



Love, Peace, and Manna

The Manna Cafe Ministries newsletter

JANUARY 2022

"Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them."
—Isa. 58:7, NLT



BY KENNY YORK

In With the New

As we sit on the cusp of a new year, our thoughts and conversations revolve around new beginnings. We're thinking about our New Year's resolutions—"out with the old and in with the new" is the theme of the season and our personal lives.

Especially in our walk with God, "out with the old and in with the new" needs to be a daily mindset. There are times when we misstep and find ourselves lost on a path that we shouldn't be on. This can be painful, and—if you're like me—we can make it more painful than it should be. We get so stuck on "out with the old" that we never get around to "in with the new." We try to fix things in our own strength instead of allowing God to do the heavy lifting. Let me explain ...

In 2004, I found myself in a bad situation. Seven years earlier, I'd started spiraling down a path that led me very far away from God, into a life of drug and alcohol addiction. For seven years, my life literally became "sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll." But then, after a series of God-orchestrated events, I found myself sitting in a little United Methodist church on the North side of town, and it was like I woke up from a fog. I don't remember much about what the preacher said that day. All I remember is that, like the story of the prodigal son, God saw me approaching and ran to meet me with open arms. I was told later by the pastor (who became a close friend) that no one could hear the message for all my crying, and that I barely waited for the altar call before I stumbled to the front, sobbing even louder than before.

CHANGE FOR CHANGE: DODGING DIABETES

Are you at risk for diabetes? Manna Cafe's Change for Change program can help you make the lifestyle changes you need to prevent type 2 diabetes. Groups meet weekly at Manna with a trained coach. Classes include hands-on cooking instruction, tips for smart shopping, exercise sessions with a certified trainer, loads of tested and proven nutritional information, and more. This program is incentivized; participants can earn up to \$1000 and will be provided with the tools to succeed. Anyone with pre-diabetes is encouraged to apply.

The next 12-month Change for Change series will begin Feb. 8, 2022. Everyone must register by appointment by calling or texting Program Coordinator Doretha at 931-449-0591 or emailing Learn@MannaCafeMinistries.com. Don't delay: register today to save your spot for the 2022 session!

L: a participant gets fit

R: Kenny and program graduate Jeremiah W.



CLAUDETTE IS ON YOUR CASE

Have you ever tried to decipher something confusing (such as a computer program or tax form), but you just couldn't make heads or tails of it? Maybe you threw up your hands in defeat ... until someone helped walk you through it. They explained the difficult parts and connected the dots for you. This is, essentially, what a caseworker does for people. Many Manna Cafe clients need help wading through the red tape that stands between them and social security, the right medication, or a rehab program. This is where Manna's caseworker, Claudette Sims, comes in.

Claudette's been doing a remarkable job since joining the team in May 2020. For example, several months ago she discovered that Salvation Army has a program that will house people for up to a year, giving them time to find a permanent residence. She set her sights on those whose health was poor and who might not make it through another winter without shelter, and within just a few weeks she'd placed five individuals into the program.

This couldn't have happened without working closely with Salvation Army's own caseworker, but Claudette believes strongly in cooperation. She explains, "Only by working as a team can we successfully help people."

Check out page 3 for a story that illustrates how a caseworker can make the difference between destitution and a full, rewarding life.





"I DIDN'T EVEN EXIST"

Louis is 62 years old. In 2005, he was released from prison after 23 years. All his legal papers were gone, and—inexplicably—he was told that the only name he'd used since birth was "wrong." He says, "I didn't even exist." Additionally, most of his friends and family had died, and he had nowhere to go. Finally, he ended up at Manna Café, and this is how he met caseworker Claudette.

Together, they faced the legal system, and Louis got his name back. "From there," he says, "I got my Social Security, birth certificate. ... Claudette got me everything that I needed." She was also able to snag an interview for Louis with Salvation Army, who offered him a place in their transitional housing program. He was given a hotel room for a year. He's deeply grateful for the roof over his head. "This isn't my [permanent] home," he explains, "but that's what I'm aiming for. And I'm not out in this cold no more unless I want to be."

Louis still enjoys many a hot meal at Manna Café, but he says, "I mainly buy my own stuff now that I've got my own money." Cooperation between Manna and Salvation Army has ensured that Louis is now on the list for Section 8 housing. He's fully confident that this time next year, he'll finally have a place to call his own.

FOUR HOURS FOR OTHERS

You might know that Manna Cafe opens its emergency warming center when the temperature drops below freezing. What you might *not* know is that the center is run almost exclusively by volunteers. Without people willing to work four-hour shifts, there would be no center, and our homeless friends would be forced to tough it out in life-threatening conditions.

Do you have a heart for the homeless? Are you a night owl? Would you be willing to run the intake desk, fetch a blanket from the closet for someone coming in from the rain, or take a midnight-till-four shift so that others can sleep? If so, we need you. Please email Volunteer@MannaCafeMinistries.com and ask to be added to the warming center contact list. And be sure to join our volunteer FB page: Manna Cafe Volunteer Outreach.



IN WITH THE NEW, CONT'D

In the midst of all that noise, I was having the first real conversation with God in a very long time. What's amazing is that before I could even get the words out of my mouth, the Father was already patching me up and cleaning my wounds. In the spirit, I must have looked like someone being admitted to the ER after a major car wreck, though most of my wounds were self-

inflicted. Seven years of addiction, self-hatred, and a dark, godless lifestyle had taken its toll. In fact, I was still hung over and messed up from the night before, and I'd done a line of cocaine just before arriving to church. There on my knees, I still had drugs in my pocket.

That's when I started to get stuck on "out with the old." My tears of grief shifted to tears of fear as I confessed to God and to myself how lost I really was. I could feel myself starting to give up as I realized how impossible it would be for me to ever get clean. That's when I heard that still, small voice we read about in the Bible. The Spirit said, *Don't worry about all that—the stuff in your life, your body, or your pocket. Let Me take care of that. You just concentrate on spending time with Me, getting to know Me again. As you do, I'll clean you up.*

Before I could manage "out with the old," God was already implementing "in with the new." Within just a few weeks, I was free of drugs and have never looked back.

As I sit and write this, I realize I needed this reminder. Maybe you do too. This year's been a rough one for many of us, and it's easy to get caught up in our own mistakes, struggles, and daily worries. Instead, let's focus on the newness that Jesus gives us every day. He'll take care of the past and our day-to-day pressures as we look toward whatever He has for us next.

Peace out.



*This is my command:
Love each other
deeply.*

—Jesus (John 15:12, TPT)

What's one of the most crucial sources of funding for Manna Cafe? Consistent, recurring givers. This is what keeps gas in the trucks, staff members on the payroll, and food boxes rolling out the door.

Want to be part of the solution to hunger in this region? Log on to MannaCafeMinistries.com, and click the Donate button.

Even easier, follow the QR code:

