By the grace of God, we are able to lend a listening ear to a woman who has found the courage to talk about the abuse she has suffered at the hands of her estranged husband, and to help her to build a network of support around her.

I am reminded of the beautiful hymn based on Hebrews 12:2, written in 1912 by Helen H. Lemmel: "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus", and would like to share it with you in its entirety:

***O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!***

***Refrain:
Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.***

***Through death into life everlasting
He passed, and we follow Him there;
O'er us sin no more hath dominion—
For more than conqu'rors we are!***

Refrain

***His Word shall not fail you—He promised;
Believe Him, and all will be well:
Then go to a world that is dying,
His perfect salvation to tell!***

Refrain

As our Adult Education Class at The Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre winds down for the summer, we give thanks to God for another rewarding school year. We are grateful to the volunteers, occupational therapists, and students who have helped to make our classroom a success.

As we move into the summer season, which has traditionally been a challenging time for UCO financially, may we humbly ask for your help to continue the wonderful work that UCO's visionary and founder, Katrine Barton Coward began almost 20 years ago? You will find enclosed a form for Pre-Authorized Remittance. We would be most grateful if you might prayerfully consider this method of regular giving, which enables us to budget more accurately. Thank you so very much for your kindness and generosity. We thank God for all of you.

***"Cast your bread upon the waters,
for you will find it after many days."
Ecclesiastes 11:1***

Also, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that we moved our Post Office Box this past winter, to a more central location. **Our new address is: Urban Christian Outreach, P.O. Box 77033, Ottawa, ON K1S 5N2**

**Urban Christian Outreach's 20th
Anniversary Service: Saturday, May
11, 2013**

As we begin to make preparations to celebrate Urban Christian Outreach's 20th year of faithful ministry on May 11, 2013, we would like to invite you to be part of a planning committee. Please feel free to email me at jill@uco-ottawa.ca or to leave a message on UCO's answering machine at 613-233-6633. Praise God for his faithfulness!

With Love and Gratitude in Christ,
Jill Wilson
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