



Ed went from homelessness and addiction to a life of service to God.


“PGM CHANGED MY LIFE”

Ed Okrie’s testimony embodies the transformative power of Pacific Garden Mission, a ministry that has been a lighthouse of hope for the homeless in Chicago since the late 1800s. Ed’s journey from the depths of addiction and homelessness to a life renewed by faith and purpose highlights the life-changing role PGM and the Gospel of Jesus Christ have played in countless lives. It takes people from a life of pain and hopelessness to hope and contentment in Christ. His story is a testament to PGM’s steadfast dedication to provide shelter, sustenance, and pathways to redemption and renewal.

ED OKRIE

“I came to the Mission about a year ago. I had a drug problem and I was homeless. I had been staying at friends’ houses, but that didn’t end well. I had been here before when I was down on my luck, but it took a few years before I came back and joined the program. I was hesitant to join because I would be giving up a lot of my freedoms, but what I didn’t realize was that I was already giving up my freedoms by being addicted to drinking and drugs.

“I have been drinking ever since I was a teenager. I grew up in a single-parent home. There was a lot of abuse in the family, so I think that may have made me feel like I needed to drink.



“I realized I couldn’t do it myself. That is when I came here to Pacific Garden Mission.”

Maybe I just did it for fun. My mom would say, ‘Your dad doesn’t want you.’ So, I don’t think I had a sense of love, acceptance, or self-worth. I just thought I didn’t matter. No one would ever tell me they loved me or that I did anything well. With six kids, one girl and five boys, my mother was very frustrated taking care of us alone and would threaten that one day she would just leave us all.

“As I got older, my life wasn’t normal. At school, I would act up and try to get attention. Drinking was always a part of how I enjoyed myself. Then at the age of 35, the drugs came in. I was depressed, and a friend suggested that I try crack cocaine. Ever since I did, it became a part of my life. I couldn’t shake the addiction for three years until I came to the Mission. I wasn’t able to keep jobs for very long. I wasn’t able to keep friends. I only cared about myself. Eventually, it all came to a

head and I ran out of options. I realized I couldn’t do it myself. That is when I came here to Pacific Garden Mission.

“I initially stayed at PGM as an overnight guest. I would sit there and listen to the Gospel services, but mostly, I would just come here to shower or eat if I was hungry. Every time I would get money, I would spend it on drugs. That is when I figured I would at least try the program. I joined it, and I have been here for over a year. Being in the program and dealing with different personalities and the structure of the program is not easy,



Ed enjoys talking to a fellow ministry worker at the Mission.

but I figured this is where God wanted me to be. I may not always like it, but if God is here with me, I can make it through the program.

“I first did the New Day addictions recovery program, which was 90 days, and then evangelist Phil recommended I join New Life. I have been in the New Life program for about a year now. After I moved out of my family’s house, I was always isolated. I stuck to myself and didn’t understand how to function in any kind of relationship with people. Coming here helped me get along with people and have patience. I try to live by God’s Word and treat people how He would want me to treat them. Even if they say something I do not like, I always try to respond in a Godly way.

“I realized who He was and what He did, and I became a more mature Christian. I can be a light to others who are lost in darkness. I feel that sharing the truth with somebody is my responsibility, and whether they take it or not would be up to them. I hope to maybe continue in ministry. I used to work at FedEx and felt the job was pointless. I’d just stack boxes, and more boxes would come, they would never stop coming, and then I realized that here I can impact people’s lives. I

**“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”
—Philippians 2:13 KJV**



Ed reads his Bible on his bunk in the men’s dormitory.

can pray for people, talk to people about Jesus Christ, share the Word of God with people, and help people who are lost in sin. We can plant the seed in someone’s heart; it is up to God and the Holy Spirit to water it.

“PGM changed my life. It is a great place and there is so much grace here. I came here, I was hungry, and they fed me. I had no clothes, and they gave me warm clothes. I had nowhere to stay, and PGM opened their doors for me. That says a lot. That tells the Gospel. I just thank God for even being here. God’s grace is what brought me to this point because if it were left up to me, I would have destroyed myself with drinking or drugs. It would have been a disaster, but thank God He intervened in my life. I hope I am able to share Jesus Christ with somebody else so that their life can be changed, too. That is my hope.”

As Ed Okrie eloquently illustrates, Pacific Garden Mission stands as a testament to the enduring impact of your compassion and generosity. We thank all the donors and supporters whose contributions have made Ed's transformation and those of countless others possible. Your commitment to PGM's mission ensures individuals like

Ed find not just temporary relief from the streets but also the opportunity for lasting change and spiritual renewal. Together, let us continue to support and uplift those in need, knowing each act of kindness echoes through lives, transforming despair into hope and darkness into light. Through Christ, all things are possible.

YOUR LETTERS

Below are some of your letters to us. We appreciate your encouraging words. They remind our staff and ministry workers that they are doing important work. We invite you to write us and let us know how our ministries are impacting you.

Dear Pastor Phil Kwiatkowski,

"I wish to express my sincerest appreciation for your sharing of the Gospel to so many at the Mission, and your weekly sermons that are broadcast on TCT. My husband, Dennis, watched the message on Saturday nights while he was going through the end stages of lung cancer in hospice. He told me you preached the Word (Truth). Dennis recommitted his belief in Jesus as his Lord and Savior before his going home to Jesus on July 13, 2023. I wish you and yours well in the continued journey you're on."

—Your Sister in Jesus —Catherine D.

Dear Pacific Garden Mission,

"I can't tell you enough how I look forward to your daily programs. This is a very hard time for Christians, and the programs bring much hope and

comfort that God is still close by. Thank you for your uplifting and positive stories."

—Lisa

"I am so blessed listening to your true testimonies on YouTube. It encourages and uplifts me more in my faith, belief, and confidence in God. God works in mysterious ways. God's grace is sufficient, and He is more than enough."

—Deborah

"I just wanted to let you all know how much I appreciate and enjoy your radio show *UNSHACKLED!* I have listened on and off for years. Your mission sounds so amazing with all the services you provide. The center has never closed since 1877. That's crazy. I hope to come visit sometime. Keep up the great work for our King."

—JDC



To donate using your phone, just scan this QR code with your phone's camera, and it will direct you to the PGM Donate page.

GIVE NOW pgm.org/donate

Visit our website at pgm.org to learn more about PGM's multiple ministries to the needy.



A Word from Philip Kwiatkowski
President, Pacific Garden Mission

DIRECTED HERE BY THE LORD

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” —Proverbs 3:5-6

I recently met a mother who was about to be reunited with her daughter. I saw the hope and joy in the face of that relieved mother. Her daughter, Nina, faced difficulties and struggled to find her faith while studying in college. She was in debt and decided to find a job, earn some money, and return to college. She did not tell her mother, so she hopped on a train and went to Chicago to look for work. While walking down the street, she saw the Pacific Garden Mission sign and entered. While here, she attended numerous chapel services and was befriended by the women’s staff. She became grateful to the Lord for bringing her here and helping her find Jesus as her only source of hope. Her mother, frantically looking for her, found her here

at PGM. I think of **Philemon 15: “For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;”** I can’t but think it was God’s direction that led Nina here.

Hope, another woman who received help here, left her violent home where her parents fought all the time. She fled for her life and looked for a place of peace. She found that place at PGM and what a joy she has been. She loves the Lord, plays her guitar for worship, and wants to attend Bible school. To leave the security of a home and find Jesus and peace at a shelter is a testament to God’s direction of one’s steps.

There is not just one reason people come here, but I believe all are directed by the hands of a powerful God. I thank our Lord, and you, our donors, for continuing to keep our light burning bright. Many Ninas and Hopes are still wandering our city streets, praying they are directed through these doors.

THE IMPACT WE MAKE TOGETHER

Pacific Garden Mission’s budget is completely donor-funded. We receive no government funding. We are eternally grateful for the individuals, businesses, churches, and foundations that make it possible for PGM to serve thousands of homeless men, women, and children each year. When you support us financially, you’re not only giving *to* the Mission, but *through* the Mission to people who need your help the most. In May your support made a true difference:

543 average number of homeless people who received aid and Gospel services each day

28,948 plates of food were served (est.)

20,000 clothing items were distributed (est.)

3,137 media outlets around the world broadcasted *UNSHACKLED!*

34 men and women were enrolled in Bible study programs and provided room and board

8 mothers with their children who were sheltered at PGM

50 people professed saving faith in Christ and became new believers at PGM

With your encouragement and support, we minister hope to the homeless, addicted, and brokenhearted.

GODLY STEWARDSHIP

Enhanced Safety Measure Protects Guests and Staff

Peter Leavitt,
Assistant Treasurer, PGM Board of Trustees

PGM recently enhanced its safety protocols at the 14th Street entrance by installing a security scanner that detects objects with metal content, and other materials and shapes of objects that could be used for harmful purposes. Security staff have been trained in its use along with the equipment installation, completing the goal of protecting each entrance to the PGM facility.

The decision to enhance our security measures was born out of a high priority to create a safe environment for our guests and staff. The detectors at each entrance help to mitigate the risk of violence, theft, or

other incidents. By screening individuals with the help of scanners upon entry, we can swiftly identify and address any potential threats.

It's important to emphasize that while detectors are an additional layer of security, they do not detract from the warm and welcoming atmosphere created by our staff members at PGM. Our focus remains on providing compassionate care, support services, and resources to those experiencing homelessness and addictions.

Most importantly, our safety measures allow us to create a safe environment where we can share the path to eternal security through the life-changing Gospel message of Jesus Christ. The purchase, installation, and maintenance of equipment such as that pictured below is quite expensive, and it was through your gracious donations that we could afford to proceed with this vital project.

We sincerely thank you!



New metal detectors add an additional layer of security at the Mission.

PGMNews JULY 2024 • Vol.89, No. 7
Published monthly by Pacific Garden Mission
Philip Kwiatkowski, President
Daniel Woolman, Editor
Paul Higdon, Design

1458 South Canal Street
Chicago, IL 60607-5201
P: 312.492.9410 F: 312.492.9414
Email: pgmnews@pgm.org
Websites: www.pgm.org www.unshackled.org

Learn more about our Mission, where lost souls find hope, compassion, and purpose.