

‘Modern-Day Mother Teresa’ Heads Homeless Church

North Carolina has one of the country’s fastest-growing homeless populations. In Charlotte, one of the largest cities in the state, the most vulnerable people are in desperate need of help.

One grandmother is answering the call seven days a week. Her name is Freddie Power, and her work has led some to call her a modern-day Mother Teresa.

The Parking Lot Service

The streets of Charlotte are home to more than 3,000 people. Rory “Hotdog” Montgomery is one of them. At 63, he can fit all he owns in a shopping cart, but he’s not bitter about his lot in life.

“The way I would explain it is that you are where God wants you to be at that time that He wants you to be there,” Montgomery told CBN News. “I don’t consider myself homeless. I am just residentially disadvantaged.”

“If I can do something good for somebody, even though I don’t have, then maybe someone that have can do something for somebody else that don’t have,” he said.

Montgomery’s giving heart is pumped even bigger on Sunday afternoons. That is when he joins dozens of other homeless for church in a Charlotte parking lot.

“It gets you off the corner of the block. You ain’t in the riff-raff. This might be the time that something happens up there, and God put me here to save me,” he said.

Church Without Walls

Power is the tireless grandmother behind this growing outreach ministry. She has started two homeless churches in the last five years through her Keeping Hope Alive ministry.

She makes regular mission trips to Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and South Africa, but she rarely misses an opportunity to join her faithful churchgoers when she is at home.

Power recounted stories of their faithfulness in an interview after one Sunday service.

“One day it was snowing so hard I thought, ‘No one is going to be there.’ And I thought, ‘No, I am going to take groceries, and I am going to go,’” she said.

“And there were five men with umbrellas and coats on and they were just covered in snow,” she said. “And we fed them and had church service. So, they come, no matter what.”

They come for encouragement, prayer and food.

The First Service

The services are still a walk of faith for Power. She prays each week for God to draw the people to the services and for Him to supply the food for her to distribute.

Power recalled that first Sunday service in 2008 when she emptied her own bank account to buy groceries.

“Twenty-two people gave their heart to Jesus that weekend. And I said, ‘OK, God, what are You doing? Do You want us to do it again?’ And He, said, ‘Yes, I want you to go do it again,’” she said.

“Someone gave me the money. So we went around, and 22 more people gave their heart to Jesus. And then He said, ‘I want you to start a church for the homeless. Put out a few plastic chairs, and I will bring the people,’” she said.

Building on a Spiritual Legacy

Power's first church for the homeless began on the corner of Duckworth and Wesley Heights in Charlotte, a corner with real spiritual significance for the city. The church meets just across the street from the site of a famous church built by Alfred Garr in the 1930s.

Power was not in Charlotte for Garr's ministry, but she knows the history well.

"Even during the Depression, he brought the old coliseum of Charlotte, a brick at a time, over here to build this. And it was thick. The walls were very thick," she said. "And he paid them a sandwich a day, just for the working. Isn't that amazing? He believed in that church. And he believed the Holy Spirit was coming in power."

"Someone invited me to come to the Garr church land—the building was there then—and we felt the presence of the Lord still on the place for all of the miracles that happened during that time," she recalled.

Labeled a "20th-century apostle," Garr's miracle meetings often made headlines in the *Charlotte Observer*. And Power, known as "Ms. Freddie," said she and her team still witness miracles in the neighborhood today.

"That is what is so great about it. We show up, and God does the rest. I don't do the miracles. He does. And He saves people, and He heals people," she said.

Hotdog, the Miracle

"Hotdog" Montgomery is one of those miracles. Though blind in one eye, he can still create works of art with just a pencil, a Q-tip and an eraser.

"I use what God gave me, when I can," Montgomery told CBN News. "It gives me a little peace—peace of mind."

Power featured one of Montgomery's works in her book, *Letters to My Mom*.

"He has such talent," she said. "He is amazing. And there he is on the street. I couldn't believe it."

Freddie has only one prayer for Hotdog and her other walking miracles on these streets.

"I want God to be real to them, right where they are at. I want them to live a supernatural, miracle life, right where they're at," she said.

And the faithful members of Power's homeless congregations have only one prayer for Ms. Freddie.

"I pray that she comes back, that's for sure," Montgomery said. "I pray that she has safe trips to do what she has to do to make her world and other people's world better."

That work is why some call her Charlotte's "Mother Teresa."