

August 2022

→ **MINISTRY UPDATE** ←

David Nichols — President (405) 613-3120
Dondino Melchorie — V.P. (702) 688-3165
Ron Minnick — Sec. Treasurer (405) 473-2378

UPDATE

WOW! 26 years ago, all of this was just thoughts in my head, but it was backed by a calling from above. That calling gave it the power to become a reality in a world that has increasingly become anti-Christ in practice, while politically Christian in words. I am constantly reminded of this every time I dare step into a “Christian” circle. The truth is that in our world today, Jesus is only for people with money, men and women with a sound mind, people with only acceptable addictions, those who can fit in with the crowd, and people who don’t remind them of the negatives in life. As long as they don’t have to see it, hear it, touch it, or be reminded of it, then life is acceptable the way it is.

God has anointed me to preach the truth, and the truth is:

1. The poor are no longer protected by law in America. If you can’t afford a good lawyer, good luck. You will sign something that will be a win for the district attorney. If your crime is severe enough, some lawyer may help you for the publicity.
2. Jesus would not be allowed to preach and teach in the vast majority of churches today. The reason? He had a record, as did most of the apostles and disciples. The church world today doesn’t accept that. If you have a record, you must be guilty. I am proud to say I was falsely accused and arrested for helping people. I was led to

believe that because they had nothing on me, all I had to do was sign the district attorney’s paper and after 30 days it would all be dismissed. I was very naïve. I found out seven years later that I had a record (failure to register). I was able to get that expunged, and I thought that would clear my name. I learned later that law enforcement can always use it against me. Upon closer examination, I found that they had charged me for the falsification of records of registration, claiming I had four men living in a three bedroom mobile home. They had fifteen men living at our location who had never lived there. These were totally false accusations, and my lawyer apparently didn’t catch it.

3. They made it plain in court that anything beyond preaching the Word was not a protected religious right. In America today, religious rights only pertain to the pulpit, and not to any practices of the Word. In other words, you can say what you want as long as you don’t act on it. Now, they are even doing away with that. Only salvation of the soul is considered religious, but that is only part of the teaching of Jesus. Beware, my friend, of what has happened in the spirit realm. The Bible teaches that the righteous shall suffer persecution. Most of Christianity is not ready for that. I get persecuted for trying to house the homeless. What will come next? Are you willing to suffer for Christ’s sake? Think about it.

Now, for some good news! The loan closed. Hand Up has now achieved stability without any money. I still give, and I hope you will also give. We need a chapel and some offices. We

need buildings to house men coming out of prison. We also need buildings to help families. We are partnering with others to meet the needs of women and children. .



Because of politics and lack of Christian interest, no money is offered to help. That is the state of the church and society today. Someone has to put legs to their prayers. Will that be you?

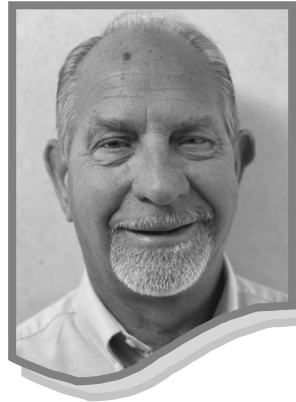
— *David Nichols,*
President & CEO

We try to encourage all of our residents here at Hand Up Ministries, including those who are not Christians, that God wants to do good things in their life. We also make the effort to impart that God wants to do more than they can imagine in their life. A recent example comes from Luke chapter 5, where Peter encounters Jesus for the first time, perhaps as he finishes a day of fishing without a catch. Jesus asks Peter and his partners (James and John) if he can borrow their boat. He talks Peter into using his boat to let Jesus get out into the lake away from the shore and preach to the people on the bank.

Peter saw it as a boat, but Jesus saw it as a platform to advance the cause of preaching life giving salvation to the people on the shore. The question is this: what do we have in our lives that we value and see as belonging to us, and yet God may see it as a platform to advance life giving help to others? It may be our education, or our career or business, or our talents or gifts. God always has the ability to see the bigger picture. It is up to us to

surrender and participate with God in helping others.

I believe that is the platform or criteria through which God judges us in the end. How much are we willing to do to help or assist others? A quote I often use in my emails to keep me thinking of this truth is, "Be blessed as you find ways to bless others."



What do you have or value that God wants to use? Can he borrow your boat?

— *Ray Riddle,*
Oklahoma Director

TESTIMONIES

I was born in Oklahoma City in 1952. I was the youngest of seven children, and I was raised as a Roman Catholic. My father was a roofing contractor, and my mother stayed home and took care of the children and the house. I had a fairly normal fifties and sixties childhood. I liked Mighty Mouse, The Beverly Hillbillies, the Beatles, the Mamas and Papas, Aretha Franklin, the Blazers hockey team, OU football, and Marvel Comics. I have always believed in God, and I prayed every night before I went to sleep. In 1970, I started attending Oklahoma State, where I majored in Spanish.

I started drinking alcohol when I was in high school, but I was more of social drinker than a hardcore boozier. I started smoking pot at the end of my senior year of high school, and I became a chronic pot head during my sophomore year of college. I also took a lot of LSD during my sophomore year. I went from the dean's honor role to academic probation because of marijuana and LSD. Something very significant happened that academic year. I accepted the Lord.

I continued to attend Mass at a Catholic church. I knew the things I was doing were wrong, and I prayed to God that He would change me. I began studying the Bible during the summer before my senior year of college, and I had a fervent desire to do God's will. I was

also restless. On Wednesday of the third week of my senior year (the day after my 21st birthday), I met a member of a small, radically fundamentalist Christian group which traveled around the country. They were camped by Lake Carl Blackwell, and they were led by man named Jim Roberts. I quit college, and I joined the group. I left everything, including my family, my friends, and my fiance. Most people would refer to this group as a cult. They didn't drink alcohol, nor did they smoke or use drugs. They didn't take medicine or go to doctors. They didn't even drink soda or coffee. There was no sex outside of marriage. The women wore long dresses, and they didn't cut their hair. The men kept their hair short, but they wore untrimmed beards. We didn't watch TV or listen to radio.

I spent 19 and one half years with this group (September, 1973 to April, 1993). I left the group because there were too many teachings with which I did not agree. For a few years, I continued to believe much of what they believed, and I lived in a tent in California. I got in touch with my family in May of 1997. Before I contacted them, they didn't know if I was dead or alive. They received me back with joy, and my brother invited me to stay at his house in Oklahoma City. I returned to Oklahoma, and I got a job.

I had a job, a bank account, a car, and an apartment, but I lost everything in 2002. I committed a crime, and I fled the state. The long arm of the law caught up with me in February, 2003, and I was incarcerated until December 30th of 2004. I was on probation until the end of 2012. My case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I arrived at Hand Up on December 30th, 2004. I started working at a very large health care laundry on September 2nd, 2006, and I worked there for 11 years and four months. I worked until the end of December of 2017, and then I retired and started drawing social security. I began working in the Hand Up office in January, 2018, and I also edited and typed the articles and resident testimonies which are included in the Hand Up newsletter.

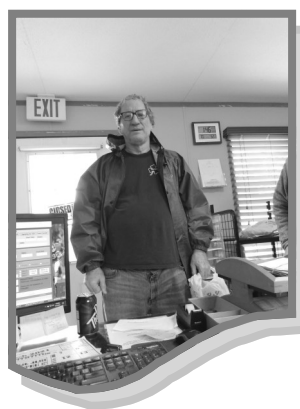
I retired from the HUM office in February of 2021. I stay up late, and I sleep late, but I still co-edit the HUM newsletter with Mark Smith. I also do occasional tasks for Ray.

I would have been homeless if Hand

Up hadn't existed. I am grateful to David Nichols for creating a safe haven for the many people he has helped over the years. Of course, I am very, very thankful to Almighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ, without whom we are nothing.

The Hand Up program is a blessing for those who wish to get their life on track and do what is right.

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— Chris Benson

I was born in Las Vegas in December of 1992, and I am the youngest of four children. We moved to Oklahoma eight months after I was born. My parents didn't go to church. I went to a Baptist

church with my grandmother, and this is how I was introduced to Christianity. As a child, I didn't take my faith too seriously, but a friend invited me to church when I was in high school. I really got into this church, and I was truly seeking the Lord. However, this church's legalism affected my relationship with God. I had bitterness toward my family, and this affected my relationship with members of the church. I began to withdraw and isolate myself, but I was still participating in church activities.

I wanted to surrender myself completely to the Lord, but I was still holding onto hurts and pains. I wasn't studying the Bible daily, nor was I praying like I should. I was just going through the motions, and I began making bad decisions. I felt condemnation and shame all of the time. All of this emotional turmoil and my struggle with lust led to me committing my crime.

I turned myself into the police, which is what my pastor recommended. I spent five days in the county jail, and then I bonded out of jail. I fought my case for a year and a half.

I took a blind plea, and I received a sentence of five years in prison and fifteen years of probation. I started attending a Bible study in prison, and my whole view on Christianity transformed. I began to see my identity in Christ and know I am forgiven. My relationship with God found depth.

My case manager told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I came to Hand Up immediately after I left prison. I am grateful for a place to live, and I am grateful for the strong, lifelong friendships I have made here. I appreciate the church services and the fellowship with the men here. I have grown in God at Hand Up. The church services and the godly leadership have helped me in my relationship with God. I have had the same job for two years, and I was able to save money for a car. I participate in the worship team at Hand Up, and I have twice gone to Arkansas to perform praise music and testify at the church pastored by David Nichols' brother.



There are many challenges ahead, but I know with accountability and faith I will be alright. I thank God for everything. He will see me through it all.

— Joseph Dodge

I was born on Tinker Air Force Base in 1966, and I was baptized when I was born. I grew up in a middle class family. My dad was in the military for twenty years, and our family moved every two or three years. We moved back and forth between Europe and the United States. Living in a military community was structured, but it was nice because we had the military in common.

I was hit in the head by a car when I was six years old, and I suffered a dislocated hip as a result of this accident. I was put in special education when I was in second or third grade, but I lived a normal life. I played with other kids in the neighborhood, and I

went on family picnics. I swam, hunted, fished, and went to the car races. I would look for Indian arrowheads with my dad and my grandfather.

I had a difficult time in school and in vocational technical school. Because of my disabilities I had a difficult time finding a job, but I made it. I worked for 16 years at several different jobs. The last job was at Norman Regional Hospital. I had several girlfriends while I was working. People picked on me and bullied me at school and and at my jobs. This was because of my disabilities. When I was 39 years old I did something stupid with my girlfriend's daughter. I was arrested, and I lost my job. The girl told her mother, and her mother told the police. The police told my employer, and I was fired. I got a lawyer, and I fought the case for four years. I started drawing social security disability six months after I lost my job.

I was supposed to serve 20 years, but because of my disabilities my lawyer got my sentence reduced to five years. I was bullied in prison because I was a handicapped sex offender, but my sister got a lawyer to help me get released after serving only one year. I was released from prison in February, 2011. After my release I started receiving social security again. My probation officer told me about Hand Up Ministries, and I came to Hand Up in 2011. I didn't like Hand Up at first, but my sister convinced my to stay here because there were so few places where I could live. I didn't have much money, and sex offenders are restricted in where they can live. I was born again after I came to Hand Up, and I changed my ways. I made friends at Hand Up, and as I learned more about Hand Up I realized it is a friendly place. My family lives nearby.

I have never taken illegal drugs, nor have I ever drunk alcohol. I have never smoked.. My dad died of emphysema, and I don't want to die like my dad.

— Roger Wofford

We appreciate all our partners and donors. It is your support that enables us to assist individuals back into society as new brothers and sisters in Christ.

