

UNITED CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES, INC.

Demonstrating Jesus' love and teaching His words in Hattiesburg, MS.

Dear friends and family in Christ,

July 1, 2017

I want to say thank you to all of you who have helped us so much with this ministry. We could not do it without you. Your prayers, encouragement, volunteering, financial aid and overall support help make this ministry possible. I often tell people my part in this ministry is simple to try to tag along and keep up with what God is doing. (God surely loves the poor and the least of these his children as we reach out and share his love and the resources that God has entrusted to our care with them.) God is doing a great work, and we have the opportunity to see what he is doing and to join in with him.

United Christian Academy has finished one full year of education, and we are now getting ready for year two. In year one, we educated 7 students and saw several of them move up three grades in their reading ability in just 9 months of school. God has provided us with a wonderful staff for this school!

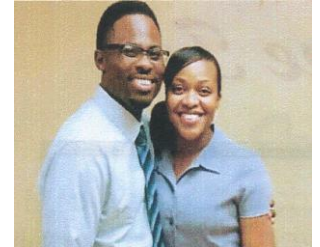


We are planning on adding more students to our school this August.



We held two weeks of summer school to help us get to know and screen possible new students for this fall. We are looking for students who want to learn, respect authority and property, get along well with others and are willing to accept correction. There are many children out there like this who just need an opportunity and support as they seek to move forward in life.

About 10 years ago, I met a young man named Derrick Crosby living in a low income housing area in which we were ministering. Derrick had recently come to know Christ as Savior. He is one of the very few grown men from this culture that just did a 180 when he came to know Christ. He left his old life behind him and started running after and following Jesus. I introduced him to the jail ministry where he started teaching and preaching to the inmates in jail. Derrick is now pastor of a new and growing church located in the same area where he grew up. Derrick is married and has two beautiful children. He will be joining us in our ministry. He will be helping me with our United Christian Ministries (UCM) ministry, and he will be teaching Bible and serving as chaplain at our school – United Christian Academy (UCA). What an example Derrick and his family will be to our youth as they see a young man who grew up in conditions similar to theirs but now is married, working, educated, serving our precious Lord and teaching his children God's wonderful words.



I did not really understand some of the hardships that many who are born into poverty and into dysfunctional homes face until I started working more closely with this culture and Gayle and I invited some of them to come live with us in our home. I was reading a passage in Isaiah this morning that reminded me of what God expects from us concerning those who are less fortunate than many of us are.

Isaiah 58:5-8 (NLT) ⁵*You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?* ⁶*“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: ... remove the chains that bind people.* ⁷*Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.* ⁸*“Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind.*

A few weeks ago, I was in a low income neighborhood inviting youth to a Bible Club that Heritage United Methodist Church was helping us put on. In the process, I met a young man who was 18 years old. He was living with his older sister, was working, did not complete his high school education, and had no idea about what he could do to move forward in life. He was teachable, smart, learned half of my ABC Bible verses even before the Bible Club got started. One of his biggest accomplishments was that he was



able to get a picture ID so he could get a job and cash a check! Things like this seem so simple to us, but they are a big deal to many of the poor in our country. With just a little help from us – helping him get his GED, get into college, get a car for transportation, etc. this young man could easily graduate from college and have a meaningful and purposeful life. Without that help he is pretty well stranded where he is.

One of our students is now living in Mexico with her mother who is dying from what we think is lung cancer. We are in the process of getting this student back to the United States, taking over the guardianship responsibility for her and looking for a family that will take her in and let her live with them. She is one of our best students, but without this help she may struggle to even find a good place to live.

Last week, we put up a homeless young lady in a local motel for about 10 days after I picked her up from the emergency room. She has some unique issues that would make it hard for her to function on her own. After, about 10 days of trying, I realized that I could not find a place in Hattiesburg that would take in a homeless woman in her condition. With the help of the Fieldhouse for the Homeless, we were able to get her into the Salvation Army shelter located in Laurel, MS. My other choice was to just put her back out on the street where she would have to let men use her so she could get something to eat and a place to stay. Folks, there are some hurting people out there who really need our help.

Our God says: ⁶ *“No, this is the kind of fasting I want: ... remove the chains that bind people. ⁷ Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, ... Isaiah 58:6-7 (NLT)* Folks, this is not a suggestion; this is a command. When we see Jesus we will be held responsible for what we do or what we do not do to help those in need who simply do not have the resources or knowledge they need to move forward in life. Jesus said, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. John 13:34*

We are so thankful for all of the support and volunteers who we see flowing through this ministry, to local churches and other organizations that reach out to the poor and needy in our community. I encourage you to continue the good work and invite others to join with you.

One of the main needs that we have right now is to raise more financial support for our school, United Christian Academy. We would love to have a few large financial gifts to help us get caught up financially and to add monthly supporters to our givers list. Gifts for our school should be made out to United Christian Ministries and designated “for education”. All gifts are tax deductible.

Feel free to call, text or email me if you would like to help in any way. May God richly bless you as you become a blessing to others.

With love in Christ,

Jack & Gayle Kennedy