

Reflections - A Look at The Ladder's Past

By Brian Beckman

Dear Ladder Friends,

This issue of Rails and Rungs is an anniversary special reflecting on The Ladder's past. We were planning a big anniversary party outside, then decided against it because of COVID-19. We ultimately opted to use our newsletter as a tool to celebrate our fifth anniversary. We hope you enjoy *Reflections - A Look at The Ladder's Past*.

The Ladder was born out of prayer, the leadership feeling that the success of The Ladder depends on it. "We pray fervently" (Ephesians 6:18) is a core value on a rung of our ladder (see our Core Values ladder on page 2). David and Kim Beckman prayed and sought the Lord, feeling a need for a youth center in Shelby. Karen McLouth was praying too, feeling that same need and having conversations with Kim. Kim and David obeyed His calling and started on the journey to create The Ladder.

Transforming this old building was a great undertaking; the planning, the surprises, and the construction all presented unique challenges.

was written to me in March 2017). The first official prayer event occurred August 6, 2015. The day began with people writing prayers and scripture on the interior of The Ladder's walls. The Word of God is the foundation of The Ladder, literally and figuratively, which is why the first core value listed on our ladder rail is *We read the Word of God* (2 Timothy 2:15).



That same day we walked over to Memorial Park and prayed for our community.



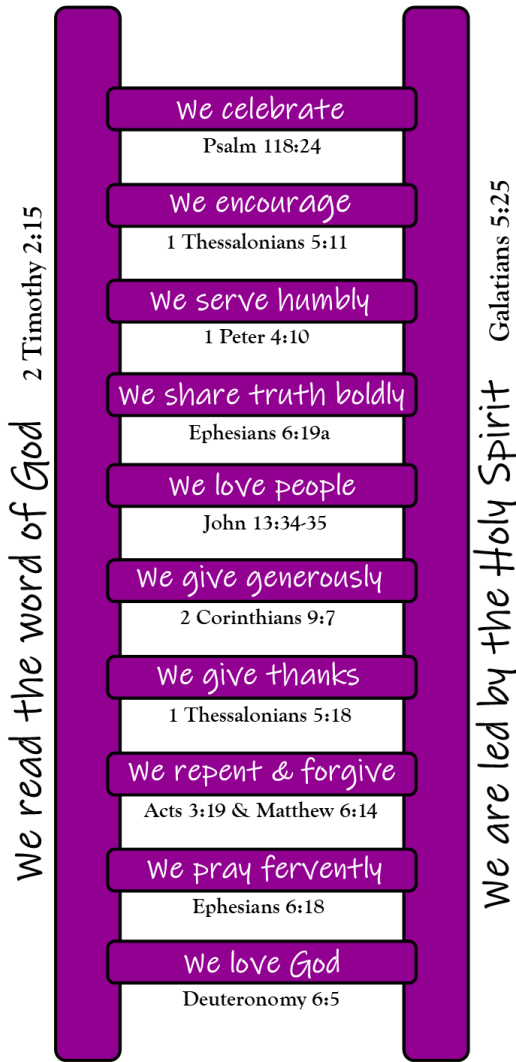
Little did we know that a group of people had been praying more than eight years before we started construction on The Ladder. (Please see the letter on page 2, which



(...Continued on page 3)



CORE VALUES To Live a Life of Worship



Depiction of the “eye of God,” as described in the letter.

Letter From a Prayer Warrior

March 1, 2017

Dear People of Faith at The Ladder,

My friend has asked me to write my testimony of faith concerning The Ladder.

Several years ago (maybe over 10), my friend and I joined with a group of people praying for Oceana County. It became known as House of Prayer. Every Friday night, we met and prayed together for our community.

Often when God is on the move, we may or may not know or fully comprehend all that God is doing—we just move in faith and trust His perfect and divine will.

The group met for the longest period at the old skating rink and thereafter wherever God would arrange for us to meet. We had as many as 40 people at a time and sometimes only one or two. But every Friday we prayed, no matter the number. We prayed for specific groups of people, townships, counties, county governments, villages, churches, families, children, schools, etc.—whatever God laid on our hearts.

Did we see immediate change? No. Was God listening to us? Of course He was! God was not asking for our opinion. He was asking for our obedience and faithfulness.

Eventually, we became fewer and fewer, but we still met and prayed. Some evenings my friend and I would go on prayer drives, driving in a direction we felt God would have us go and praying against the powers of darkness. One evening she shared a picture she drew—it was an eye with a heart shape as the pupil. We felt it was the eye of God. Later we realized that we had been driving in the shape of an eye with the undeveloped property of The Ladder (which was not yet there) as the very center of the eye. Even then we were not aware of God’s ultimate plan. [see image to the left of this letter.]

I had a vision that I walked out into the parking lot of House of Prayer, across from the Shelby High School. I saw hundreds of young people from the school into the street. They moved listless and dazed like robots. The crowd was massive; I could hear their shuffling feet. A little boy came out from the crowd, looked up at me and said, “Will you be my mother?” That was the end. At the time, I had no idea what this could mean. Now, I think I do.

My friend and I talked recently about The Ladder and how the youth of the community are being ministered to at The Ladder! We discussed the praise concert we attended there one time last year, and the young people who attended and were ministered to by this one event—not to mention others.

Could it be that The Ladder is set in the very middle of God’s eye of love for the young people of Shelby and throughout the community? Is this the beginning of God’s move to save our youth from the enemy of our souls? Does this have anything to do with my vision? I do not know.

But I do know this: it will be my privilege to pray for these young people as they attend and are ministered to at The Ladder. To me, God has honored the prayers of His people from 10 years ago, and look what has happened.

The Ladder exists—young people are being ministered to and people continue to pray. GOD BE PRAISED!!!

May our God continue to bless each and every time an event is scheduled at The Ladder on behalf of our youth. May hundreds be saved, lives restored, families re-united and other miracles occur!

May the Peace and Blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ be yours.

-Anonymous

Names of individuals mentioned in the letter above have been changed at their request, so God alone receives the glory.

Our Mission

The Ladder is dedicated to impacting families by guiding people to love and follow Jesus: read God’s word, live in step with the Holy Spirit, and make disciples.

Celebrating the Life of a Good Neighbor: Gilbert Revilla

August 9, 1954 - July 16, 2020

By Cathy Zoulek

Gilbert became part of The Ladder Family in 2016 through our Meal Ministry. When we began serving AgeWell meals, he would either come in to the center to pick them up or someone (usually Ladder staff member Charles Jensen) would deliver them to his home.

Gilbert suffered from multiple sclerosis and other health issues, but he remained very active helping and serving his neighbors. He mowed Mary Byl-Rivera and Kim Warmuskerken's lawns for several years. He also mowed and snow-blown for Gordon and Pat Wyns, and after Gordon died, he would drive Pat to the grocery store. When Pat moved in to a nursing home, Gilbert called her every week just to talk and see how she was doing.

"He was a very caring kind man who would give you the shirt off his back" said Kim. "He was always willing to help, and was available morning, noon, or night. Gilbert was the kind of friend that anybody would want to have."

You would not only see Gilbert helping his friends and neighbors in Shelby. He owned a trailer and would load up his mower and drive to Hart to mow lawns.

"Gilbert was one of the most awesome gentlemen I've known," said Mary. "He was so kind, considerate, and always ready to help with anything you needed. I will miss him always."

Gilbert's ability to love and serve others even though he was struggling with his own health issues was so motivating to us all. Charles said, "I will always remember how he always had a positive attitude and would meet me with a smile." He will be missed by all those who had come to know and love him. 🙏



(Reflections, continued from page 1)

After praying in the park, the group walked back to The Ladder to bathe the center in prayer. The group encircled the building, praying and worshipping the Lord by singing, *Holy Spirit You Are Welcome Here*, which leads us to the second core value listed on the rail of our ladder: "We are led by the Holy Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).



Most of the people that attended that first prayer event were people connected to The Ladder, but three ladies showed up to pray on that hot August morning because they saw the event in the paper. Helen VanderMey, Jan Wiersema and Carol Bitson have been loyal to The Ladder mission ever since. Jan was an active prayer warrior and ardent supporter of The Ladder until her passing in 2019. Helen and Carol continue to pray and have become champions (volunteers) for The Ladder.

Since then, the leadership has organized a prayer team and prayer partners. The prayer team began meeting corporately twice monthly on the 1st and 3rd Thursday. Presently the team meets in unity at 8:30 am at The Ladder and at home on those days. The prayer partners pray for The Ladder from their homes regularly. Both groups have shown great perseverance, which reminds me of the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8. I believe the parable paints a picture of each person on the prayer team and each prayer partner as being a faithful prayer warrior, who have persistently gone to our Father on behalf of The Ladder. Luke 18:7-8 says, "7 And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth."

We are so grateful to our prayer warriors for their time, sacrifice and faith. All our prayer warriors are listed in this newsletter (see insert). They are the backbone of this ministry. Please thank the Lord for each one of them. I certainly do! 🙏

Our Vision

The Ladder is a friendly, intergenerational and ethnically diverse community center aimed at knowing and serving our neighbors and uniting our community around Jesus, so that lives are transformed.

What Do Folks About



A song came to mind that sums it all up: "Surely the Presence of the Lord is in This Place." This is how I see The Ladder. I see God all around and in the hearts of all of you. (Type this link into your browser to view the lyrics and listen to the song:

<https://youtu.be/ttEgZLg-2-Y>).

- Brenda Babinec, Champion

I have really enjoyed watching some of the special needs people come in and doing things with other people of the community. I pray that The Ladder will soon be able to open back up so these people have somewhere special to go.

- Donna Near, Member

It is a good place for the young people to spend their extra time, mainly to learn about Jesus, serving others, sharing, and giving. It's also a wonderful place for the older people to share a meal, play a game or just visit. I love this place!

- Esther VanNett, Champion

The Ladder is a friendly environment where kids can go after school when their parents cannot pick them up.

- Reid Maynard, Youth Member

Smiley faces, interested listeners, good huggers, good food, great music. A place to share our one God and His powers, even meet a neighbor you hadn't met and a relative or two. It is a place filled with warm, safe, and friendly people sharing the love of God.

- Bill & Connie Ramey, Champions

The Ladder takes care of kids that normally would be on the street, providing companionship, friendship, and food for them - things every child needs.

- Mary Byl-Rivera, Member

I like that they welcome you with open arms and always wish the best for you.

- Tim Dukes, Youth Member

Our community is so blessed with the service and friends that The Ladder provides to those who go there. Everyone feels welcomed.

- Pat Tate, Member

When I went to The Ladder after school, I felt calm, and I was respected for who I was. I feel that I have gotten a new family that I get to visit and have fun with every Thursday.

- Nick Jagnow, Youth Member

Having lived in Shelby for almost 90 years, I don't remember having a place that both children and adults could go for activities like The Ladder has. I like to hear what is happening and getting a list of what I can pray for. Also, I am thankful for having meals brought to me. The people helping there are all so caring. My thanks to all!

- Miriam Aebig, Member

Volunteering at The Ladder gives me a purpose. It is a wonderful Christian-based center. The staff and those attending make you feel cared for and needed. Every day they tell you how much they appreciate all you do. I especially love the jam session, card playing, being a greeter, and connections with all the people. Seeing the enjoyment on the faces of the groups that come in is precious. The Ladder and staff are a true blessing for our community.

- Bev Riggs, Champion

The Ladder gives me a safe place to walk. Also, the people are happy to see me and talk to me.

- Sue Richards, Member

