

Love Stories

Tales of People in Need
and the Central Virginians
Who Helped Them

True Stories from the ministry of
Love INC
Charlottesville, Virginia



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**Tales of People in Need and the Central Virginians
Who Helped Them Succeed**

*True Stories from the ministry of
Love in the Name of Christ*

As retold by
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*All client names used in these stories are pseudonyms in order
to protect the identities of those served by Love INC*



Love Transforms a Nightmare into a Home

The Juarez family came to this country with high expectations. Even before stepping into their new community, they had a surge of excitement when they were able to buy a trailer at a very low price.

It was a purchase made sight unseen, however, and they did not realize that shysters are everywhere. The exhilaration turned to utter dismay when they actually saw their new home. The trailer they bought was unfit for habitation.

It had rotten floors, broken windows, and doors were held on by wire. The kitchen appliances were unusable. Of course, it had no furniture. The stench was unbearable. Trash littered the lot. The family had walked into a nightmare.

Fortunately, there was at least one redeeming factor in the otherwise hopeless scenario. Fanny (from the Church of the Incarnation), who is bilingual, stood in the gap, interceding for this family who did not speak English.

Fanny first telephoned Love INC, requesting furniture for the family. Love INC partners quickly responded to the need. Then Fanny began

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to tell the Love INC staff about the appalling conditions in the trailer. In alarm, the staff made numerous calls to the Church of the Incarnation and

the Hispanic community there. As a result, Bernard became the coordinating person.

As part of the initial effort to assist the family, Jeff from First Christian Church had delivered two appliances and some additional furniture to the trailer. Immediately after the delivery, he telephoned the office, sickened at what he had seen, exclaiming: "Ray, people don't live like this!" Ray's sad words were, "I hate to tell you, but sometimes they do!"

Upon hearing about the trailer, a Love INC volunteer began making calls to some builders who went to First Baptist Church, Park Street, to see if they would donate building supplies. Pastor Jack from Calvary Chapel of Greene also offered to help supply materials. Several volunteers came and put a new floor in the kitchen. This process was slow and dragged on throughout the summer, though several churches were mobilized on this family's behalf. The Soul Winning Soldiers Motorcycle Club eventually put in all new windows, purchased by the Church of the Incarnation.

Volunteers were still hampered by the language barrier and by having to work through an interpreter. Despite the difficulties, everyone was grateful that this deplorable situation had come to light so that the people of God were able to reach out to this needy family.

By autumn the windows were in, the bathroom floor was completed, fixtures were installed, the kitchen floor was completed, and some base cabinets were installed. Fannie told Love INC with great delight that an unknown benefactor from the Church of the Incarnation had supplied money for the completion of the project. He paid for a furnace, so the family was ready for the winter months at least.

Today, you can ride by that double trailer and find flowers blooming during the spring and summer months and children's bicycles in the yard. A family who obviously cares for their home lives there. The four children are polite and friendly, and their mother smiles and says "Thank you" over and over. ❧



Gracie Finds a New Church Home

Gracie has had a hard road to travel in life, from abuse as a child to addiction as an adult. She lost her children. She spent time in prison and then in drug rehab. When she was able to return to Charlottesville, she was excited but apprehensive at the same time. She would be able to reunite with her son and her long-term boyfriend. The three of them would be starting from scratch, however. They had no clothes, no furniture, nothing. Through help from her counselors, she was able to find a rooming house situation, but she still had no bed. Her counselors suggested she call Love INC.

Love INC has been part of Gracie's life practically since it opened. The first Love INC records about Gracie come from 1995 when the Oakleigh Christian Fellowship helped deliver furniture for her. Free Union Baptist Church helped provide her with some of that furniture as did First Baptist Church.

The year 2001 was especially difficult for Gracie. The children's father had committed suicide. Gracie's daughter began to have truancy problems and substance abuse issues. Gracie had substance abuse issues as well. Of course, money issues followed the drug issues. Gracie had a breakdown when she was finally evicted. She was hospitalized, and by the time she got out of the hospital, she had no place to live and no furniture. Her children's schooling had been disrupted. She faced court battles and having her children taken from her.

By 2003, Gracie was trying to get back on her feet once again. She thought she might be able to get a job, but she had no clothing suitable for interviewing.

By 2003, Gracie was trying to get back on her feet once again. She thought she might be able to get a job, but she had no clothing suitable for wearing to an interview. Love INC gave her a voucher to the Albemarle Baptist Association clothing closet on Bolling Avenue. Because there was nothing readily available, the ABA gave her a gift card for

some new clothes. Gracie was quite tickled because she tries hard to look nice. That year Trinity Presbyterian had a holiday food basket for Gracie.

Gracie virtually dropped off the radar until 2007, when she showed up at the Hand to Hand Thanksgiving Dinner giveaway and then began to show up at the Hand to Hand services thereafter. There seemed to be a hunger inside her for the good news of Jesus Christ. She stayed after the services to pray with the Hand to Hand prayer partners. Her name went on the prayer list.

In October of 2008 Gracie, helped by her counselors at the On Our Own Drop-in Center, found a place to call her own again after many years of bouncing from one place to the next. That rooming house was only a beginning, but at least she had a roof over her head. Love INC found her a bed, blankets and some housewares. Unbelievably, the house where she rented a room was sold right out from under her. But the downturn turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Gracie was contacted by her son, now out on his own. He said he wanted to take a year off from school and make sure she was situated in a stable place to live. He found an apartment on Ridge Street suitable for Gracie, her boyfriend, and himself. Gracie turned to Love INC once again for all that she would need for this new place. The big needs were for a refrigerator and a sofa bed.

Nita and Greg from Covenant Church of God had a refrigerator to donate. They connected right away with Gracie. Not only did they

donate their refrigerator to her, but Nita, who loves to collect things other people might need, found tons of household items, kitchenware, and such that Gracie could use. She visited with Gracie. She invited Gracie to church.

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Gracie called Love INC just to talk about her new church and especially about her new friend. "She's really nice to me and she talks to me. And I really like going to church at her church," Gracie said. Nita also talked about how they had become friends and she and her other friends had enjoyed reaching out to Gracie. They have "brought Gracie into the family." ❧



Help from a Caring Landlord

In May Abbie's landlord called staff at Love INC to see if help could be found for a tenant who was behind on rent. Abbie had a job, but the her roommate, a man notorious to the landlord, was not pulling his weight. The landlord had already offered the pair an opportunity to work off the unpaid rent by doing maintenance around the property. Abbie was working and doing the maintenance work, but the roommate was doing nothing. The landlord was quite frustrated. The landlord did not want to immediately evict the pair, because Abbie was trying so very hard.

Abbie finally called Love INC looking for help for the rent and for some assistance regarding her roommate who had started to be abusive. Abbie had become insistent that he pull his own weight, and he did not take kindly to what he referred to as nagging. To make matters worse, her employer had cut her hours back. She was referred to CARES but also asked about her church attendance. Love INC suggested that living apart from the roommate might be a place to start.

This was a daunting step for her, but finally, with the help of her landlord, who is a Christian, she was able to get rid of the boyfriend. After having her hours cut back several times more, Abbie lost her job. Now she had no job and little prospect of obtaining another because of a felony conviction in her past.

Amidst all the bad news something very good happened. Her landlord had repeatedly invited Abbie to

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church, and eventually Abbie had began attending New Faith United Methodist Church with her landlord and family. This small country congregation had welcomed her with loving, open arms. She felt at home there. She joined the women's group and attended Sunday School, also doing odd jobs around the church "just to help out." She often called them her "new family."

She began to make some changes in her life, reaching out to her family, long estranged by her past behavior. There were no new boyfriends to move in. Instead, she moved her elderly father into her home. She found another job and a host of odd jobs on the side to make ends meet. She read the following poem to the good folks at New Faith one Sunday morning. She says she has nothing, but she has the Lord and she has her newfound family at New Faith UMC.

I thought the flame had gone out of my candle
and there were times I wished I were dead.
Then I almost died and how I begged for life instead.
I thought about giving up and putting life to rest
but that would have been a mistake
for I found out that I am truly blessed
though I have lost a few friends
I have now gained a couple dozen others.
In fact you can say I adopted a new family
and their friendship is like no other.
Some say they're just doing their jobs,
but I surely know better,
for they know and remember more about me than just my name.
Moving on would have been real easy
but staying was a whole lot more pleasing.
Life will always have its ups and downs and can be tough to handle,
but with my new friends it looks much brighter,
for they're giving me hope.
If one candle burns out, it's ok
Go ahead and light another!

Abbie continued to be part of her newfound church until she moved away. 𐄂



Known as Purple Rose

Every agency contacted was quick to confirm the details of this problem family. The woman was known as Purple Rose. To read her pitiful pleas for help, one would think everyone in the area had rejected her needs entirely. Yet, after some investigation, Love INC found that Mount Moriah United Methodist, Chestnut Grove Baptist Church, Maple Grove Christian Church, Laurel Hill Baptist Church, Nortonsville Church of God, and Hand to Hand Ministries, among others, were all helping her independently of each other.

Love INC had sought long and hard to coordinate services and meet the needs of this family. Now there was a new problem. The family had run out of fuel after the winter months and had no prospect of getting more. Most businesses will deliver only a full tank load and that with the cash up front. This family has no cash – ever. Only God knew what was to take place next.

God sent Albert and Jeanne of Coveseville Presbyterian Church to Love INC. They had a tank full of kerosene fuel they could not use. It was free for delivery but the glitch was that no delivery could be found! For months, Love INC went round and round with agencies, fuel companies, and individuals, trying to find someone to donate their services in delivering the fuel oil. They met with one road block after another.

Finally, Love INC appealed to all the churches, and Don Hardman, pastor of Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church answered the call.

The family had run out of fuel after the winter months and had no prospect of getting more.

He wrote, “One of our members has collected a 275 gallon oil tank from a friend that can go in a trailer or pickup, and he has secured the loan of an electric pump from Charlottesville Oil Co. I am trying to get the other details, like workers and truck/trailer, all lined up. We are

looking at delivering the oil sometime on Monday morning if all the giver and receiver are available.”

Finally, it was done, just in time for the cold weather to set in. Many thanks to those at Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian who put so much time and effort into the lives of “Purple Rose” and her children.

She herself wrote one of her characteristic emails to say “Thank you” to all involved:

Thank u all so so very much u all will never never no how much we appreciate that so very much u will never have no idea.
i do not no any men that would have took there time out like that for us and go thru the trouble they went thru to get it for us.
they was so sweet.
i will always be grateful for that.
it took them along time to get it done but they did it.
thank them again for us.
i can not thank them enough.
or u for helpin make this happen.
thank u. Raymond thank u. God Bless u all.
i can not get over what they went thru to do that anyone else prob would have given up and went on but they didn't.
they reminded me of my friend that passed he was the only one that i no that had patience to do anything and didn't mind.
and those to men didn't seem to mind.
i felt so bad for them and hated seein them haven to do that but it means a lot to us.
they made me feel so good to no there are still people in this world that do care for people.
i would have wrote sooner but one of my daughters thought i was gonna have to take them in to see a Dr but she didn't thank God.
so i am gonna get her there tomorrow if they can see her.
and this computer is very bad shape like to never let me send this.
it has bout had it. haha.
but anyway i had to write and let u no we got it and we appreciate that so so much.
thanks and i am sorry for bein such a pain.:)

☞



The Lord's Orchestration

Pastor Stephen and the wonderful people at his church, Life at Zion, have been working among the homeless in the tent cities in the wooded and river areas of Charlottesville and the county. In their ministering they met one man who seemed very much in need of a hand up. He would be able to return to his regular job, said his doctors, if he was able to have some needed surgery on his rotator cuff. There was a major obstacle to getting the surgery, however. Jerry's doctor refused to do surgery until Jerry had a place to live with a roof and sanitation and cooking facilities.

Pastor Stephen contacted Love INC, first looking for financial help to put Jerry up in a motel. He thought it might cost around \$1200. Love INC does not have a bank of funding for financial needs, and it does not encourage churches to pay for motel rooms under normal circumstances, especially since that amount could help a family obtain an apartment. But now Love INC was working on Jerry's behalf.

The next piece of the puzzle came to play as Kim from Charlottesville Health Access met with Jerry. She was concerned that what was holding him back from a surgery and being a productive member of society was a simple roof over his head. How could he maintain a roof over his head if he could not work?

*The answer was God-sent,
of course, right there in
the Love INC office.*

The answer was God-sent, of course, right there on one of the desks. Right desk of a staff member was a small slip of paper from Jeff, a former medical student intern. He had come by the office in the summer to let us know that he was renting an entire house (occupied by Christian students). He felt that God had truly blessed him with this house and he wanted to share it with someone who was in need. He wasn't looking to make any income, just to bless someone in need. He wanted Love INC to keep him in mind.

Suddenly in God's perfect timing, Jeff's note rose to the top of the

paper piles on the desk. Jeff agreed to meet with Jerry. Pastor Stephen met with Jeff and with Kimberly. Then Love INC heard nothing for a long time. God's work was going on in his churches and among his people. Finally, an email came from Jeff:

Greetings! I am writing you today to pass along a long overdue update on our brother.

You all originally found him at the homeless camp on Pantops, trying to find a place to recover after his shoulder surgery in early October. He has since began a (thankfully) healthy recovery, with slowly improving shoulder function. Due to the Lord's orchestration, you all finding a place for him to recover, and some determination on his part, his shoulder has had time to recover and pain is slowly dissipating.

While he has been here, he has helped with dishes and household chores, taken care of our rambunctious kitten, and has been reading a good deal. He watches TV, spends time with his girlfriend, and frequently talks about his family and thoughts on life and God. He is always ready to talk, and overall has been a pleasure to have as a tenant/roommate.

A goal he and I set out at the beginning of his recovery was that for a continued stay after, he must begin to make significant strides in finding employment and continue to go to his physical therapy sessions. Beginning early next month, he has been able to find a metal/construction shop that will be hiring him to do light work while he only has one fully functioning arm, and then more involved work as he continues to heal. He has done this line of work for the last 20 years of his life, and finds it very fulfilling. I've told him that as long as he continues to make strides and helps out around the house, he has a place to stay. He has willingly and enthusiastically agreed.

He was overwhelmed every time someone stopped by with a meal, and would often express amazement at the love he felt when talking with people who stopped by. A few times, he returned home to find a home-cooked meal sitting, waiting on the porch.

Your willingness to see a need and take action has directly affected his life. Christ's love has been expressed here, and we both thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

In Him,
Jeff ☩



Just Thank Jesus

It was one of the hottest days of the season, and when Sadie called the Love INC office, she had just finished wrestling with her refrigerator that couldn't beat the heat either.

She shared that she had done everything she knew to do – vacuumed under it, cleared ice away, and cleaned behind it – but it still wasn't working properly. It was too cold and iced on the top and too warm on the bottom. Her food was spoiling.

Sadie didn't talk only about her plight with the refrigerator – she went on to tell the phone volunteer about her other problems. She was the only one in the house working. Her daughter couldn't find a job and the granddaughter didn't have a job, because she was pregnant.

Sadie sounded both disgusted and discouraged. "No one will help me with the repair bill for the refrigerator," she said. "It's going to cost me \$125 at least just to have someone come by here and look at it. I don't have \$125. I'm sick right now and I'm supposed to be on medication, but I can't afford that either. I was in the emergency room yesterday..." Her voice trailed off. She could be heard crying softly.

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"Well," said the staff person, "I can try to see if we can find someone to come by and take a look." The staff person went on to caution Sadie that the hoped-for repair person might not respond right away, but it was agreed that an email would be sent out immediately.

The next day, Paul from Crozet Baptist Church called and offered to have his own repair man come to the lady's house. He would be glad to pay for whatever it cost.

With that good news, the staff tried to reach Sadie or her family and finally a young person answered the phone. When told about someone coming to fix the refrigerator, she said "Oh, no! Somebody already came last night and fixed the frig!"

Since Love INC had had no e-mails concerning someone coming to fix the refrigerator, the staff person was somewhat confused. The young person on the phone described the man, but she did not know his name. Love INC has no idea who he was either — and we did ask.

Sadie called the next day to say thank you for the repair. She said she tried to thank the man, but he said, “Just thank Jesus.” ☞



When God Breaks Through

Hazel stepped from a life of possibilities into one that breathed of hopelessness and loss.

Married and striving toward being a good mother to her daughter, she seemed to have much going for her. She was known as a hard worker and had even worked at one time for the director of Love INC when he owned some 7-11 stores.

Although she did not attend church, Hazel sent her daughter to the Albemarle Baptist Church AWANA program and to church on Sunday mornings. Yet, this lack of a strong anchor in her life through a relationship with Jesus began to erode that apparent strength.

The first outward sign was the failure of her marriage, which she compounded with a disastrous choice. Leaving Charlottesville with another man, Hazel moved to another state with her children (at this point, she had three). Like the prodigal son in the Gospel of Luke, she ended up with no job, no family supports, and her children were often hungry or ill clad.

Eventually, she decided to move back to Charlottesville to be near her family and her children's father. She found, however, that the economy was not the same as had been several years earlier, and getting a job was much harder. On top of that, she had no car.

*Then the unthinkable happened.
Hazel could not even believe it
at first, though all the signs
were there.*

With few options, Hazel stayed out in the county in a trailer belonging to her mother's new boyfriend. Afforded the opportunity to leave her little ones at the trailer for safekeeping, she began her job search.

Then the unthinkable happened. Hazel could not even believe it at first, though all the signs were there. Her mother's boyfriend was molesting her beautiful little girls. Hazel immediately removed her children

and took them to the daddy, explaining to him the horror of what she had discovered.

Then she brought in the authorities. There was a dizzying round of psychological appointments, police investigations, and school appointments. To make matters worse, Hazel's mother did not take kindly to the accusations leveled at her boyfriend. She went to court and filed an eviction on her daughter.

But into this emptiness, God was about to break through.

Finally, one of the several social workers who were involved in the situation produced an emergency Section 8 voucher to help Hazel find a home suitable for her children and herself. Hazel breathed a sigh of relief--until she realized that she had no job and no way to earn the security deposit.

Her children's father had bailed her out over and over in the last months and was now supplying the childcare, food, and overhead for the children. He did not have \$800 to spare.

Hazel was staying with an acquaintance, sleeping on the sofa, but the friend was to be evicted herself within a matter of weeks. Her situation seemed pretty hopeless all around.

But into this emptiness, God was about to break through. Perhaps the first visible sign was in a voicemail message Hazel left on the Love INC phone. She described briefly the abuse of her children, then left only her first name but no phone number.

Considering the seriousness of the content of her message, the Love INC staff immediately contacted the area child protective services. At the time, no one had a record of a report.

So the staff prayed and finally Hazel called again, giving more information about her need. Although Love INC does not provide direct funding, this case seemed to warrant advocating on her behalf. Although it deviated from normal procedure Love INC put out a request for the needed security deposit. Concurrently, Hazel began looking for an apartment in earnest.

Separately, concerned members from Covenant Church of God and First Presbyterian Church contacted Love INC to help with this need. Together, they made up what was needed for the deposit. By the first of the following month, Hazel and her children were in the apartment.

It was somewhat bare, but it had most of the essentials. Hazel did express the desire for something to sit on in the living room. David of University Baptist Church had just the thing: a large sectional sofa. Hazel was delighted.

This is not the end of the story. God was indeed in the process of breaking through in Hazel's life. She continued to keep in touch with Love INC. She was given clothing by Roger and Kim from Portico Church and toys for the children by Fresh Fire Church, along with other items.

These gifts helped keep Hazel in touch. The real objective was that Hazel start attending church and come to know Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The Love INC staff kept up the gentle reminders that she needed to get into a church. Hazel had many questions. What was that church like? Where could she find a children's program? Was this one really a Christian church? How about that one?

Then one day after a number of months, Hazel came into the office unannounced. She almost did not need to announce the news she had brought with her. Her face beamed with the obvious light of Christ.

She explained that she had started going to church. She was attending a class on healing of personal issues and a Bible study as well. She and her children were attending Sunday school and worship each week.

Hazel kicked her boyfriend, who was an illegal immigrant, out of her apartment and traded the truck he had purchased (but put in her name) for a van that she and her children could use to get to church.

Most importantly, she had given her life to the Lord. Oh, the power of the Almighty God! Hazel couldn't remember the name of her church but said it was "really good."

*Hazel kicked her boyfriend
out of her apartment*

A couple of months later, the staff discovered the connection. A number of single moms had a devoted mentor, watching after them, encouraging them, and finding help when they ran into problems. Anna of Christ Community Church was their shepherd, and here Hazel was touched eternally with the Savior's love. (When Anna is not shepherding single moms, she heads up the Pregnancy Center.)

Thank you, Anna, for shepherding Hazel!! And thank you to all those who helped with Hazel's needs, forging that link of relationship that ultimately brought Hazel to God's throne.

Yes, into Hazel's emptiness, God broke through to bring life and hope. But He used many caring Christians along the way, demonstrating as well that transformations may not happen overnight.

It may seem like we are getting nowhere with someone, but it was our Lord who talked about the seed, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It takes planting and weeding, cultivating and watering before the fruit of our labor becomes evident. Hazel is living proof! ☞



“Nobody Never Chosed Me Before...”

“I never asked for nothin’ for me, just for my daughter and my grandson, but they even gave me something. Other people would just throwed stuff down on the floor and leaved. And then you feel so obligated and so bad.

“But these people, they’re a working family. The man, he just took the food in the kitchen and they sat right down with me and talked. So I asked, ‘How’d you get my name?’ And they said they choosed me.

“Nobody never choosed me before, not never. Almighty God did this for me. And I know I don’t deserve it from Him, but He did it.”

In these words Ms. Harris described her encounter with Vickie and Bob, God’s servants from Northridge Community Church, a short while before Christmas.

With a daughter confined to a wheelchair with cerebral palsey, Ms. Harris had spent most of her life taking care of her, as well as a grandson borne by that daughter. Without so much as a word as to how the grandson came to be conceived, she cares for him and her daughter without complaint, even placing the teenager’s school and sports needs above her own needs.

*“Almighty God did this for me.
And I know I don’t deserve it
from Him, but He did it.”*

Were you to ask why Ms. Harris does this, you would begin to grasp what goes on in her mind. It is more than raw duty to care for her kind that prompts her. Instead, out of her love for them, she speaks of her faith and trust in “Almighty God” to get her through from day to day.

But as Thanksgiving approached, Ms. Harris was concerned that she would not have much to put on the table for that special holiday. Nor, for that matter, would she be able to provide for her family as she would like to at Christmas. So at that point, she called Love INC to see if we might find some help for her.

Concurrently, the body of Christians at Northridge Community Church had decided that they would like to help five families at both Thanksgiving and Christmas. Ms. Harris's family was one of those, which led to Vickie and Bob's visit with her.

Their ministry to Ms. Harris has added to the imprint of God's love in her mind. She readily expresses her thanks for all that God has done through His body here in this area, helping and sustaining her.

But the blessing is not all one way. Vickie wrote in an email that she has "fallen in love" with this family and that she wants to keep in touch with them.

Out of loving service God is prone to remind us that we are His ambassadors. What we do honors Him. And when we are in the center of His will, we begin to fall in love with those we serve. ☩

**Charlottesville/Albemarle
LOVE INC office**

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