

# theHOPE

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Peoria Rescue Ministries exists to glorify God by serving the Church in providing a Gospel-centered ministry of mercy that responds to the needs of the poor, at-risk, & hurting in our community.

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waiting  
on hope  
love

joy peace

comfort

Winter 2020

The official newsletter of Peoria Rescue Ministries.  
Creating pathways out of poverty through Jesus Christ.

# FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

## SO MUCH GRATITUDE

First, I want to say a huge THANK-YOU to the thousands of you who joined us for HOPE•RISING 2020 and are partnering with us “to create pathways out of poverty through Jesus with our neighbors in need. And if you thought you missed it – you haven’t. You can still join in at [peoriarescue.org/HR2020](http://peoriarescue.org/HR2020).

As we contemplate Christmas and the coming year, my thoughts are drawn to the incarnation. You see, it wasn’t that God, from afar, announced that he would save the world and bring peace on earth. No, He came near to us, so near, in fact, one of His names was Emmanuel – GOD WITH US. The essence of Christmas and the



Jonathan Rocke  
Executive Director

incarnation is rooted in relationship. God loves and saves within a relationship, and it should be the same for us. Our loving and serving should be incarnational in nature. It should be done “with others,” not to, or even for others.

It’s why our mission is “to create pathways out of poverty through Jesus WITH our neighbors. It’s to recognize the significance of a relationship in alleviating poverty in people’s lives.

It’s also made the Covid-19 Pandemic challenging through relationships lost through required isolation, among other things. We had planned to launch 2 new relational initiatives this year that we had to postpone due to the pandemic. We are now targeting those for 2021. The first, called SHARE CHAPEL, is designed to create shared worship and fellowship experiences with local churches and our students and guests, leading to lasting relationships. The second is a new way to teach critically important financial life skills through a relational approach within the church’s context. It’s called FAITH AND FINANCES, and we hope to pilot that course with a local church soon.

Would you please join “with us” in praying that God will bring an end to the pandemic soon? This way, we can continue toward a more relational approach to our ministry, including launching SHARE CHAPEL and FAITH AND FINANCES this coming year?

### Have you heard the news?

South Side Mission, which is a separate organization from Peoria Rescue Ministries, made the difficult decision to close the Women’s Shelter portion of their ministry. We at Peoria Rescue Ministries, were able to assist Southside Mission by welcoming ALL the ladies into our shelter community at the **Esther House**.

For the record, South Side Mission is NOT closing – they are refocusing their resources toward their other community ministries and while we work closely together, South Side Mission and Peoria Rescue Ministries are separate organizations.

Please take a moment and pray for **South Side Mission** and the wonderful work they do in the 61605 neighborhood and our community, and pray also for **Peoria Rescue Ministries**, that we will continue to further God’s Kingdom through Human Flourishing by offering compassionate crisis care, transformation and transitional services for those experiencing homelessness or life dominating circumstances.

## COVID-19 Needs List

*We’re always open! After business hours, please use the Mission’s side entrance on Walnut Street to drop off donations.*

### SANITATION AND GENERAL SUPPLIES

Clorox wipes  
Hand sanitizer  
Large, small and contractor grade garbage bags  
Lysol disinfectant  
Personal sizes of shampoo, soap, deodorant, shave gear  
Kleenex

### FOOD NEEDS

Coffee  
Creamers and sugar  
Lunch meat  
Cups of fruit  
Single serve snacks

Ways to Give Financially



P.O. Box 837, Peoria, IL 61652



[www.PeoriaRescue.org](http://www.PeoriaRescue.org)



Text “GIVE” to 309.271.0070

# waiting on comfort

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, we read, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in trouble with the comfort we have received from God!"

In a season where we are desperately waiting on that comfort, we see just what a broken world we live in. As we experience life here, we all work through troubles large and small.

Now, we have two options. We either handle them ourselves, or we have God's great mercy and compassion help us through. When we allow our loving God to help us, He will do what these verses talk about. He comforts us in our troubles.

God reminds me of this every single day. Sometimes it's by remembering how I was laid off, and after a few months, we eventually lost our home. Myself, my wife, and our little girl became homeless ourselves. Other times He reminds me by seeing our daughter Amanda's obituary. I keep it in my Bible as a reminder of God's faithfulness and comfort that He gave and still gives to this day.

There are times God reminds me of the comfort that He shared when I broke my back, which caused me to lose what I thought was going to be my dream job. Or when I suffered through two sinus and three back surgeries. Or the broken hearts my wife and I have had raising children and trying to point them to Jesus. I can go on and on.

If there is something consistent in my life besides the troubles, it's our Lord Jesus always being there to comfort me, without fail.

I have learned something else. We have a choice to share the comfort God gives us, or we can choose to be selfish with it. Have you let our God comfort you? If so, what do you do with your comfort? Or maybe you haven't let God help you. I would encourage you to allow God to comfort your heart.

If you have the opportunity, please don't be selfish with the comfort you have received from God. Suppose you choose not to share that comfort. In that case, you miss many beautiful opportunities to share the comfort and love of Jesus with others.

Just think about it. Maybe that is the reason God brought you through those troubles, so you could share your comfort with someone who would not be comforted unless you were there to do it.

This reminds me of the words to the song "Scars" by I Am They. I won't write them all here, but the chorus is: *So I'm thankful for the scars,*

*'Cause without them I wouldn't know your heart. And I know they'll always tell of who You are. So forever, I am thankful for the scars.*

When you share your scars and the comfort that our God gave you, you are living proof of the mercy of God. You are a scarred, living, breathing miracle of mercy, and you can help others be one, too.

*Rev. Lee Burnham*

*Men's Ministry Director*





# SIX SIMPLE THINGS

(TO HELP YOU GET BY)

If you or someone you know is struggling around the holidays, help is just a phone call away. Free and low-cost bible-based counseling is available at **Barnabas Center. 688-9282**. Don't hesitate to call.



## Barnabas Center Counseling Director Curt Meiss shares helpful tips for the holidays ... and beyond

**1** Let's make the most out of this holiday season. Let's schedule a couple of 15 minute appointments on your calendar to sit silently before God and thank Him for our spiritual blessing in Christ, our church family, our family and friends, and any other good gift that comes to mind.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

- Jas 1:17 ESV

"...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

- 1Th 5:18 ESV

"...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ..."

- Eph 5:20 ESV

**2** "Rules without relationship lead to rebellion." - This was a quote by author Josh McDowell to instruct parents in how to approach their kids. Does it also apply to how we celebrate the holidays with our families? Are we applying rigid rules to when and how holiday celebrations HAVE to be done? Let's focus first on enjoying relationships and allow flexibility in the minors. At the end of the day, it's about relationships!

**3** Holidays can be a time when we throw caution to the wind in terms of our eating and exercise habits. Here are a few tips to get ahead of the game this year and to prevent regret on January 2nd:

- Stock up on delicious and healthy foods. Reach first for fruit, nuts, apple cider and cinnamon, fresh vegetables.
- Avoid stocking up on unhealthy foods that are high in sugar and carbohydrates
- Enjoy some of your favorites but savor each bite and limit servings and serving size.
- Get proactive and consistent in a sustainable wintertime exercise routine where you raise your heart rate above the resting heart rate for 25-30 minutes. Bundle up and walk outside, use indoor exercise equipment, or try out an indoor exercise video.

"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." - 1Co 10:31 ESV

**4** This holiday season, take some time to honor the memories of valued people in your life who have passed away. Set aside time to review and reflect on photos/videos, do an activity or perform a symbolic gesture to honor your loved one. Finish your time with a prayer of thanks to God for the good things this person brought to your life. Pass on some of these good attributes to bless others.

"So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil

days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do." - Eph 5:15-17 NLT

**5** Unrealistic and uncommunicated expectations can add pressure and unnecessary stress to our holiday season. Identify your own expectations early and make sure they are realistic. Then tentatively communicate expectations EARLY to those who will be impacted, looking for mutually acceptable compromises. Expect imperfection in how your plans play out and roll with it. Pray proactively for patience and resilience when things do go wrong. We live in a fallen world and our peace is in Jesus, not in the "perfect" holiday gathering.

**6** Material gifts are one way to share love, according to the *Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. This Christmas, look for opportunities to show love based on the other 4 love languages:

- Quality Time - Could you give the gift of time to someone who may lack family and friends and may find the holidays a lonely time.
- Physical Touch - Hugs matter! (and so do other forms of meaningful and appropriate touch)
- Acts of Service - Do an unprompted job for someone by seeing a need and filling a need without being asked. Give a coupon redeemable for a chore that needs to be done.
- Words of Affirmation - Take the time to share sincere appreciation for the character qualities that you notice in others. You may never know how much it means to the receiver.

**16,744** Meals**94,850** Pounds of Food Distributed to the Community**7,743** Nights of Lodging Provided**8,636** Clothing Items Provided**164** New Client Visitors at the Empower Life Center and Barnabas Center**1,813** Hours of Counseling**7** Commitments of Faith & Following**Cat Matching Deadline**

In January, the Caterpillar Foundation announced the year-round Matching Gifts Program to support our U.S. employees, retirees and board of directors in their contributions to worthy causes. The deadline for making contributions is Dec. 31, 2020.

Eligible Caterpillar participants may request an annual combined total maximum match of \$2,000 each calendar year to eligible 501(c)(3) nonprofits like Peoria Rescue Ministries, to which contributions are tax deductible.

To find out more about this program before the deadline closes by calling PRM Development Director Dan Wolf at (309) 676-6416.

**Do you have an IRA?**

If you are an IRA holder, we hope you'll consider making a **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)** directly to Peoria Rescue Ministries. QCDs can be made directly to Peoria Rescue Ministries from your IRA, and the distribution can count fully (or in part) towards your RMD. If you are interested in supporting Peoria Rescue Ministries this way, be sure to consult your financial advisor directly for specific information on your unique circumstance. **For more information, call Dan Wolf at (309) 676-6416.**

# POTENTIAL

I am not sure how all of you fare at letting go of expectations, plans, and the daily things we all take for granted. This year has been problematic for me in ways I never imagined possible. It was hard for me not to go to church, be with my dear friends, or go out to dinner with my wife. There were too many changes here at work to even count. The list of ways 2020 has reshaped this ministry continues to grow.

To say the least, it's been a year of uncertainty at Peoria Rescue Ministries. Looking back, here are just a few of the things that I never really expected to spend time thinking about, let alone having to coordinate, stock, and staff: Isolation centers, daily temperature checks, social distancing, face masks, and more. Uncertainty moved in, rearranged the furniture, and made itself at home. Then it started asking a lot of questions. Good questions. Tricky questions to answer.

"Will COVID-19 hit Peoria and our surrounding cities really hard?"

"Will unemployment rise? What about the headway that was made on homelessness?"

"Will people actually play in our golf outing, participate in our HopeWalk, or watch our Hope/Rising Fall Fundraiser online?"

All that uncertainty became so burdensome. The wait was the worst part of it because I couldn't control any of it. However, I had no choice but to wait for things to return to normal and let go of when that might happen.

For a while, there was resentment, disappointment, frustration and even worry. After a while, though, I started seeing a shift in myself. The resentment was gone, the frustration ebbed away, and finally, what had blanketed me like a fog began to lift. You see, something new inside of me was being born out of perseverance: gratitude and hope.

Appreciation began to take root with God's numerous daily reminders that He never left His throne. None of this year has surprised him, and I can trust Him, especially while waiting. Those reminders were such a merciful blessing, and I hear it echoed by almost every person I speak with.

I have relished hearing the stories of



how so many have encountered God's kindness and mercy. There are so many new gifts and abilities that have come out of a year of waiting. I'm sure you could share a few of your own without even trying.

What lifted that foggy burden was where Jesus began his approach to adversity. Gratitude.

The Bible informs us about the spiritual potential found in a grateful heart. A general attitude of thanksgiving in both the trials and blessings of life is what distinguishes the Christian. The apostle Paul exhorts us in Scripture to give thanks for all things, in all circumstances (1 Thes. 5:18). So that is what I intend to do.

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." Much like Paul said here in Philippians 3:12, my living into a "gratitude no matter what" lifestyle is a process. Still, it's one I can continue to practice right here on this page.

I am not sure that there are enough kind words at my disposal to communicate gratitude for how the PRM staff and I have seen you respond to the needs of this year. We have been thoroughly astonished by how you have bestowed generosity upon our guests. To say that you have overwhelmed us with your love in so many unconventional ways amid a community-crippling pandemic would be an understatement. Your actions show to us how deeply you believe in God's mission to serve the poor, forgotten, and the least of these in our communities.

For that alone, I will tell you that 2020 will be a year that all of us who work here will remember for the rest of our lives. We will not forget the miracles of God's generosity acted out by his people, for his people. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

*Dan Wolf*  
Development Director

# ROLL WITH IT

My husband and I have been watching old Jeopardy episodes lately. As a category, It feels as though 2020 would appear like this in the show:

“I’ll take 2020 for \$1000, Alex.”

“The answer is ‘Covid.’”

“What has challenged and changed our lives?”

The Women’s Ministry answer would be, “What has brought us before the Lord and allows us to see His mighty hand at work?”

We all know this year has been hard, and the hurdles it brought to the ministry caused our staff and volunteers alike to seek God’s perspective and His bigger picture.

At Empower Life Center, we changed how clients can receive material goods and started Diaper Drive Through Tuesdays. While we definitely miss the extended time with the clients, we can still catch up with them, give encouragement, and pray with them. We opened these days up to the community, so we have the opportunity to begin new relationships with women and men who were not aware of our services.

Parenting classes continued to meet via Zoom, and we resumed in-person learning a few months ago with appropriate COVID-19 precautions. By limiting the class sizes, our educators get to know the participants better. As word of our fatherhood program spread, the number of attendees and graduates increased this year.

In all, our incredible, gospel-centered, God-dependent staff and volunteers have rolled out innovative processes to serve our clients in the best way possible. I’m so thankful for their call and motivation.

And speaking of calls, our prayerful supporters have answered God’s call to provide diapers, formula, baby items, and clothing in abundance, giving me another reason to be grateful.

Appreciation for the blessings they provide this community through their tireless outpouring of love can never be adequately expressed. “Thank you” never truly covers generosity like that.

At the Esther House, we experienced a decrease in guests and residents for quite some time. This presented us with an opportunity to develop even more profound and impactful relationships with the women and children God entrusted to our care.

Great new staff members and volunteers joined our seasoned team and approached this task with grace and resolve. Together, they all embraced the difficulty and changes with the love of Jesus Christ leading the way.

I am very blessed to see the team at the Esther House living the gospel into the lives of our guests. We’ve seen the community rally around those guests by bringing them many lovely items for parent and child alike. Through support like that, we have seen God’s hand of restoration and renewal transform women’s lives with indescribable power. Our Father is so, so good, kind, full of merciful grace and love. We are given the honor and privilege of witnessing this every day.

Our Prayer Team has been such a bedrock of comfort; we could not persevere without them going to our Father on our and our ladies’ behalf. Through their intercession, the health of our staff, volunteers, guests, and residents has been brought before the Lord, and he has shown us his favor. That doesn’t mean we stop praying, though, so please continue to pray for all of us.

As the season of cold weather approaches, we are filling up. This makes your support even more critical, as we have the opportunity to love and care for our guests and share our Abba with them. He is our greatest need and our ALL!

*Julie Philyaw*  
Women’s and Family Ministries Director



The pandemic may have changed how **Empower Life Center** functions, but our services are still charging along. For more information on how you can benefit from our services, visit [PeoriaPregnancyChoices.com](http://PeoriaPregnancyChoices.com) today!

## Prayer Requests

- For the continued work to clear hurdles for 1212 Community House
- That housing and work would be provided as needed for clients
- For an atmosphere of peace and an attitude of community among the men & women in our renewal programs
- For clients’ salvation and spiritual growth
- Wisdom and strength for staff as we counsel clients in difficult situations
- That staff will be able to meet people’s needs with mercy, grace, and love

Have a request that we can pray for? Please send your request to [prm@peoriarescue.org](mailto:prm@peoriarescue.org) or P.O. Box 837, Peoria, IL, 61652.