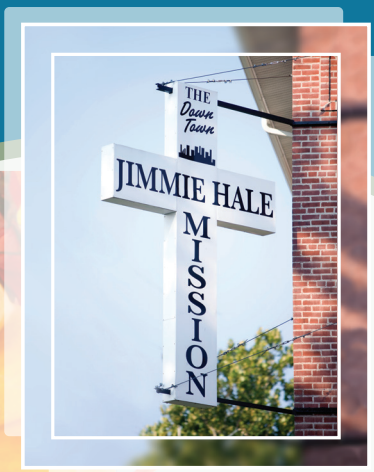

JIMMIE HALE MISSION

Good News

STORIES OF CARING

November 2026

Saving Grace

> *"God's grace has made all the difference." — Jamie*

Jamie remembers a time when his life still felt like his own. He had a job, a home and a family. But one poor choice led to another until, little by little, everything slipped away. Eventually, there was no home to return to and no one left to call.

As the last pieces of his former life fell away, Jamie found himself living beneath a bridge. The concrete was his bed, the darkness his shelter. Some days, Jamie caught fish from the stream. Other days, hunger drove him to search through the garbage for something – anything - to eat.

"I had given up," he said. "I was just trying to survive."

"Hunger will make you do almost anything." Jamie said. "It has a way of shrinking a person's world." For Jamie, life became about making it through one cold, lonely night and finding enough food to face the next. Desperation led him to stop believing his life could ever be right again. He was tired, ashamed and without hope. But even beneath that bridge, when Jamie felt invisible to everyone else, God still saw him.

With nowhere else to turn, Jamie prayed. That prayer led him to Jimmie Hale Mission, where he was provided a warm meal and people welcomed him without judgment. For the first time in a long time, he could sit at a table without wondering where his next meal would come from. More importantly, he no longer had to face another night believing no one cared about whether he survived.

Today, Jamie is a graduate of our 16- week Reclaiming Hope Program and is in our Continuum of Care Program. He is back to work, clean and sober, slowly rebuilding his faith and the life he once believed was lost forever. The road has not been easy, but he is no longer walking it hungry, forgotten or alone.

That my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever! — Psalm 30:12

When the Meals Matter Most

"It all begins with a meal" is more than a familiar phrase at Jimmie Hale Mission. It is the principle on which this ministry was built, and where hope begins.

72 years ago, on Thanksgiving Day in 1954, Mission co-directors Jessie Hale Downs and Leo Shepura served their first Thanksgiving meal at the Mission and began welcoming overnight guests. That act of sharing the love of God with those in need would help shape one of Birmingham's most enduring ministries.

They understood that a meal could reach someone when little else could. It could offer comfort to a person who was hungry, ease desperation for someone who felt forgotten and be a reason to walk through the Mission's doors. From there, trust and hope could begin.

Much has changed since that first Thanksgiving meal, but its purpose remains. Every day, men, women, and children come to Jimmie Hale Mission carrying burdens that reach far beyond hunger. A nourishing meal meets an immediate need, but it also gives us the opportunity to listen, encourage and offer the care each person needs to begin rebuilding their life.

Mrs. Jessie and Brother Leo could not have known how many people would one day gather around the tables they first prepared, but their example still guides and inspires us. We welcome our neighbors, feed them, see them, and love them as Christ loves us.

A meal can be the beginning of a new path in life.

Preparing the Table

As families prepare to gather around their own tables, Jimmie Hale Mission Meals on Wheels volunteers are preparing more than 350 Thanksgiving dinners for Meals on Wheels shut-ins across our community.

Some of our volunteers pack each meal with care. Others load their cars and carry the dinners from one doorstep to the next. Many choose to do both by helping to box the meal and then delivering it into the hands of someone who may have no one else coming to visit that day.

Each dinner also includes a colorful handmade placemat filled with cheerful drawings and a message of encouragement created by local children. These simple messages of care remind each recipient that this meal was prepared especially for them.

Visit our website JimmieHaleMission.com/ThanksgivingVolunteer to volunteer, whether you would like to package meals, deliver them or do both. You can also find a printable placemat design to decorate and send.

The greatest gift is God's love, shown through those who care.

Beyond the Line

From the back of our kitchen, Kenneth watches. He notices when a new client who is just beginning to work there lingers in the kitchen, ready to talk but unsure how to begin. He knows when to ask questions, when to make him laugh and when to keep quietly working beside him.

Kenneth understands because he once came to the Jimmie Hale Mission as a client himself. After completing the program, he worked in UAB's main kitchen, gaining valuable experience he would later bring back to the Mission as a member of our kitchen staff.

The kitchen now gives Kenneth a natural way to connect with the men here. While hands stay busy and meals come together, conversation comes more easily. Little by little, people relax, trust grows and relationships form.

At Thanksgiving and Christmas, Kenneth and many others prepare dinners for our Meals on Wheels recipients with that same attention. They cook for hours knowing that this may be the only meal shut-in individuals receive on these meaningful days. He cares deeply and knows in his heart that the Jimmie Hale Mission kitchen is his mission field.

Kenneth knows how to feed a crowd, but his real gift is making each individual feel seen.

A Legacy of Gratitude

There is something deeply meaningful about knowing the love we have shared can continue long after we are gone.

Through a legacy gift to Jimmie Hale Mission, your compassion lives on in renewed faith, restored families and lives given the chance to begin again.

By including Jimmie Hale Mission in your Will, estate plans, or naming Jimmie Hale Mission as the beneficiary of your bank, investment or retirement account, you create something lasting, a reflection of your faith and generosity that time cannot erase. The good you begin today can continue touching lives for generations to come.

A life well lived leaves love behind. A legacy gift allows that love to keep living.

Please contact Perryn at perryn@jimmiehalemission.com or 205-323-2266 for more information.

Dear Mission Friends,

Thanksgiving has a way of drawing us back to what matters most, not simply what is on the table, but who is gathered around it and who sets the table before us.

At Jimmie Hale Mission, we are especially mindful of those who once wondered whether they had a place to belong. Many arrive carrying years of hurt. Yet, as they enter our doors, something begins to change. They find people who believe in them and they begin to believe in themselves.

That same spirit reaches beyond our walls each Thanksgiving as meals are prepared and delivered to our Meals on Wheels neighbors. For some, the smiling face holding a meal at the door may be the only person they see all day. Along with a nourishing meal comes a warm smile, a few kind words and the reassurance that someone cares.

None of this happens without you.

Your generosity places food on the table, but it also creates moments of connection, compassion and hope. It gives individuals the chance to sit among people who see them for who God is helping them to become.

From all of us at Jimmie Hale Mission, thank you for being part of this family. May your Thanksgiving be filled with the same love and hope you so generously share.

With gratitude,

Perryn Carroll
Executive Director

P.S. Please consider sharing your blessings with someone who needs a fresh start this Thanksgiving.
Your donations make a difference!

Bon Appétit!

Each year for Thanksgiving our Jimmie Hale Mission kitchen prepares and serves: 40 turkeys, 216 pounds of yams, 120 pounds of green beans, 133 pounds of dressing, and 575 slices of pie to serve over 750 meals!

Your gift helps fill every plate.

Please help us serve hope this Thanksgiving.

Go to JimmieHaleMission.com/donate to give today.

Thank you!

Save the Date

Wednesday November 18
Jessie's Place
Graduation 10:00 a.m.

Thursday November 19
Royal Pines
Graduation 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, November 25
Downtown Men's Center
Graduation 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, November 26
Downtown Men's Center
Help us serve over 750 meals!

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