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"The Salvation Army showed me love when I was unlovable."

—SPENCER



Planting a Seed

In Ottawa, The Salvation Army helped Spencer move on from a life of incarceration and drugs.

September 21, 2022 BY LINDA LEIGH FAITH & FRIENDS

On the outside, Spencer was in control. He'd gone to college, received a degree in hotel restaurant management and owned a business. But the reality was that he was deep into substance use. Then a transformative event gave him the courage to change.

Drugs and Prison

Growing up, Spencer had a difficult time figuring out where he belonged. He struggled to identify with the peers in his class and, in an attempt to fit in, he would act out with poor behaviour in school and at home. As a result, he left home in Grade 11, rebelled and started to dabble in drugs and alcohol.

"I was 17," says Spencer. "As my attachment to drugs got stronger, I spent more time getting high."

For 20 years, substance use was a priority for Spencer, and he often put his life at risk in order to use.

"I remember overdosing in Toronto's Regent Park," he says. "People thought I was dead and dumped my body into an apartment stairwell for someone else to find. I also recall

having a gun held to me during a drug deal that had gone bad.”

“It feels so good to be a part of the Salvation Army family.”
Spencer

Spencer tried treatment centres many times, but he couldn’t separate himself from the lifestyle. To get more drugs, he engaged in criminal behaviour that often led to incarceration.

Transformation is Possible

In 2017, while in prison, a life-changing experience altered what mattered to Spencer.

“I participated in a Bible study and found Christ,” says Spencer. “I got on my knees, prayed and gave my life over to God.”

In March 2018, Spencer was three months clean when he was accepted into the stabilization program at The Salvation Army’s Booth Centre in Ottawa. This is an abstinence-based residential program for men that provides a safe and supportive environment and encourages clients to pursue goals that are meaningful to them.



Spencer (fourth from left) became an official member of The Salvation Army this past April

“Against all odds, the court overturned my detention order with the understanding that I would explore options for change at The Salvation Army,” Spencer says. “The Salvation Army provided me with guidance and direction as to my next steps. Living there and staying clean kept me alive.”

Spencer eventually moved on, worked part-time, lived in a small basement apartment and attended college.

Life Today

Today, Spencer is the spiritual formations coach and facilities supervisor at Teen Challenge Canada, working with adult, at-risk men who suffer from life-threatening addictions. In April 2018, he started attending Salvation church services and, in April 2022, he became an official member at Ottawa’s Barrhaven Corps church.

More than 40 of Spencer’s co-workers attended the ceremony.

“It feels so good to be a part of the Salvation Army family,” Spencer says. “They showed me love when I was unlovable. This had a profound impact on my life.”

Spencer is passionate about sharing his faith and influencing the lives of people who suffer from substance-use disorders.

“My desire is to continue being useful and help my community. Sometimes that just means planting a seed.”

This story is from:



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On Monday, October 3, 2022, **Karl** said:

What a truly amazing story of God beautiful gift of grace. I, like yourself Spencer lived a life where as a young person found difficulty in some particular areas if life, and share this so that you know you are not alone. I also like you have offered myself to God, He by his grace gave me the courage to clean my act up, living true, living clean today and about to renew my soldiership... God is so good!

I believe this is just the beginning of many great and wonderful things...step back evil of the world, God has already taken care of it and has won the battle.

Oh what a change, what a difference, when you have that encounter with God. Life takes on new meaning...

Keep up the good fight my friend and brother in Christ.

On Thursday, September 22, 2022, **Jim Mercer** said:

What an amazing story of God's grace! I count a privilege to have walked with this man of God. He has influenced my life in many ways. God continues to use Spencer to impact men for Jesus. How we need more Spencers in our organization and our world - a man who understands addictions and has a compassionate desire to see men set free. God Bless this man and his ministry .

On Thursday, September 22, 2022, **Tonderai Rukato** said:

To God be the glory

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