

GUIDED GIVING

[Making life better for God's retired servants]
a publication of GuideStone® 

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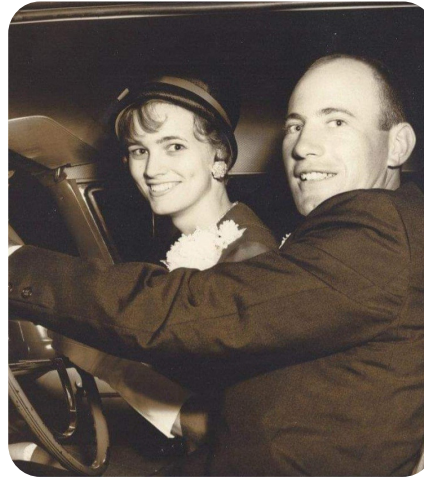
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information and recipient stories!



"My sustaining Bible verse has been Philippians 4:13 (NLT), 'For I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength.'"

Continuing the Call: A Widow in Ministry

By Susan Ervien



When high school sweethearts Vayon and Russell Smith married in 1964, they decided early on to serve the Lord. How, exactly, didn't become clear until a little over a decade later.

"We began to serve in various SBC churches near our home near Franklinton, Louisiana, as lay people. Russell was a deacon, taught Sunday school to the youth and led a group of RAs. I taught Sunday school to girls and was WMU director of our church and eventually our association in 1976," recalls Vayon.

But it was in 1978 that Russell felt a different call. That summer, he volunteered to spend a week building a mission church in Montana. One week turned into two. Then, two days before he was set to fly home, he called Vayon to ask whether she would be willing to move to Montana. Montana is a far cry from Louisiana, but the Smiths sold their home, packed up all the belongings they could and moved their three children up north.

"I did not think I would be able to stand the cold," remembers Vayon. "That year, they had the worst winter in 50 years, but the Lord sustained me through it all. And it was during that first year there that Russell answered the call of God to preach the Gospel in Montana."

Over the next 40 years, despite a short stint in seminary, Vayon and Russell served in churches all over Montana. The pay from these churches was minimal, so both the Smiths worked other jobs to help make ends meet.

"We had three children to raise, and it was necessary to work," says Vayon. "There were no extras for stashing it away for retirement. We focused on ministry and what the Lord wanted us to do. The Lord always provided for our needs."

The Smiths continued to serve in various capacities through different church plants in Montana until they retired in 2017 and moved back south, finding a place north of Franklinton, Louisiana — where their ministry all began.

However, what was meant to be a sweet time of retirement near family soon turned sour when Russell became ill shortly after their return. With little retirement income and mounting medical bills from Russell's illness, the Smiths needed help.

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A Letter from Our President

D. Hance Dilbeck, Jr.

Greetings from Mission:Dignity and GuideStone!

I love the openings of Paul's epistles. They are often very encouraging. I can imagine being in one of those early house churches as the letter would be read aloud. I wonder if the hearers, our first-century brothers and sisters, sat a little straighter; the great apostle with a Damascus Road experience was talking to them.

In the opening words of Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, he utters these words, *"I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with you for all of you in my every prayer, because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now."* Philippians 1:3-5 (CSB)

Paul's words here could be my own. For those of you who have joined us on our Mission to provide Dignity to God's retired servants, we at GuideStone give thanks to God every time we think of you. Some of you reading these words are newer donors; others have given faithfully for many years, even decades.

Thank you, whether you're a long-time donor, a brand-new one or somewhere in between. We are thankful for you.

Because of your faithful gifts through Mission:Dignity – 100% of what you give goes to help a retired minister, his widow or other church worker near the poverty line – more than 2,800 people have the needed extra income to provide for their monthly needs. No retired pastor or pastor's widow should have to choose between food and fuel or medicine and maintenance of their home or car. And thanks to the gifts they receive through Mission:Dignity, they don't have to make those choices.

In the following pages, we'll share some stories from around this God-honoring ministry. And I hope that, as Paul continues in Philippians 1, "your love will keep on growing" for the men and women we are so privileged to serve.

In Christ,

D. Hance Dilbeck, Jr.

President – Chief Executive Officer
GuideStone



Mission:Dignity[®]

A ministry of GuideStone[®]

Want to learn more about our ministry?

Visit: MissionDignity.org

Email: MissionDignity@GuideStone.org

Call: 1-877-888-9409

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One night, Vayon was watching The Mike Huckabee Show and heard about Mission:Dignity® from guest GuideStone® President Emeritus O.S. Hawkins. She wrote down the contact information and requested an application. Mission:Dignity was able to step in and help the Smiths during this financially and emotionally difficult time. When Russell passed in 2019, Vayon was devastated.

“We had been married 54 years when he died, so we had a long time together. It was hard to think about living without him,” she says. “However, just as the Lord sustained me in the cold, hard winters of Montana, he sustained me in the cold, hard reality of Russell no longer being here with me.”

And just as Russell had committed to serve the Lord, so had Vayon, so she sought the Lord as to what he might have for her next.

“My sustaining Bible verse has been Philippians 4:13 (NLT), ‘For I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength.’ Knowing that Jesus is ever with me, giving me the strength I need to face each day and its challenges, is what has kept me going.”

And “going” is an understatement. Over the last five years, Vayon has been led to start several Facebook groups, one being “Praying Grandmothers,” a large group of women praying daily for their grandchildren. Another was a Bible Study group on Proverbs, which was active for two years.

It’s through these groups and her recent foray into sharing a devotional on her Facebook page every day that Vayon continues to spread the Gospel from her home. One of her devotionals is featured in this year’s 40 Days of Dignity, a compilation of devotionals submitted by Mission:Dignity recipients.

“This is a daily requirement for me,” she says, “to be in his Word, consuming it and making it a part of me. Just as our bodies need nourishment from good healthy food, we need to consume the Word of the Lord to be able to live the Christian life he wants us to live.”

Since October 2019, Vayon has also helped raise funds for a church in Kakamega, Kenya. Since July of 2023, Vayon has been frequenting the local nursing home to play hymns and old Gospel songs for the residents’ enjoyment.

Finally, Vayon is a gifted painter who creates greeting cards with her work to encourage those within her influence and circles of ministry.

Vayon’s passion for serving the Lord knows no bounds as she continues answering her calling long after her husband went on to glory. Mission:Dignity is honored to serve her and other widows just like her as they continue in ministry. We consider it a biblical call to serve these noble women, as James 1:27 (CSB) states, “Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress...”

“I am so thankful for the ministry of Mission:Dignity,” says Vayon. “It allows me to continue to survive financially and serve in this capacity.”

The people of God are thankful, too.



Vayon Smith artwork above.

Give to the O.S. and Susie Hawkins Emergency Grant Fund



The Hawkins Fund was established to perpetually provide for the emergency needs of Mission:Dignity recipients with the highest financial need. Today, Mission:Dignity recipients at this income level earn an average of \$1,033 monthly. The Hawkins Emergency Grant Fund exists in addition to the gifts that provide monthly grants to more than 2,800 retired pastors and their widows.

Fast Facts About Emergency Grants

- \$800,000 in emergency grants disbursed in 2023
- Average age of emergency grant recipients: 82
- Medicare or Medicaid does not cover most dental care and vision care costs
- 100% of your designated gift will go toward emergency grant needs

This year, Mission:Dignity expanded an initiative to raise money specifically for this fund. As the costs of medical procedures, home repairs and assistance devices rise, we hope to meet these needs head-on with generous giving from the Hawkins Fund.

If you are interested in designating a gift directly to The O.S. and Susie Hawkins Emergency Grant Fund:

- Select "OS and Susie Hawkins Emergency Grant Fund" from the drop-down box under "I want to support" on our donation page at MissionDignity.org.
- Or write "Hawkins Fund" in the memo line of your check.
- Or contact our office at **1-877-888-9409** or MissionDignity@GuideStone.org.
- For more information, please visit GuideStone.org/Mission-Dignity/Get-Involved/Hawkins-Grant

Qualifying emergency needs include:



Eyeglasses



Hospital Stays



Medical Bills



Hearing Aids



Dental Work



Home Repairs



Natural Disasters



Steward Your Resources with Purpose

With GuideStone Wealth Management™, team up with our Christian financial advisors to finish well and make a positive impact for the Kingdom.

We believe the advisor relationship is more than a financial conversation. It's a sharing of values.

We'll help guide you in developing a comprehensive plan to align your faith with your finances.

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- A dedicated advisor
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GIVING TUESDAY

DECEMBER 3, 2024

One of the most fun charitable events of the year is almost here — **#GivingTuesday is December 3, 2024**. Mark your calendars for this once-a-year opportunity to join with countless others to support the ministry of Mission:Dignity.

Plus, we are excited to share that this year, due to a few gracious donors, gifts will be matched — up to at least \$600,000 (maybe more!) — on #GivingTuesday!

Where does your donation go?

\$150 supplies five days of groceries

\$400 covers a month of utilities or medications

\$1,200 provides three months of housing expenses

\$4,800 fully underwrites a year of assistance

To make your gift go further on #GivingTuesday:



Give online at MissionDignity.org on Tuesday, December 3



Call the Mission:Dignity office at **1-877-888-9409** for more information



Use the camera on your phone to scan the QR code and learn more about how you can participate

New Staff Announcements and Updates



Welcome Manager, Donor Relations: Denny Gorena

Denilio J. Gorena (Denny) joined Mission:Dignity on August 5 as manager, donor relations. He considers this new calling to be the greatest of all in order to serve so many of our Southern Baptist ministers, workers and widows who struggle daily with financial and other needs.

Denny hails from Brownsville, Texas. He attended Criswell College and earned a BA in pastoral ministry and biblical studies before he began serving in student ministry at various churches. After serving in student ministry for 20 years, Denny served as pastor at the First Baptist Church of Leonard for 12 years. In June 2016, Denny was called to serve as Senior Pastor of Sagamore Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. He served this historic church for eight years before being called to Mission:Dignity. Denny has been married to Cheryl for 34 years and they have two adopted sons, Elijah and Giovanni.



Welcome Manager, Recipient Relations: Chad Vandiver

Chad joined Mission:Dignity on May 28 as manager, recipient relations. Having recently served as a third-generation missionary in Northeast Africa, Chad felt the Lord calling him to honor Mission:Dignity recipients who have served faithfully for many years.

Chad grew up in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and Paris, France, and has extensive experience sharing biblical truths and developing cross-cultural friendships in urban contexts. Before serving in Africa, he was a mobilization specialist and Send Montreal Missionary for Send Network® Canada. Chad is also passionate about church planting and helped found the Empower One Network in Northeast Africa and CrossCreek Network out of CrossCreek Church in Colleyville, Texas.



Congratulations, Operations Team Lead: Keith Wilson

Keith Wilson joined Mission:Dignity in 2018 as database coordinator and began serving as operations team lead on April 1 of this year. He brings a wealth of experience in donor database operations specific to Christian ministry and is a Blackbaud Certified Raiser's Edge Professional (bCRE-Pro). Keith is passionate about our mission and taking care of each donor that God calls to give to Mission:Dignity. He lives in Carrollton, Texas, with his wife, Carol.

Year-End Giving Reminder



#GivingTuesday is a great way to get a head start on year-end giving.

As 2024 comes to a close, please remember Mission:Dignity and the soldiers of the cross our ministry serves. 100% of every donation goes to improve the lives of retired SBC ministers, workers and their widows in financial need.

Your year-end donation directly affects the ability of these faithful servants to buy groceries, pay utility bills and renew daily prescriptions. We could not do this work without you!

To ensure that your gift arrives by year's end, please consider giving online at MissionDignity.org or sending your donation to our address before December 31, 2024:

Mission:Dignity
P.O. Box 819109
Dallas, TX 75381-9109



For more information on how you can support our widows and ministers in need, please contact our office at 1-877-888-9409 or MissionDignity@GuideStone.org.



Mission: Dignity

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5005 LBJ Freeway, Ste. 2200
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Slow Mail? Give Online Instead!

Due to the widespread and ongoing mail delays many are experiencing, we recommend giving online via credit, debit or electronic funds transfer (EFT).



Visit ***MissionDignity.org*** and click the **Donate Now** button to get started today.

