

God Called... A Family Answered

The History of The Hope Center at Hagerstown Rescue Mission



In January 1954, a small group of men and women began meeting for prayer at Christ Lutheran Church in Hagerstown, Maryland. Armed with great faith, a burden for ministry, and a calling from God, Jimmy Resh cast a vision for a rescue mission in Hagerstown – a ministry Jimmy knew was needed. In July of that same year, the mission was officially named “Hagerstown Union Mission” as the core group of believers continued to meet and pray about God’s plan for Hagerstown and the Resh family.

That plan became evident on May 19, 1955, when the Hagerstown Union Mission officially opened its doors to the community. Located at the corner of Jonathan Street and Jail Alley, the Mission property was far from the comfort and security the Resh family had known in beautiful Pen Mar, Maryland.

Moving his wife, their four daughters, and their infant son into a second-floor apartment on the Mission grounds began a faith journey for the Resh family. As they opened the Mission’s doors on that first day, Jimmy was confident that God intended Hagerstown to have a Rescue Mission.

As Jimmy worked with the needy and lost in Hagerstown, he enhanced his knowledge by attending the Summer School of Alcohol Studies at Yale University in 1957. That same year, the Hagerstown Union Mission moved to its current location at 125 North Prospect Street.

Because of his passion for souls and his desire to see lives changed, God greatly used the ministry of Jimmy Resh and the Hagerstown Union Mission to open rescue missions in Cumberland, Maryland; Westminster, Maryland; Frederick, Maryland; York, Pennsylvania; Martinsburg, West Virginia and Winchester, Virginia; as well as the Cedar Ridge Children’s Home, Four States Crusade for Christ, and the Good Samaritan Lodge. Thrift stores were opened in Hancock, Maryland; Berkeley Springs, West Virginia; Waynesboro, Pennsylvania and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. As a result, Four States Christian Missions, Inc. was established.

Over the next 60+ years, many changes would shape the Mission and the small but dedicated group of family and staff that have made Hagerstown Union Mission their life's work. But through the years, one thing remains unchanged. The purpose and focus that Jimmy and that small group prayed for decades ago is the same focus that the Mission stands for today: the life-changing message of hope that can be found through a relationship with Jesus Christ is available to all who receive Him.

Throughout the years, all of Jimmy and Ellen's children served in some capacity at the mission. Sharon, the oldest daughter, served as manager of the Thrift Stores. Dorcas served as Children's Director, and her husband Carl was Superintendent. Becky served in the office along with her sister Laurel. And Jim Resh, Jr has served many years on the Board of Directors. Even today the family, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-nieces and nephews continue to follow God's calling.



After serving faithfully since 1955, Jimmy Resh retired from his role as Executive Director of the rescue mission. In 1995, Sonny Shank became Executive Director, and his wife Becky became the Director of Development for the rescue mission. As the fourth child of Jimmy and Ellen Resh, Becky had spent much of her life at the rescue mission. The call from God continued to be answered by a family ready to serve Him.

In 2008, the name of the Hagerstown Union Mission was changed to The Hope Center at Hagerstown Rescue Mission – offering hope when there seems to be no hope. The words of Jesus in Luke 4:18 is the motivation and foundation for all programs and services at The Hope Center. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed."

Sonny and Becky Shank poured their heart, soul, time, and sweat into The Hope Center. They were passionate about God's work at The Hope Center in rescuing people in need, helping to change lives, and giving hope to those in need in the Hagerstown community.

Sonny and Becky led two renovation and construction projects that changed the building Becky once called home. But even as things changed at The Hope Center, the most important thing has not changed: the mission of reaching the least, the last, and the lost for Jesus. After 27 years of faithfully serving the Lord, The Hope Center, and the Hagerstown community, Sonny and Becky Shank retired.



In August 2022, Aimee Izer became the Administrator of the Hope Center, and her husband, Terry, became the Superintendent of Facilities and Men's Programs. Aimee is the great-niece of Jimmy and Ellen Resh. Even today, the legacy of the Resh family continues in the work at The Hope Center. God called... and family continues to answer!

The inspiring words of Jesus that led Jimmy to step out in faith over six decades ago still stand as the timeless message of hope for today. Illuminating the darkness with the light of Jesus and reaching out to a lost and dying world is the passion of The Hope Center at Hagerstown Rescue Mission.

In 1955 Jimmy Resh answered God's call and began a ministry of hope that still stands today. The ministry of The Hope Center continues to thrive because of the thousands of people who have sacrificed their time, talent, and treasures to the least of our society.

Jimmy and Ellen's spirit lives on at The Hope Center through the dedication of members of the Resh family, who are an integral part of this ministry and work daily to keep their legacy alive. The ministry of The Hope Center is more than just a job. It's a passion and a heritage of service. God didn't just call Jimmy and Ellen - God called a family. And that family is still following the call to this day!

Our Founders



The history of The Hope Center cannot be told without emphasizing the importance of two very faithful servants of Christ.

Jimmy and Ellen Resh had a heart for people and a willingness to follow God's call.

That call took them from their quiet life in Cascade into the roughest part of Hagerstown: Jail Alley.

They knew what they were doing looked crazy to human eyes; Jimmy and Ellen packed up their

five children and started a new life in an old dance hall just off Jonathan Street.

The Resh's knew this area was dangerous but believed God would provide protection and resources. Jimmy would drive around Hagerstown looking for a man who had stayed at the Mission but was drunk again. Jimmy would pick up the man and bring him back to get sober and clean up. Jimmy's compassion for these men would become his greatest spiritual legacy.

Ellen had the difficult task of creating a stable, safe home for her five children while simultaneously working to provide a stable, safe home for the men who began living at the Mission. Ellen knew the importance of a mother's love for men caught in addiction. Her support and love became her strongest trait, and she rightfully earned the "Mission Mother" title.

Jimmy and Ellen remained at the forefront of the mission as it grew. They worked constantly to provide for their family and their mission family.

Jimmy always thought of new ways to reach people with the Gospel of Christ. From free books to the Free Press (newspaper), youth outreach, Soup Line, and even radio and television programs, Jimmy spread the love of God to all people he met.

Jimmy and Ellen each worked tirelessly until the time came for God to welcome them into eternal retirement. In March 1996, God said, "Welcome home, My good and faithful servant," to Jimmy Resh. At his death, Jimmy had served the Lord for 41 years of non-stop ministry at The Hagerstown Rescue Mission.

Ellen spent many of her years handling the Thrift Store and sorting operations. Making sure the stores were always stocked with gently used goods at low prices for people on a budget, Ellen would eventually spend her years managing the sorting room, continuing to do it right until her passing at the age of 93. She was called home in November 2009; having seen and done so much for Christ, it was her turn to hear her Savior welcome her home.

While we miss our founders, we know they are in Heaven rejoicing with Jesus every time one of our residents or guests commits his life to Jesus Christ. The call God placed in their hearts over 60 years ago remains at The Hope Center. And their family continues to lead the ministry. Because God called... and a family answered!