

# Stories MADE NEW

Spring 2025

Volume 4

## Finding the Good in Adversity

Mark King, SMN Board

Have you had the opportunity to watch a butterfly break out of its cocoon? After an intense struggle it comes forth looking like a wet, weak, and needy creature. Sometimes we make the mistake of wanting to help the poor thing, but if we intervene it will cause the butterfly to be weak and crippled for life. This metamorphosis process is how God designed the butterfly to come forth complete and beautiful.

Life brings challenges at different levels. Some are easily navigated and soon forgotten. But adversity carries the thought of a more intense challenge—not something most of us would welcome as valuable in our lives. Rather, something we'd try to avoid. In the Bible Joseph, Daniel, Naomi, Esther, Nehemiah, and Paul faced adversity. They are very good examples to follow in how to respond to life's challenges. What became of these people? Were their lives ruined by the hardships they faced?

Recently, I had the opportunity to hear Damon West tell his life story. As a young adult, he was introduced to drugs and became extremely addicted. He came from a good home and community and had a good job, but the addiction became his downfall. He then became a thief to support his addiction. The law eventually caught up with him and he was sentenced to life in prison. Thus, he found himself in a hardship of his own making.

Before he was incarcerated in the federal prison another prisoner told him he has a choice in how he responds to the hardships that prison will bring. He said to Damon, "picture the adversity you will face in prison as a pot of boiling water. What happens when you drop a carrot into a pot of boiling water? It turns soft and mushy. What happens to an egg when you drop it into a pot of boiling water? It turns hard. What happens to a coffee bean when you drop it into boiling water? It turns the water into coffee." The carrot and the egg are overcome by their environment, but the coffee bean changes the environment for the good.

Damon experienced much adversity in the prison environment. But after much endurance, with God's help he was able to change the atmosphere in the prison he found himself in. Because of his positive influence and behavior, he was released on parole for life only eight years into his sentence. And God has opened many doors of opportunity for him to speak about the choice we have to be changed for the better through the adversity we face.

Has adversity made you bitter or better? Are you allowing God to make a beautiful picture with the puzzle pieces of your life? In the book of James, it says we are to "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. God is an expert in making beauty out of our ashes. Will you give God the ashes of your life?"

Stories Made New has been developed especially for young women who support the 1963 Mennonite Confession of Faith.

We desire to see these young women brought into spiritual freedom and life in Jesus Christ.  
**Please pray for this ministry to our Anabaptist communities!**

Stories Made New operates under the Board of Directors and advisory committee.  
Names and affiliations are listed on the back page.



### Vision

To bring young women who are struggling into fulfillment and purpose in Jesus Christ.

### Mission

To help young women deal with and work through life dominating problems.

To give them loving nurture, discipleship, and care.

To help them learn and value discipline and purposeful living through a structured home setting.

To give them vision and understanding of the joy and blessing of serving others.



## When Up is Down

Ernest Witmer, Administrator

In Jesus' way of looking at things, the way up is down. Someone has called it "the upside-down kingdom." So, while it's a privilege to collaborate with Fairmount Homes, take up residency in the Hurst mansion on the hilltop, and settle into the greater Farmersville community at large, the greatest honor of all is—for Jesus' sake—to serve the young women of Stories Made New on the difficult journey up their own mountain of life.

Many times, to these young women, life feels like an insurmountable mountain! The uphill challenges they've already encountered has left them dazed, confused, and hurting, often wondering what is up and what is down. They are vulnerable, not always sure of who they are nor of how they came to be in the first place.

But here they are. Now what?

We are honored to come alongside these young women—not as perfect professionals with all the answers, but as sojourners too, knowing something of the struggle ourselves. Our philosophy of ministry is that we all grow together: residents, staff, and administrators alike. And we are always mindful of the fact that this ministry exists for them, our resident women—not for us. If self-service would be disguised as the service of others, we'd end up hurting the very ones we're here to help!

This of course is true for any work, or church, or ministry! While the laborers are worthy of their hire (and the rewards of ministry are deeply meaningful), if the motive in serving others is really about serving ourselves, then, in fact, we're using others—perhaps even abusing others—though it might all look good on the surface.

So, while living on the hilltop may look attractive to others and offer tremendous views for us, what really matters is how well we interact with the ones we are called to serve. Jesus washed the feet of those He served. (He also called their bluff sometimes.) Whatever the case, He made it about them. He lived to die, and in dying, He gave life to many!



## Let God Do the Fighting

*"He was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities: the chastisement of my peace was upon him; and with his stripes I am healed." Is 53:5*

I was a sinner unworthy of God's unconditional love and grace. I deserved hell, but God kept tenderly, lovingly calling me till at long last I totally surrendered everything to Him.

I was tired of trying to do life on my own, my own way. I was tired of feeling like life was not worth living. But praise God, I chose life and along with that I chose asking God to take full control of my life.

How much happier I am when I'm not trying to control things but just leaning on God's shoulder and

saying, "Not my will, but yours." How freeing it is to be still and LET GOD DO THE FIGHTING for me.

I feel like I'm making it sound easy but anyone who is living the Christian life knows the amount of hard work, the daily—sometimes hourly surrenders, and the tears. Praise God He is there to bear us up on wings of trust and faith.

Family/friends, you can pray for me and with me that I will remain faithful to God and that I can continue trusting Him! Thank you each for your support and prayers.

-Wanita (current resident)

## Christ in Me

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*  
Philippians 4:13

-Rachel  
(current resident)



# His Name Is Redeemer

Keturah King, Mentor

His name is Redeemer. I would never be a mentor today at Stories Made New, whispering hope into others' ears, had I not met Him and known His redemption in my own story.

Three years ago, my life was dominated by fear and despair. While diagnosed as depression, to me it was much darker. It stemmed back to consuming fears I experienced soon after conversion at age twelve. An oppression settled over my life. For years I searched for assurance of salvation. Few guessed the hidden wrestling for peace lurking beneath the surface over the next decade.

In 2021, as I began my fifth year of teaching, my eyes were opened to grace. Grace compelled me to abandon the fragile security of self-righteousness for its own embrace. I hungered for honesty, having always repressed myself to be, do, and think "perfect." My eyes were opened to God's goodness and beauty everywhere, and I saw my sin and hard heart in light of it. My heart was completely enthralled by these new discoveries!

But there was a block, a lie separating me from experiencing what I saw. I did not think God could forgive me for something that had taken place in my thoughts many years earlier. The unpardonable sin. If what I was believing was true, and I saw no other possibility, I was doomed for an eternity in hell. My mind gradually reoriented itself from hope to despair. Days became heavy and nights full of terror. An insatiable hunger for knowing God consumed me. With intense grief and wrestling, I searched for life; and, not finding life, I searched for death.

I left the classroom over Christmas break and arrived at Aquila Villa, as the ministry was then known, in February 2022. I came hopeless, broken, fully embracing shame, trying to cope with my pain. Rendered nearly speechless by fear and confusion, it was months before my mentors understood the depths of my despair.

So how *did* hope enter? Acknowledging, confessing, and replacing lies with Truth opened up the possibility for hope to germinate. Learning to discern God's voice from the enemy's voice filtered out harsh thoughts. Love began healing the brokenness. It was a gift to be able to enjoy life again. The journey took months. Still the pendulum swung between hope and despair. Still, I longed to experience God's presence in a way that exceeded the darkness I had known. But we dared to ask and then waited.

Eight months into the program, I became sick with COVID, scarcely able to recover for weeks. God chose to heal me through anointing with oil (James 5). He also touched me emotionally/spiritually; and for the first time I experienced God's presence in the way I desired. My orientation became one of hope. Those new discoveries of grace and freedom in Christ became an amazing reality.

And now I listen to others' stories, still waiting to be touched by the Redeemer. Is it too much to expect Jesus to write hope into the story of every young lady who enters this home? Were there not leftovers when Jesus fed the multitudes? Lillias Trotter said, *"Take the very hardest thing in your life – the place of difficulty, outward or inward, and expect God to triumph gloriously in that very spot. Just there He can bring your soul into blossom."*

He does.

Because Redeemer is His name.

Posing with Penny



The Quilt Show



Parents Visiting



*Touched by loving hearts, wakened by kindness,  
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.*



Fun n Games



## Bird Houses

(suggested donation \$15)





154 E. Farmersville Road  
Ephrata, PA 17522



## PRAISE REPORTS

- Settling into our new home on the hill is going well
- Faithful supporting constituency
- Keturah King has joined our staff as a mentor
- Beautiful Jesus moments for the young ladies here
- Good Board of Directors oversight
- Wonderful input and connections from our time at REACH

## PRAYER ITEMS

- Timely issuance of the permits for the additional five bedrooms
- Sufficient funding for the needed upgrades
- Guidance for our collaborative counselors working with the young ladies
- Continued wisdom and grace for staff and volunteer support

Learn more at: [www.storiesmadenew.org](http://www.storiesmadenew.org)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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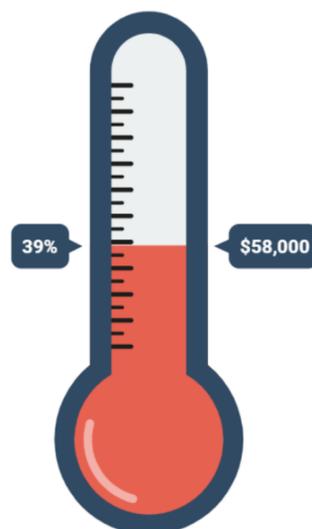
## WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Make checks payable to  
**STORIES MADE NEW**

154 E. Farmersville Rd, Ephrata, PA 17522

To learn more, go to: [www.storiesmadenew.org/give](http://www.storiesmadenew.org/give)  
Tax-deductible receipts will be sent upon request.

GOAL: \$150,000



Funds still needed to cover  
transitional costs and remodeling!

**\$92,000**

(alternative, in-kind donations of labor and  
materials are also appreciated)

### Other items still needed:

- pop-corn popper (stir crazy style)
- Bosch mixer
- fresh fruit & produce for canning/freezing
- two yards of garden mulch
- yard volley-ball set w/ poles and net
- a wheelbarrow