

## Sacramento Union Gospel Mission is Saving Lives of the Homeless and Lost

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Union Gospel Mission Sacramento takes in dozens of drug addicted homeless men every year, helps them get sober, educated, acquire skills, learn jobs, and graduates them back into society. They could teach cities and counties how to do this.

Faith. Hope. Charity. And discipline.

The Globe met with Pastor Tim Lane who runs the Union Gospel Mission in downtown Sacramento. He gave a tour of their facilities, and we talked for two hours about the work they do at the Mission, and why it works.



Pastor Tim Lane at a Chapel service at Union Gospel Mission. (Photo: UGMSAC.com)

He explained: “To see God take someone from the hard life of homelessness and the streets, and reintegrate them into a warm, loving, community of fellow believers.”

As they say on their website, they have been “restoring dignity to broken lives for 60 years by providing meals to hungry men, women, and children.”

Union Gospel Mission offers food, clothing, showers and beds to the homeless living on the street not yet ready to join a program of change. The in-house life-changing program is only for men, but they hope to be able to provide a similar program to women some day.

“We feed 8,500 to 9,000 meals a month to the homeless, and even continued during COVID lockdowns,” Pastor Lane said.” During Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, the mission prepares 440 food boxes to families unable to adequately feed their children, and they give away 300-holiday food boxes with all the trimmings.

They take donations of clothing and household items, and collect, sort, and distribute this clothing and necessities 365 days a year in their men’s and women’s clothing closets.



Union Gospel Mission women’s clothes closet. (Photo: UGMSAC.com)

Pastor Lane said he is often accused of “supporting” the homeless as some sort of “advocate.” While he said he loves all of them, in or out of the program or on the streets, they don’t have the right to live on the streets doing whatever they want.

Of the Mission, “We are not a welfare state. We don’t hand out tents, and they should not be allowed to live on the streets anyway,” Pastor Lane said. Notably he added, “We are responsible for the sidewalk (legally), but aren’t allowed to move tents. I don’t believe in letting them live on the streets. I’m not some homeless advocate.”

Once in the Union Gospel Mission program, Pastor Lane said there are rules the men must abide by:

- No drugs or alcohol
- No smoking
- No pornographic materials (or Victoria Secret catalogues stuffed under the mattress)
- The men must attend daily Chapel services nine times a week, twice on Friday and twice on Sunday.

Upon successful completion of the probationary period, candidates will proceed to:

- Bible-based Twelve Step Course and Heart of Addiction Workbook
- Anger Management Course
- Weekly Counseling with one of our Chaplains
- Assigned duties to serve the homeless community
- Aftercare with attaining jobs, schooling, finances, reconciliations, transportation, and housing

As for personal appearance requirements during the on-site program, the men must:

- Shower and shave daily, keep appearance trimmed and neat.
- Proper footwear must be worn at all times.
- Dress appropriately for Chapel; collared shirts are the **ONLY SHIRTS ACCEPTABLE**. All shirts with buttons must be buttoned up. Long pants must be worn.
- Men may wear shorts, swimming trunks, and tank tops may be worn but are restricted to after business hours.
- Men must be present for prayer over the meal or they will not be allowed to eat.

“We’ve gotten this screwed up idea that it is someone else’s fault. We will not allow them to make excuses,” Pastor Lane said. And the men are required to help assist in the daily operations of the Union Gospel Mission with assigned jobs each.

The Mission explains: “One of these jobs will be assigned and the program man is accountable to be at that job during its hours. It is your responsibility to know these policies and procedures. You will be tested. We hope that your stay will be the beginning of a long fruitful walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Pastor Lane said once one of their men graduate from the program, “they are not pushed out the door into the world as some sort of test of their hard-won sobriety. Typically they learn additional skills that help them re-acclimate to a normal life or move to Grace Haven Annex

when they get a job or enrolled in school.” Many continue on and work at the Union Gospel Mission while preparing to re-enter society.

We discussed that the government concept of “protecting” or “shielding” the homeless by allowing them to live on the streets and suffer.

And this is the problem with “low barrier” shelters, which have no rules for the homeless, and no accountability for their behavior. What will change in their lives if they are not held accountable and responsible, while seeking treatment? Living in a city-approved tent-camp on the sidewalk, stealing for drug money, does not encourage life-altering change.

Pastor Tim Lane’s Union Gospel Mission program works. And they take no government money.



Union Gospel Mission. (Photo: UGMSAC.com)



Union Gospel Mission recent graduating class.  
(Photo: UGMSAC.com)

However, the Mission was forced to shut down during COVID – as if what this faith-based organization does for its residents and the homeless is not “essential.” While they still fed the homeless, they could not allow them to take showers or sleep there. So Pastor Lane brought in portable, self-contained showers, and set up as much outdoors as possible. They also re-opened the public chapel ASAP.

Pastor Lane said they took the shutdown as an opportunity to address badly needed renovations. And it’s a good thing they did. The renovations and updating turned into a ground up renovation and restoration in the residents’ living quarters.



UGMSAC cafeteria. (Photo: UGMSAC.com)

We toured the kitchen and cafeteria, and newly renovated shower room, bathroom areas, laundry rooms, dormitory sleeping quarters, and meeting rooms, updated with industrial grade wall, floor and shower materials designed to help prevent bacteria, infestations and outbreaks, while providing long-term energy-efficient insulation and protection. It is very nicely done while being fully functional.

While we talked, “Mike” came by to say hello. We chatted for a few minutes, before he headed out. Pastor Lane said Mike was once living on the streets, but because he had an incredibly strong work ethic, always had work. He joined the UGM program, graduated, and now works there.

The message of hope, charity and redemption oozes out of every wall, office, classroom, chapel, table, bed, and room of the Union Gospel Mission, and of the people who make it work.

“It’s not how you start the race,” Pastor Lane said, “it’s how you finish.”

[Learn more about the Union Gospel Mission.](#)