THE HISTORY OF THE JIMMIE HALE MISSION

Since 1944 the Jimmie Hale Mission has been a shelter for the homeless, a rest stop for the weary, a feeding station for the hungry, and a sanctuary for the hurting. For many, the Mission has not been their last stop but the first step toward a changed life.

Our purpose is to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of the men, women and children in our community with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It all began with Jimmie Hale, who used to be known as the town drunk. After becoming a Christian and sober, his desire was to have a Mission. He wanted to have a place where homeless men could come and receive help and hope.

Jimmie fell in love with and married Miss Jessie, a school teacher from Moundville, and the two of them founded the Mission in March of 1944. The first location of the Mission was a storefront chapel and, ironically, was in the same building where Jimmie had sold his last drink as a bartender. Not only was it the birth of a dream, but they had just found out that they were expecting the birth of their child.

In November 1944, just eight later, Jimmie died at the early age of 39 from damage his body had incurred from his years of drinking. Following his death, his 27-year-old, pregnant widow continued the work of faith. Those following ten years were very difficult, yet Jessie remained faithful. In 1954, God sent Leo Shepura to assist Jessie, and for the next 36 years, Jessie and Leo were co-laborers in the ministry.

In 1990, Tony Cooper came to the Mission as Executive Director following in the steps of Jessie Hale Downs and Leo Shepura. Tony has often said, “There is no way I could ever replace them; I can only work hard to follow them.” He counts it a privilege to be a part of the Mission.

The Jimmie Hale Mission has grown considerably under his leadership. What started as a storefront chapel now includes:

- **Shepura Men Center**, a downtown, homeless shelter and recovery program for men;
- **Royal Pines Center**, a rural recovery program for men;
- **Jessie’s Place**, an intermediate shelter for women and children;
- **Stewart Learning Centers** for education remediation and employment readiness, which helps men and women return to the workforce;
- **Discovery Clubs**, which serves as a preventative branch of the Mission ministries, provide Bible clubs for elementary school children after hours; and
- **Mission Possible Bargain Centers**, fundraising thrift stores.

Though Jimmie Hale did not live to see the fruit of his labor, thousands of hurting people have been helped and multitudes of lives transformed at the Mission named in his honor.