

**Religion has always been an important part of Thomas' life.** Thomas grew up reading the Bible and attending a Pentecostal church every Sunday. This is something he continued as he moved around the country, first from California to Iowa, then to Minnesota, Texas, Kentucky, and Arkansas. Over time, Thomas formed a close personal relationship with God. It's been an important source of strength for him during an often-troubled life.

Thomas' favorite Bible verse is Isaiah 40:31. When we sat down with him recently, he recited it to us from memory.



***But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. -Isaiah 40:31***

*"We used to sing that as a chorus at my church," says Thomas. "I know it by heart."*

**Thomas never had a lot.** For most of his life, he's done janitorial work or worked in restaurants. These jobs didn't pay much, and he became used to living paycheck to paycheck. Thomas always showed up on time and worked hard, but his personal life caused him trouble.

*"I got hooked up with the wrong people," Thomas says. "I made bad decisions."* While living in Minnesota, Thomas and his friends wrote bad checks. Thomas ended up in jail. When he got out, all he had was a t-shirt and a pair of shorts.

**He had no family and nowhere to go. Thankfully, the Mission was there.**

When Thomas came to the Mission for the first time, he had almost nothing. He was able to get some new clothes and a nice pair of work boots from the Rescued Treasures "thrift store." He became a dorm monitor, and he got to set up rooms and show new clients around.

**With his basic needs taken care of, Thomas quickly found a day labor job in town.** Things went well for a while, and Thomas saved up a bit of money. Eventually, he left the state to make a new start somewhere else.

Thomas moved around a bit, working here and there. The money was never great, and Thomas got involved in toxic relationships that led to more bad situations. At one point he was kicked out of his home. He tried staying at a Salvation Army shelter in Arkansas, but they had no room. **Thomas was literally living on the streets.** He slept in a tent and went to the Salvation Army for a meal each day. It was never a situation he was comfortable in, and it's not something he ever wants to return to.

Thomas recently moved back up north. He had no money, so he returned to Northlands Rescue Mission. Thankfully, Thomas arrived with a new outlook on life. He's determined to move on from his troubled past, and right now he is focused on one thing: getting his own apartment.

**Things have gone well for Thomas since he returned to the Mission.** For one, he feels safe for the first time in a long time. *"When I was in Arkansas, I had my stuff stolen 6 times,"* Thomas says. *"I lost my birth certificate and my glasses. I don't have to worry about that kind of thing here."*

Thomas got some new pants and shoes from the Mission, which he is grateful for. With the help of the advocacy team, he got a new birth certificate as well. He also has an eye appointment soon so that he can get some new glasses.

Thomas is working at a local café, and he's been on a list for housing since December. **He is just waiting for the call that he's been approved.** Then, he will have the apartment that he wants so much.

In the meantime, Thomas is saving up money from work and helping around the Mission. He's gained a reputation for doing a lot here. He is always on top of his assigned chores, and he often does chores that he isn't expected to. Thomas even persuades other clients to help out with extra tasks. Thomas is receiving help from the Mission, so he sees it as a personal responsibility to keep the building clean. It also keeps him busy.

*"I try to stay pretty active for a 51-year old man,"* Thomas says.

When he has down time, Thomas enjoys riding his bike and playing cards with the other clients. He loves games like bridge or hearts. He tells us that he almost never loses!

**Thomas still makes time every day to talk to God.** The advocacy team helped him find a King James Bible, and he reads it regularly. Scripture and prayer help Thomas focus on the present. He knows it's time to forgive himself for the past and move on to a better future.

***"As long as I can get consistent hours [at work], I'll be doing okay,"** Thomas says. **To the Mission's supporters, Thomas says, "Thank you for the donations. I appreciate all the help. It's a blessing."***

**Thank you for not giving up on our clients.** Sometimes, roadblocks and stumbles are inevitable. With God's love and your compassion, Thomas and others still find their way.

God Bless,



Sue Shirek  
Executive Director