

# GUIDED GIVING

[Making life better for God's retired servants]

a publication of GuideStone®



## Our Noble Widows: Mission:Dignity Answers the Call

Both the Old and New Testaments speak to the responsibility of the church to care for widows in need, none plainer than what we read in James 1:27 (CSB): *"Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress ..."*

Widows are typically some of the most vulnerable members of society from a cultural perspective, which is why God calls his bride to step into the gap. In the United States, women often outlive their husbands and 2,800 new widows are added to the national total of 11.8 million every day. Many of those in the current generation of widows did not work outside the home or did so on a very limited basis, providing sparse work experience for what jobs may be available and little in terms of receipt for their own Social Security.

The widows served by Mission:Dignity® have an added disadvantage. The churches where their husbands served as ministers often did not offer adequate life insurance programs or contribute much, if anything, toward retirement. Many of these women face hardships alone — including the natural consequences of aging or uncertain diagnoses and terminal conditions — after the husband passes away unexpectedly or succumbs to a prolonged illness.

Add our nation's recent struggles with inflation, and we have a community of women in desperate need — women who have served the Lord faithfully and deserve the honor of being cared for in their later years.

It is pure joy at Mission:Dignity to answer this call to arms for widows like Brenda Collins of Trussville, Alabama. Brenda and her late husband, Jim, served the Lord in churches all over Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma for 51 years.

"What I really loved the most was just being by his side," Brenda recalls. "And when my children got older, I was able to go with him. I made every hospital visit. I made every home visit. We were connected at the hip. And so God called us both into the ministry. He called Jim to preach and to be a pastor. And he definitely called me to be a pastor's wife."

Jim pastored almost exclusively in small churches, and not one church contributed to his retirement or matched any contributions. Brenda says, "Mission:Dignity was a game changer" when it came to their retirement, relieving much of the stress of daily living.

*(continued on page3)*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Our Noble Widows: Mission:Dignity Answers the Call pg. 1

A Letter from Our President pg. 2

2023: Another Record-breaking Year pg. 3

Mission:Dignity Sunday 2024 pg. 4

Out of the Mouths of Babes pg. 5

Introducing GuideStone Wealth Management pg. 6

40 Days of Dignity 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Sneak Peek pg. 7

Slow Mail? pg. 8



### Mission:Dignity

A ministry of GuideStone®

Want to learn more about our ministry?

Visit: [MissionDignity.org](https://MissionDignity.org)

Email: [MissionDignity@GuideStone.org](mailto:MissionDignity@GuideStone.org)

Call: 1-877-888-9409



Like, connect and follow  
@MissionDignity for up-to-date  
information and recipient stories!

# A Letter from Our President

D. Hance Dilbeck, Jr.

Greetings from GuideStone and Mission:Dignity!

I love the opening lines of Paul's epistle to the church at Philippi. In it, he writes, "I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy 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)

I have the same feelings when I remember you, our faithful donors to Mission:Dignity. Your support in caring for these servants of the Gospel is an inspiration to all of us here at GuideStone, and we give thanks for you in our prayers.

As I trust you know, 100% of every dollar you give goes to help a retired minister and his wife or widow in extreme financial need. An endowment given long ago provides for the administrative costs. That means when you give, you give through Mission:Dignity to one of these dear servants.

Helen Johnson served more than six decades with her pastor-husband. After his death, she moved to be closer to her daughter and joined a local church here in Texas. The pastor asked her how she wanted to serve, and she said, "Put me where I can share Jesus." Since then, she has been the greeter at the



church's battered women's shelter and has led more than 50 women to Christ! Read more of Helen's story on page 4.

Stories like Mrs. Johnson's are repeated throughout Mission:Dignity's recipient base. Those we serve have given so much of themselves and continue to do so in their retirement years. It is a sincere privilege to support them.

Your donation means so much more to them than just the financial benefits – as important as they are. That monthly stipend is a reminder that the convention of churches they served has not forgotten them or their service, that their service matters and that they are cherished.

On behalf of the 2,800 "soldiers of the cross," we are privileged to serve through Mission:Dignity. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



D. Hance Dilbeck, Jr.

(Continued from page 1)

"When Mission Dignity sent the first check," she remembers, "Jim literally sat down and cried. He was so taken aback by the fact that we had someone who we knew we could trust and help supply a little bit of extra funds for us on a monthly basis."

But, less than three years after the Collins family connected with Mission:Dignity, disaster struck. Jim began to feel ill in October 2020, after rarely being sick his entire life. They sought medical attention, and though no doctor could pinpoint what was wrong, Jim began to need regular blood transfusions.

After months without answers, he was set to undergo exploratory surgery, during which he unexpectedly passed away in February 2021. All this transpired during COVID, which meant that Brenda's last contact with Jim was via FaceTime® and his funeral was limited to 10 people. Brenda was devastated, and the loss was palpable. "The day that he died, a part of me died. And that's not fixable. And it won't be until eternity. It won't be. But I just love the fact that, for some reason, I feel like Mission:Dignity cares."

Mission:Dignity stepped in and coordinated a seamless transfer of the funds to Brenda after Jim's death. "I got a call from Mission:Dignity," she says. "And I have to tell you that I honestly was surprised, but it was such a comfort and blessing to have them call me."

Mission:Dignity serves retirement-aged ministers, workers and widows as they face advancing age, illness, infirmity, death of a spouse and even natural disasters. Through it all, we provide constant care, prayer and financial assistance directly at the point of need. It is a call we take very seriously and cover with prayer daily.

"Mission:Dignity not only provides security and peace of mind financially but more importantly than that, Mission:Dignity feels like a friend," says Brenda. "I can pick up the phone and call someone to just talk. Not about needing more funds, not about the money, but to talk with someone who understands the ministry that we loved for so many years. Mission:Dignity means so much more than money to me."

FaceTime is a registered trademark of Apple Inc.

## More Thanks from Widows



"I could not pay the bills. I had no money in the bank. Sometimes, there was only 60 cents in the bank. I said, 'Lord, here I am. How are you going to take care of me?' When I was approved to get a monthly payment from Mission:Dignity, I was so thrilled. I jumped up and down, and I said, 'Thank You, Lord!' Now I go to bed every day with peace."

Sudha Jayagraphu, pastor's widow and Mission:Dignity recipient since 2022.



"Because we were pastoring, all of a sudden, we didn't have a home, and Ron was gone, and I didn't have any income except for his Social Security, which wasn't a whole lot. When I received a letter saying that I had been accepted into the Mission:Dignity program and that they would send me a certain amount every month, it was like cool water on a hot day. I needed it. I needed good news."

Patsy Rogers, pastor's widow and Mission:Dignity recipient since 2019.



"I did not know who I was without Tom White. I had been with him since I was 15. I knew God had a plan to help me, but it took me a while to realize that it was through Mission:Dignity that he was sending that help. Mission:Dignity has made an absolutely wonderful difference in my life. Not only the caring people, but with the support I am able to meet my monthly financial situations. I'm able to have my medical insurance. I'm able to meet all of my obligations."

Donna White, pastor's widow and Mission:Dignity recipient since 2018.



## Fast Facts

Life expectancy for women in the U.S. is **79.3 years**.

Life expectancy for men in the U.S. is **73.5 years**.

**64%** of men die before their wives.

There are 11.8 million widows in the U.S. and approximately **2,800 added daily**.

The average age of widowhood in the U.S. is **59 years**.

The average age of Mission:Dignity widows served is **83 years**.

Average monthly income of Mission:Dignity widows is **\$1,500**.

**60%** of Mission:Dignity recipients are widows.



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**.



Save the Date:

# Mission:Dignity Sunday is June 23, 2024

Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress ... James 1:27 (CSB)

Join us in supporting retirement-aged ministers, workers and their widows on Mission:Dignity Sunday 2024.

Gifts from people like you and churches like yours provide monthly financial assistance to more than 2,800 individuals like Helen Johnson:

M.C. and Helen Johnson served the Lord together for more than 57 years. After they had just moved to a new state to be closer to family, M.C. passed away unexpectedly.



“After my husband passed away, I was paralyzed with fear. I always knew that God would supply my needs, but I didn’t know he was already working on my behalf through Mission:Dignity. They came along and provided exactly what I needed. I’m so thankful.”

Order or download free materials online at [MDSunday.org](https://MDSunday.org).

Materials are not dated and can be used at any time of the year.

Promotional materials include:

- Bulletin inserts
- Posters
- Videos of recipient stories

Mission:Dignity does not receive SBC Cooperative Program funding.

## 2023 Fundraising Update: Another Banner Year

Mission:Dignity had another record-breaking year of giving in 2023:

- **Total giving: \$12,196,444** — the second-largest fundraising year in Mission:Dignity history!
- **48,503 gifts** were processed in 2023.
- **9,550 donors** gave during 2023.
- **More than \$11,743,667 was distributed** to 2,164 households consisting of 2,908 brothers and sisters in need.

100% of your gifts aid retirement-aged ministers, workers and widows in need. Your generosity resulted in another extraordinary year of helping our recipients. Thank you!

GIVE TODAY!



### TO FIND OUT MORE

about Mission:Dignity Sunday 2023, contact our office by calling 1-877-888-9409 and then selecting “Option 2”.



## From the Mouths of Babes

Nowadays, social media, email and text dominate how we connect with other people. Physical, face-to-face contact is on the decline. The only next feasible step is telepathy! Despite these efforts to stay connected, so many people feel incredibly alone. Even college students and parents of large families surrounded by thriving communities report feeling more isolated than ever. So you can imagine how Mission:Dignity recipients feel — many without social media, houses full of kids, offices with coworkers or dorms packed with friends — Isolated. Having served for so long in the middle of the hustle and bustle, many are left without family nearby, a car to visit church friends or even a spouse to share a morning cup of coffee with. In contrast, God calls his church to step in the gap, love one another, share each other’s burdens and encourage one another.

Connie Young and her student missions class at First Baptist Church, Enterprise, Alabama, decided to do just that. Her sweet, exuberant and loving students decided to send Valentine’s

Day cards to Mission:Dignity recipients across their state. The children colored, wrote verses and shared encouraging words with retired pastors, widows and workers in their own backyard. On a day touted to be all about love, Connie and her young friends exhibited exactly what Christ meant when he called us to love one another.

And the impact was immeasurable. Recipient Eduardo Torres joined many others in writing the students back:

“I am Pastor Eduardo Torres, and the purpose of this note is to thank your children for sending cards to my wife and me. One of the cards comes with a drawing of an elephant with hearts, is signed by Anna, and the content says, ‘Treat others the way you want to be treated.’ The other has some balloons in the shape of hearts, and the content of this one says, ‘We love because God first loved us. Love each other as I have loved you.’ **We are truly grateful to the Lord for this gift, with precious biblical messages, especially when my beloved wife, Luzdary, suffers from stage 4 cancer.** We ask for your prayers on our behalf for our health. God bless you, and thank you very much.”

Biblical encouragement and brotherly love — from the mouths (and crayons) of babes! We are so thankful for these students and their leaders, who were willing to reach out to these Mission:Dignity recipients needing connection and hope.



If you and your church, Sunday school class or Bible study group want to serve our recipients, please email Donor Relations Specialist Hannah Reynolds at [Hannah.Glick@guidestone.org](mailto:Hannah.Glick@guidestone.org).





# 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.**

Here's what you can expect:

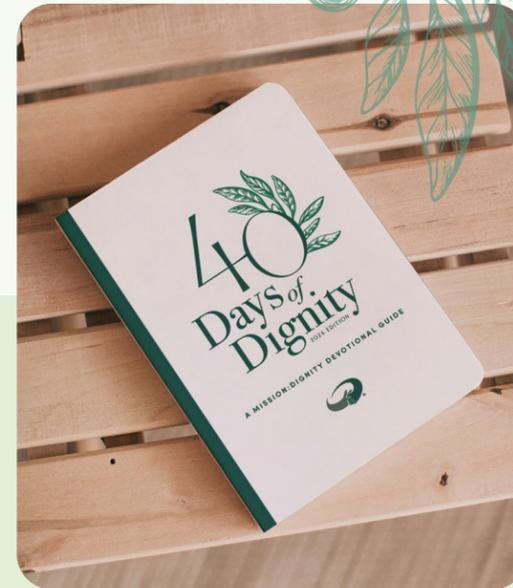
- A dedicated advisor
- Comprehensive financial planning
- Daily portfolio management aligned with your values
- Estate planning
- Insurance planning
- Tax planning and special pricing on tax preparation services by a third party
- Charitable giving strategies



For more information about GuideStone Wealth Management, visit [GuideStone.org/Wealth-Management](https://www.guidestone.org/Wealth-Management).

GuideStone Wealth Management and GuideStone Managed Accounts services are fee based services available to investors in personal investment accounts and non-ERISA retirement accounts offered by a GuideStone affiliate. An advisory fee for the service is assessed quarterly and based on total assets in the account. These fees are in addition to the underlying mutual fund fees. Advisory services are offered through GuideStone Advisors®, an SEC Registered Investment Adviser. GuideStone Advisors is a controlled affiliate of GuideStone Financial Resources®. For more information about the firm, products and services please review the *GuideStone Affiliate Form CRS* ([https://www.guidestone.org/-/media/Funds/files/pdf/Affiliated\\_Form\\_CRS.ashx](https://www.guidestone.org/-/media/Funds/files/pdf/Affiliated_Form_CRS.ashx)).

GuideStone, its affiliates, and financial advisors do not provide legal, tax, or accounting advice. You should consult your legal and/or tax advisors before making any financial decisions.



This year, Mission:Dignity will again release a 40-day devotional book highlighting devotionals written by our very own recipients. This devotional will be available to anyone. A donation is suggested. We pray this book will bless you as it has blessed us!

For more information, contact us or visit [MissionDignity.org/Devotional](https://MissionDignity.org/Devotional) to sign up and be notified when the 2024 version becomes available.

Please enjoy an excerpt from this year's upcoming release.

## NO NEED for a PLAN B

**Psalm 25:4-5**

*Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Psalm 25:4-5 (NIV)*

In this verse, David is praying, asking the Lord to guide him in his life, lead him in God's truth and teach him. Prayer and Scripture were both important to David. We cannot go astray if we look to the Lord in prayer and obey his Word.

Psalm 119:105 (ESV) states, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

We find guidance in Scripture for the next step as well as for life's long journey. As a righteous Hebrew, David knew that God had delivered his precepts and promises to the people of Israel to keep them in the path of blessing (Deuteronomy 27-30).

He knew, too, that God had promised to make Joshua's way successful if Joshua obeyed the Book of the Law (Joshua 1:7-8).

In Psalm 25:5, David calls on God as his Savior and states that he always waits on him. Despite the pressures of life, including vicious opposition, David endured by anticipating help from the Lord.

Waiting on the Lord is often hard. We tend to want to run ahead of God, but that usually leads to trouble. When we wait for God's direction, we always receive a blessing.

God is our Savior in several ways.

1. He sent his Son to come and save us from sin.
2. But he also saves us from ourselves. Any of our schemes and plans are never as great and successful as God's plans for us. He has the very best plan for us. With him, there is no need for a Plan B!

How are you anticipating help and guidance from the Lord today?



**Vayon Smith**

Served the Lord alongside her late husband, Russell, for 12 years  
Mission:Dignity recipient since 2019

# 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](https://MissionDignity.org) and click the **Donate Now** button to get started today.



## PRAY WITH US!



Pray with us in 2024! Join in prayer with new prayer requests from Mission:Dignity recipients each month. These requests are posted weekly on our social media outlets. Follow [@MissionDignity](https://twitter.com/MissionDignity) or visit [MissionDignity.org/Prayer](https://MissionDignity.org/Prayer) to learn more.

We hope you will enjoy uplifting these specific needs to the throne of grace with us.