



December 2023

Dear friend,

Greetings from the Center of Hope! Our mission at the Center of Hope is to walk alongside people to promote physical and spiritual health, and ultimately change our community one life at a time. We take our mission seriously as we care for the less fortunate in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. We are encouraged to be part of a church network that puts the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus first. We understand that we must work together to advance the Kingdom of God around the world and in our own neighborhoods. All for HIS glory and honor! As the end of the 2023 year approaches, I am deeply encouraged by your continued support of the ministry of the Center of Hope. We are thankful that God is providing for our ministry through you and your churches. As recipients of your financial support, we take seriously our role of being effective stewards to ensure that Christ's name is glorified through the use of the funds in our ministry. We are currently 58% funded for our fiscal year (April-March). We now will move forward in faith that He will continue to provide in the following months. Please keep us in mind this Christmas season.

We have exciting and concerning news regarding our various ministries. The exciting news is that our ministries are caring for our community better, which is evident in our statistics from January through October of this year. When compared to our statistics last year (January-December 2022), we have already seen a 27% increase in pastoral counseling interactions in our Care Center, a 141% increase in participants in our Earn-Your-Way program, a 355% increase in the number of hygiene kits distributed, 380% increase in the number of IDs and Birth Certificates distributed, 14% increase in bicycle repair and 6% increase in the number of bicycles distributed in our Bike Ministry, and 35% increase in the number of clothing provisions given out. We still have two more months of services to add to those numbers! The rise in participation in our programs shows that the Center of Hope is needed in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. However, it also shows that the poverty in Sioux Falls is deepening, which is concerning. Your continued support is crucial as we seek to address this concern in our community.

Please pray for the Center of Hope and our guests. Most of our guests are experiencing addictions, homelessness, mental illness, loneliness, financial insecurity, and/or relationship brokenness. Pray that God opens their eyes to HIS presence, especially during the holiday season for many of our guests are isolated from their families and experience intense emotions during the holiday season. Pray for our staff, and volunteers as well as they walk alongside our guests through their various struggles.

Below you will find stories and a video of a Center of Hope guest testimonial. Thank you for partnering with us in ministry.

Would you like to receive these updates digitally? Please email Kelli at kgilmore@rca.org to be added to the email list. You will receive more timely updates from the missionary you support and help us be good stewards of our resources.

Sincerely,

Brett Rockvam
Executive Director
Center of Hope

Forgetting He Came for Me . . . and You

By Adam Hofer

As I sit around the table with my family before we eat meals, we pray as a family and we always end the prayer by thanking God for coming, for teaching us His ways, and for dying on the cross so that we live life to the fullest reconciled to God, and for all the work that is done through the Holy Spirit. We approach Him with thankful hearts because we know that He came for us, taught for us, died for us, and works in our hearts for us so that He is glorified through us. Yet, so often it is easy to forget this reality. Seeing him when life is hard is often difficult. Being disciplined enough to want to hear from Him in those times can be just as difficult. Yet, we know from His Word that we have a God who is always there...in the good times and bad times. Give us eyes to see this reality continually, Lord!

Today, a 31-year-old man was brought to the Center of Hope to talk with me because he was experiencing suicidal thoughts. In our two-hour conversation, we spoke of the Gospel, his innate value in the eyes of God, and that God had a plan for his life outside of the brokenness he currently is going through. Yet, he seemed to refuse to listen to my words and, like so many others, intentionally chose to stay in a state of hopelessness to stew in his brokenness. He heard everything I said to him before but lacked the strength to press on. All the pains of his life, ranging from his childhood to the present, were weighing on him to the point that he did not want to live any longer. The only thing that seemed to numb his pain was meth, which has led him deep into addiction. I asked him, **“Do you want to be well?”** He replied sadly and without hope, **“I am going to die with meth flowing through my veins.”** The surprising thing is that he has a relationship with God. Yet, through his struggles, he forgot that He came *for him*, taught *for him*, died *for him*, and is currently there *for him* through the Holy Spirit. In his despair, he didn't want to hear it, or at least, not at first. Thankfully, our long conversation led to prayer twice. The first time I prayed over him. The second he prayed, **“God, I need you more than ever. I am broken. I need you.”** In periods of hardship, we often lose sight of God's presence. We forget He came for us. Yet, we desperately need Him.



The reality is we often forget He came for us, which leads us to lose sight of God's presence in our lives. We lose sight of Him because our eyes are focused elsewhere, on our pains, on our responsibilities, on our families... Yet, that does not change the reality that God came in flesh through Jesus Christ, that He dedicated His life to disciple and teach, and that He hung in constant, throbbing pain on the cross to set us free from the bondage of sin and death, and that He unleashed the Holy Spirit to renew and empower our hearts and minds. Why did He do these things? The answer is simple: He loves us, even when we forget. I'm no longer going to forget that He came for me...and for you. Let's spread this message of hope to the hopeless this Christmas season. Thank you, Lord, for coming! Thank you for loving me.

Watch a testimonial from one of our program participants: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OSOs0P_o6A

Clothing Drives— Consider Hosting a Church Drive

We need your help! We have an urgent need for winter gear and clothing, specifically men's and children's coats, snow pants and coveralls, gloves and mittens, steel-toed boots, winter boots, shoes, and belts. We are VERY LOW on these items. Another need is for adult backpacks to be used to give out to people transitioning out of prison. The backpacks will contain a felony-friendly list we've been working on all year (VERY COMPREHENSIVE), employment options, a local church list, and a Bible.

Donations can be dropped off Tuesday-Friday 9 am-5 pm at our Donation Dropoff on the north side of our building. Ring the doorbell and we'll help unload. Thank you in advance!

Let's Connect—Mission Moments, Pulpit Supplies, and MORE!

Out of our gratitude, we want you to know that we value our partnership in ministry. If you are a pastor, elder, or deacon of a church, do not hesitate to reach out to us if you need pulpit support help or if you want us to update your congregation on what God has been doing at the Center of Hope. We would love to join you for worship! All for HIS glory and honor.