

Well Done, Brothers

new address

In our office, there's a magnetic board that we like to call our "t-board." On it, we've listed each of our transitional homes and the names of the residents who live there. About a year ago, David Trickett had to add a new address for one of our residents. Last month, we added a second name to that column. The new address on our t-board reads simply: Heaven.

David Hilburn and Robert Bailey are the two residents who've made the journey there. But, before they stepped through the veil, during their final days and hours, their lives spoke most eloquently. As you will see, their time here on earth ended uniquely well.

what's so funny?

They'd never seen anything like it. The supervising nurse kept coming to David Hilburn's hospital room to tell us to keep the noise down. Meanwhile, another nurse was watching us through the glass door, puzzled by the laughter she was seeing in a dying patient's room.

David had only recently moved into our transitional house when he joined the C.H.A.R.M. staff in January 2016. Soon after, he was diagnosed with cancer, and by mid-July, he lay in the hospital dying. On David's final night, he was surrounded by friends and family who had crowded into his ICU room.

With hoarse, slurred speech, David asked each person in the packed room to come to his side. As they came, one by one, he shared his special memories and funny stories and told them how much he loved them. David was in his element. With his sharp wit and dry sense of humor, he had us all in stitches.

love sings

The joy in the room spilled out into the hall, and the nurse who'd been watching through the door came in and thanked David for allowing her to be part of such a joyous celebration of life. She added that he had been the best patient she'd ever had. What happened next amazed us all.

David called her over and asked if he could give her a hug. Then he held her hand and told her that he loved her, but that his love was nothing compared to God's love for her. He told this young woman that he wanted her to have the same peace that he had. As he witnessed to her that night, the joyful love of Christ in David's heart flowed over the soul of this sweet Muslim nurse.

In the wee hours of the morning, after all the tubes and needles had been removed, David started singing.

O how marvelous! O how wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
O how marvelous! O how wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!
(Charles Hutchinson Gabriel, *My Savior's Love*)

With just a few hours remaining, he sang and spoke the words of hymns. He left in peace, but not before giving us a sense of peace about his leaving.

at home with hope

When the doctors told him there was nothing more they could do, Robert Bailey decided he wanted to die at home. "Home" to Robert was the transitional house where he lived. Robert first came to us in 2012. His stay was longer than any other resident's. He was a rock-solid, ever-faithful role model for the newer guys who came to live with us.

His family, friends, and roommates said about him: "He always [had] a joke on his lips, and the edges of his eyes [were] always on the brink of curling up into a smile." "He showed me true fellowship...and Christ's example of how to love and live." "He always had an encouraging word, never a condemning one. He knew how to bring the best out of you." "He was always giving." But, what struck people most about him was his love for Jesus. And his hope. Robert lived with a sure and certain hope.

on the journey, day 67

In March, he began a daily writing regimen on Facebook that lasted 82 days. There were many ups and downs during that time, and once during a friend's visit, he confessed that he had asked the Lord, "Why me? Why so soon?" His friend challenged him with a question: "Have you asked why **not** you?"

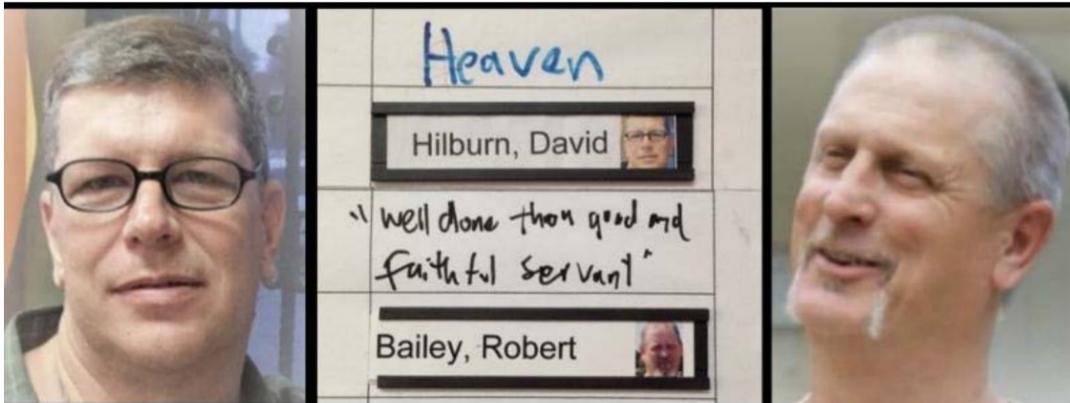
As Robert pondered those words, he had a light-bulb moment. Driven by his deep concern for others, he saw a new purpose: He decided to turn his daily writings into a book. He wanted to reach people who might be in a situation like his, to encourage them and give them hope. With the help of his fiancée, Virginia, and one of his C.H.A.R.M. brothers, Robert finished his book, *The Journey of Hope: Why Not Me?*

Among those touched by his journey were his hospice nurses. Some of them would come and stay with Robert for hours - even when they didn't have to. People have said that there is something different about our houses, something you can feel when you walk in. These nurses said they'd never felt anything like it.

In that faith-filled home, Robert was surrounded in his final hours by friends and loved ones singing songs of praise. He celebrated and sang his way into heaven. He remained steadfast - still praising God, always encouraging others, simply trusting in His Lord - till the end. His smile never faded.

for them, all is well

Dying well means living with joy until the end. It means finding peace with your life. It means finding hope in your future. Well done, David and Robert. Well done.



David Hilburn

Robert Bailey

David Hilburn's mother, Elizabeth Persons, journaled her thoughts about the loss of her son. To read more, click here:

[Excerpts from a Mother's Heart.](#)

For a hard copy of Robert Bailey's book, *The Journey of Hope: Why Not Me?*, text Virginia Cerda at 713-799-3563. For a downloadable copy and more of his story, click here:

[Robert's Journey.](#)

The book is free of charge.

Our transitional house residents...



Even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Your donation helps us provide family-style housing for recently released men and women. There they learn how to "do life" as they continue to grow in the Lord. We give them a stable place from which to launch back into society, now free to be the people God created them to be.

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Christ's Hope and Reconciliation Ministry (C.H.A.R.M.) ministers to incarcerated men and women and their families. Our mission is to share the hope found only in Jesus Christ and to see souls reconciled to God. As the lives of individuals are transformed, so are their relationships with their families, local church, and communities.

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