

WOVEN

together



Shane grew up in Orangeburg, South Carolina, with a close-knit family that taught him to pray and follow God. However, his family held him to high expectations with little grace for shortcomings. Because of this, relationships with his family have been strained over the past few years. They accused him of making poor decisions and being lazy, leaving Shane feeling crushed and abandoned. He loves his family and being pushed away by them was heartbreaking.

Soon after the pandemic hit, Shane found himself unemployed, couch-hopping around town. Before coming to Columbia, he was living with an elderly friend in Orangeburg. When she moved to Texas in mid-2021, she connected him with Oliver Gospel to have a safe and welcoming place to live. Shane recalls his first few days at Oliver Gospel, saying, "It's world-changing for you because it helps you get a foundation of what's going on and what you're doing. It helps you to see what it's like to not be homeless again."

Shane started out in our Refresh program, which provides nightly shelter for men experiencing homelessness for up to 30 days. Shortly after his first few nights, he realized that his mental health declined from the pain and hardship of his estranged family and unemployment. For the first time, he was able to focus on himself after years of worrying about where he would sleep for the night. Through Oliver Gospel, he was connected to Prisma Health, where he received mental health counseling and medication and started to feel like himself again.

Once he stabilized his mental health and got a job, Shane started the six-month Rebuild program at Oliver Gospel. In Rebuild, he has remained healthy and stays in our transitional housing while saving money for permanent housing. He continues to reach out to his family and prays that he will see renewal in those relationships as he begins this healthier and more stable chapter of his life.

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REBUILD: *Finding Stability*

If you have been to our Men's Center, taken a tour, or read some of our past newsletters, you have likely encountered this word: **Rebuild**. Maybe you immediately pictured a construction site or a hardware store, or maybe you weren't sure what this word had to do with our mission here at Oliver Gospel.

Rebuild is our six-month, transitional housing program for unhoused, working men. Like scaffolding on a building, this program supports the walls and foundation they are rebuilding after much of their life has been damaged by homelessness. Much like a building under construction needs scaffolding, there are many in our community who need external support to rebuild parts of their lives. They are often well-trained and hard-working, but they have lost a sense of hope and safety because they no longer have a place to call home.

The main cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. Someone must earn **\$17.30** per hour, working full time to afford a two-bedroom home at the fair market rate. The average renter earns **\$13.52** per hour, leaving a **\$3.78** "wage gap" that renters must fill with already low resources. Homelessness can be sudden. It can also be short-lived. Neither reality makes it any less stressful, damaging, or painful. The Rebuild Program provides the "scaffolding" necessary to repair and restore a person's livelihood.

How do we help bridge this gap?

Rebuild is for men who are employed 30+ hours a week. By providing no cost lodging and food, Oliver Gospel takes away two of the biggest stressors in a person's life: food and shelter. More than physical needs, our Rebuild residents are paired with a Life Advisor to disciple and support them. **They discover Jesus in a new light and their hope is restored despite difficult circumstances.**

We have seen restoration take place in countless lives through this program. If you would like to learn more about all the programs we offer, visit our website to schedule a tour or connect with us!

At Toby's Place, the women often use creative outlets as a part of their healing and growing process. One of those outlets is writing. Through crafting poems, these women are processing their experiences, their losses, and their journey. It has been a source of healing as they look back on where they came from and as they look to the future with HOPE! The poem on the right was written by one of our current Toby's Place residents!

Healing the Past through Poetry

Dear Past,

Although I'm no longer there living in you
Somehow you've managed to find me.

Somehow I'm left to face the facts
Somehow you've come upon my tracks.
With things I carried buried deep inside me

For darkness you were
and to darkness you went.

Deep below down in my soul buried
underneath my belly of sin.

For you were only to be used as a defense.
You were only to be used as a shield.

Stepping stone even so.

Therefore. presently as of now
I no longer need your existence.

I am no longer there with you.

I've learned, I've grown, I've experienced
and ready to experience more that's beyond you.

In conclusion, I am now living in my present.

Such a beautiful gift my present is.

It is Light!



WOVEN TOGETHER

Tracy and Joel Hilke (pictured), supporters of Oliver Gospel, brought over 13 beautiful handmade quilts for the women and children at Toby's Place. Becky Morton, maker of the quilts, prayed for the future owners of each quilt as she sewed. She asked Tracy where she should donate the quilts, and Tracy instantly thought of Oliver Gospel.

Tracy's relationship with Oliver Gospel goes way back to when her high school's gym housed the overflow from Oliver Gospel's emergency beds. Years later, she reconnected with Oliver Gospel through her boyfriend, Joel, who took her on a date to tour Oliver Gospel. When they got married, instead of gifts, Tracy and her husband asked for guests to donate to local charities, including Oliver Gospel. When asked why they support Oliver Gospel, Joel says ***"It is not just helping the outward, physical needs, but it goes right to the heart, presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and changing people eternally. We are happy to invest in that."***

Tracy, Joel, and Becky are just one of the beautiful pieces of the Oliver Gospel family. Like a quilt, there are so many unique pieces that work together to make Oliver Gospel what it is—a diverse community seeking to transform lives through the power of Christ's love.



Toby's Place residents with the quilts

When I heard that we had donors dropping off handmade quilts, I thought, "Wow, we have so many creative and unique people in the Oliver Gospel community." And it's true! One of our very own baristas has a background in art and design, bringing creativity to The Roastery. A local middle schooler organized a "fun run" this past fall to raise money for Toby's Place. These are just a few examples of the exceptional gifts that Oliver Gospel receives from our community. Every donor, volunteer, staff member, and guest contributes unique talents to Oliver Gospel, and TOGETHER we create a beautiful community, woven together, much like those handmade quilts. And, TOGETHER we, as the Oliver Gospel family, bring beauty to the city of Columbia. Thank you for giving your talents, your time, and your treasures to the Oliver Gospel "quilt". You make our community stronger and more beautiful.

Travis McNeal

TRAVIS MCNEAL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



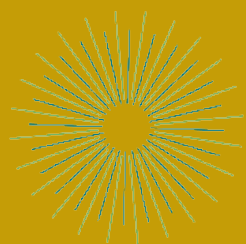


MEET OLLIE

The furriest volunteer at Oliver Gospel, Ollie the Bear is a jubilant, caring part of our family. He loves sharing and teaching. He wants to teach families and children how to care for those experiencing homelessness in our community. **Together, we will learn and transform our city!**

Stay tuned in future newsletters for interactive questions and activities for your whole family!

Mark YOUR Calendars!



MIDLANDS GIVES
Powered by CENTRAL CAROLINA
Community Foundation

**OUR GOAL:
\$125,000**

Tuesday, May 3th, 2022

All donations will be matched up to \$50,000 by Jim Hudson!
Learn more at www.midlandsgives.org/olivergospelmission

PRAYER REQUESTS + NEEDS

- » **PRAY:** One of our residents whose nephew has cancer
- » **PRAY:** Job opportunities for our residents moving into the Career Phase
- » **NEED:** Dye-free laundry detergent and diapers/pull-ups (all sizes) for Toby's Place
- » **NEED:** Rolling luggage and backpacks for our Men's Center

Connect with us

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