Therefore what God has joined
together
let no one separate.
Mark 10:9 (NIV)

Welcome to
The Light Post

HIGHLIGHTS

03  BROKEN CYCLE. HEALED SPIRIT.
09  REPAIRING FAMILIES TORN APART BY ADDICTION.
15  BREAD & LIFE.
16  DONATION GUIDE.
17  UPCOMING EVENTS.
He was using pot and alcohol by 13. Ecstasy by 15. Cocaine soon followed. Then meth.

“Growing up, I never had any morals,” says Charlie. “No values, no respect for authority, no real education. All my feelings and thoughts and actions led to anger. You took what you want, got what you wanted however you could.

“I was chasing the wind.”

Born and raised in London, England, Charlie grew up knowing nothing about love. He never once stepped inside a church. Both his parents were alcoholics, and on an almost daily basis, drugs were being sold out of his home. “It wasn’t unusual for the door to come flying in and there were the police. Just lots of crime and drugs.”

By 15, Charlie had moved out and was sofa-surfing. He eventually got involved with the dark side of Great Britain’s music scene, which meant staging “rave” parties at warehouses and airport hangars, making his living by charging at the door. He also attached himself to hooligans who followed an English soccer team, and under the guise of being fans, roamed from town to town, crashing taverns and creating havoc alongside other wayward young adults.
He became adept at installing carpet, but he couldn’t be counted on to show up regularly for work because it was more important to get drunk and stoned. “It was accepted to drink and use drugs, or you were looked upon as weak,” he says. “My only reason for being on earth was because my mother had given birth to me.”

He fathered a son at 19, when “I was still just a kid myself.” That son would be 24 now and “possibly in jail,” for “my relationship with him and his mom ended badly.”

He spent time in jail for violence-related offenses committed among his hooligan friends, but when England started to impose stiffer sentences, Charlie retreated from those behaviors and focused more on the music.

Ten years ago, he was invited to a party, and it’s there he met Meredith, an American from Grand Rapids studying at the London School of Musical Theater. “At first, I didn’t want to go to the party, but my friend convinced me by buying some cocaine and a couple of bottles of vodka.”

Meredith and Charlie connected and married within a year, then had a son, Jackson. They eventually settled in her hometown, where Charlie found a job in maintenance, even though he was still abusing alcohol and drugs like cocaine and other stimulants.

Milo, their second son, was born in 2013, but by 2016, “things had gotten really bad with my marriage,” and Charlie tried Alcoholics Anonymous for the first time. He stayed sober for three months, and the couple became pregnant with Daisy.

For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 (NIV)
Charlie got stuck on Step 3 of AA, which challenges alcoholics to turn over one's will to the care of God. “I didn’t believe that,” says Charlie, “so I stopped calling my sponsor, stopped going to meetings. My drinking and using got real bad. I didn’t want to be at home. My life was unmanageable.”

Last year, Meredith filed for divorce and changed the locks on the doors of their home in Alger Heights. Charlie wandered back to England, re-connected with old friends and went on a five-month bender. “I didn’t know what I was doing,” he recalls. “Days were nights and nights were days. I was a mess.

“I thought I’d hit bottom, but then I found a trap door, and went even deeper. I was completely broken.”

From criminal friends, Charlie acquired enough money to buy a plane ticket back to Grand Rapids. He’d heard about Guiding Light while in AA, and this time, he took action. In trying to enter the program he “dropped dirty” (failed a drug test), so he wandered the streets of Grand Rapids drinking water and coffee and hanging out in a diner until he could drop clean, and was finally accepted into the Recovery program on Sept. 9, 2018.

“I was scared,” he recalls. “I didn’t know if my intolerance and anger and impatience was going to allow me to live with other guys for four months. I felt like a time bomb about to go off.” But Charlie found acceptance within Guiding Light’s walls, and he embraced time with coaches, who helped him understand the source of his addictions and behaviors.

Eventually, he and Meredith agreed to give it another go, and he’s taking classes to join her as a Roman Catholic. “Meredith is running a licensed daycare, the divorce is off the table, and the five of us are connecting again,” he says.

“We’ve been swimming together when we can on weekends, and Meredith and I attended a marriage retreat. This summer, we’ve booked a rustic cabin up north. Things like that never would have interested me before, but I’m not that same man anymore.

“Guiding Light has taught me to be a better person. It’s taught me to be a better father.”

Charlie recently finished the Guiding Light Recovery program and is now living at Iron House, eager to return to his family, but patient in knowing it can happen too soon. He’s also secured a job in maintenance, a pivotal move toward regaining his independence.

“I grew up in an environment where it was not OK to express my feelings,” Charlie says. “The only emotion I ever had was anger, and I had no role models to show me how to be a father, how to teach my kids right from wrong.

“I’m learning now to be the person I want my own children to be.”

“I don’t need to be that monster anymore. And anytime I need help, I can always get on my knees.”

87

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. (1 Corinthians 16:13 NIV)
A Father’s Long Road Back to Reconciling With His Boys

Bruce went from a father who stole his own son’s money, to a dad now reconciled and invested in that son’s life, as well as the life of his son’s half-brother— but it’s been a long and dangerous journey back.

“This place,” he says of Guiding Light, “not only saved my life, but my family. I’m doing things now not just to prevent a relapse, but to create a future. I’ve got a whole new perspective.”

To understand the fragile relationship Bruce once had with his son, you need to go back to when Bruce was just a tot, and cradling memories of being at his own father’s knee inside a donut shop, and everyone acknowledging his dad as a friend. “I would always be holding his hand, and everyone saying, ‘Hi Bob’ because they all knew him.

“He was a U.S. marshal, and I was so proud of him.”

Then, when Bruce was only 5, tragedy struck. Alone with his dad, Bruce witnessed the heart attack that would claim his father’s life at age 47. “Dad was carrying some stuff up the stairs, and he fell. I could see the fear in his eyes. It was the last time I saw my dad alive.”

Over the years, Bruce would lose not only his father, but two other father figures. Looking back, he figures those losses played a part in the addictions that would stalk him and prompt his entry into rehab programs more than a half-dozen times.

Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, Bruce doesn’t remember much about his formative years, only that he and his mother and siblings moved around a lot. He graduated high school in 1989, with plans to accompany a buddy into the U.S. Army.
He bailed instead, thanks in part to falling in love his senior year with a girl named Ruth. Instead of joining the Army, he got a job and, at the same time, “I started doing drugs, smoking a lot of weed and trying cocaine.”

The relationship with Ruth didn’t last, and he upped his dependencies on drugs. By his late 20s and early 30s, he’d created a career installing flooring, but escalated his drug use to include crack cocaine. Though making upwards of $250 a day, he “would get paid on Friday and be broke by Monday.”

The loss of his boss – with whom he’d been living – “got me even deeper into my addiction,” since he was suddenly without both a job and place to live. Since the family of his late boss had roots in Michigan, they invited Bruce to move and work in the Lakeview and Muskegon areas.

In Michigan, Bruce met Heather, a girl from Lakeview 10 years his junior – he was 27 and she just 17 – and in 1998, they had a son, Bruce II. Over the better part of 20 years, it was a tumultuous relationship; Bruce says she repeatedly cheated on him, even bearing a second child, Hunter, by another man. He’s still at a loss over why he didn’t ever break up with her during that period.

“I was just a doormat,” he recalled. “I figured a bad relationship was better than none at all. She reminded me a lot of Ruth, and I just jumped right in and stayed with it.”

Bruce fell into a deep dependence on meth while trying to hold together the relationship with Heather, which now included providing for Bruce II and Hunter. He spent 30 days in jail for possession of meth.
“For four years, it got so bad supporting my habit, that we never had any money. One Christmas, there wasn’t even anything for presents for the kids. My addictions were spiraling out of control.”

Bruce recalls, with tears, falling deeper and deeper into depression and depravity. “It got to the point I was stealing money my oldest son was making from his pizza job.

A lot of times, we didn’t have food in the home. Hunter would come to me and say, ‘Dad, I’m hungry,’ and I’d tell him we didn’t have any food, that you’ll eat at school tomorrow.’ It was horrible.”

At one point, Bruce’s habits were costing upwards of $1,500 a week. To pay the toll, Bruce was trolling Meijer and Walmart parking lots for discarded receipts. He’d pocket them, then walk into the store, steal the items listed on the receipts, and saunter up to ask for a refund. He spent 30 days in jail after being caught and convicted.

He’d already tried rehab at least six times. But now, he realized he needed something different, and leaning on information he’d gleaned from a rehab counselor, he approached Guiding Light.

Since his entry into the Recovery program in September 2018, “my life has changed tremendously,” Bruce says. He no longer has any meaningful contact with Heather, but his relationships with both boys is steadily improving. He’s also secured full-time employment alongside another man in recovery. Together, they perform maintenance duties.

“This place gave me the opportunity to find out who I am, and to know that I’m worthy of love. And I can show love.”

Bruce is now fully re-connected with both boys. Hunter, now 17 and enrolled in high school, is living with what Bruce calls “a wonderful foster family where he has structure, meals, whatever he needs. Both the parents caring for Hunter have been in recovery, so they know what I’ve been going through, and they’ve said it’s OK for Hunter to stay with them through graduation.”

Bruce II is nearly 21 years old, and exploring a career in law enforcement. “We talk daily,” he says. “That relationship has blossomed like you wouldn’t believe. One afternoon, he called me up and said ‘Dad, I’m having a bad day,’ and so I shared with him what helps me through bad days, and he called me later and said ‘Thanks for talking with me today; it meant a lot.’

“If that’s what recovery is all about, if that’s what I can do, if that’s how I can make a difference, then I’m never going back to that life I had.”

Part of Bruce’s journey is discovering a spiritual side, not necessarily rooted in a traditional faith, but rooted in “love, awareness and mindfulness.”

“I see a big shift in my life now,” he says. “I’ve been given a second chance on becoming a dad.”
Becoming a Bread & Life sustaining donor is an easy way to support Guiding Light by setting up an automatic deduction from your debit or credit card or directly from your bank account.

Set up your recurring donation online at: GuidingLightWorks.org/bread-life

Or our Accounting Assistant would be happy to help you with this. Contact Arla at:
(616) 451-0236 ext. 22

Continued support to sustain our men and our mission.

Becoming a Bread & Life sustaining donor is an easy way to support Guiding Light by setting up an automatic deduction from your debit or credit card or directly from your bank account.

Set up your recurring donation online at: GuidingLightWorks.org/bread-life

Or our Accounting Assistant would be happy to help you with this. Contact Arla at:
(616) 451-0236 ext. 22

Becoming a Bread & Life sustaining donor is an easy way to support Guiding Light by setting up an automatic deduction from your debit or credit card or directly from your bank account.

Set up your recurring donation online at: GuidingLightWorks.org/bread-life

Or our Accounting Assistant would be happy to help you with this. Contact Arla at:
(616) 451-0236 ext. 22

Why give

By donating to Guiding Light, you help Grand Rapids men who are lost, homeless or recovering from addiction and substance abuse. With your support, we are getting these men off the street and on a payroll—renewing their faith and providing them with the community and resources they need to become productive and independent again.

How to give

Any single donation, no matter the size, helps us keep the light on. We also make it easy to set up recurring monthly donations, and we partner with Barnabas Foundation to provide estate planning services tailored to each family situation, at no cost to you.

To give by mail:
Please make check payable to Guiding Light.
Please mail to PO Box 1703, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

To give by phone:
Contact Arla at 616.451.0236 ext. 22.

To give online, or to learn more, visit:
GuidingLightWorks.org/Give

Questions?
Contact Development Director, Starla McDermott at 616.451.0236 ext. 20.

Other ways to give:

Why give

By donating to Guiding Light, you help Grand Rapids men who are lost, homeless or recovering from addiction and substance abuse. With your support, we are getting these men off the street and on a payroll—renewing their faith and providing them with the community and resources they need to become productive and independent again.

How to give

Any single donation, no matter the size, helps us keep the light on. We also make it easy to set up recurring monthly donations, and we partner with Barnabas Foundation to provide estate planning services tailored to each family situation, at no cost to you.

To give by mail:
Please make check payable to Guiding Light.
Please mail to PO Box 1703, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

To give by phone:
Contact Arla at 616.451.0236 ext. 22.

To give online, or to learn more, visit:
GuidingLightWorks.org/Give

Questions?
Contact Development Director, Starla McDermott at 616.451.0236 ext. 20.

Continued support to sustain our men and our mission.

Becoming a Bread & Life sustaining donor is an easy way to support Guiding Light by setting up an automatic deduction from your debit or credit card or directly from your bank account.

Set up your recurring donation online at: GuidingLightWorks.org/bread-life

Or our Accounting Assistant would be happy to help you with this. Contact Arla at:
(616) 451-0236 ext. 22

Why give

By donating to Guiding Light, you help Grand Rapids men who are lost, homeless or recovering from addiction and substance abuse. With your support, we are getting these men off the street and on a payroll—renewing their faith and providing them with the community and resources they need to become productive and independent again.

How to give

Any single donation, no matter the size, helps us keep the light on. We also make it easy to set up recurring monthly donations, and we partner with Barnabas Foundation to provide estate planning services tailored to each family situation, at no cost to you.

To give by mail:
Please make check payable to Guiding Light.
Please mail to PO Box 1703, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

To give by phone:
Contact Arla at 616.451.0236 ext. 22.

To give online, or to learn more, visit:
GuidingLightWorks.org/Give

Questions?
Contact Development Director, Starla McDermott at 616.451.0236 ext. 20.

Continued support to sustain our men and our mission.

Becoming a Bread & Life sustaining donor is an easy way to support Guiding Light by setting up an automatic deduction from your debit or credit card or directly from your bank account.

Set up your recurring donation online at: GuidingLightWorks.org/bread-life

Or our Accounting Assistant would be happy to help you with this. Contact Arla at:
(616) 451-0236 ext. 22

Why give

By donating to Guiding Light, you help Grand Rapids men who are lost, homeless or recovering from addiction and substance abuse. With your support, we are getting these men off the street and on a payroll—renewing their faith and providing them with the community and resources they need to become productive and independent again.

How to give

Any single donation, no matter the size, helps us keep the light on. We also make it easy to set up recurring monthly donations, and we partner with Barnabas Foundation to provide estate planning services tailored to each family situation, at no cost to you.

To give by mail:
Please make check payable to Guiding Light.
Please mail to PO Box 1703, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

To give by phone:
Contact Arla at 616.451.0236 ext. 22.

To give online, or to learn more, visit:
GuidingLightWorks.org/Give

Questions?
Contact Development Director, Starla McDermott at 616.451.0236 ext. 20.
UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 30TH | MINISTRY UPDATE MEET & GREET
5:30PM at Varnum Law
333 Bridge St. NW, 17th Floor
Register to attend at: GuidingLightWorks.org/Meet-Greet

JULY 22ND | 63RD ANNUAL BUILDERS EXCHANGE GOLF EVENT
To support Guiding Light Back To Work program
Location: Thornapple Pointe

For God gave us
A SPIRIT
not of fear but
of power & love
AND SELF-CONTROL.

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)
Let all that you do
BE DONE IN LOVE.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:14 (ESV)

GUIDING LIGHT
255 Division Ave S
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616.451.0236
GuidingLightWorks.org

Through the guiding light of God’s Spirit, Guiding Light partners with individuals to fulfill their God-given potential through rescue, recovery and re-engagement in the community.