

THE FRUITS OF OUR PRAYERS

Dear Friends,

I trust this finds you all well. I thought spring was here, but alas, another bout of snowy weather is happening before me as I look out the window. I enjoy watching birds and can hardly wait to see my first robin of the year. Noreen, a devoted volunteer, came into The Ladder on February 21, announcing that she saw Mr. Robin the day before in her yard. She even had photographic evidence of the orange-breasted bird! Isn't evidence important in so many different situations? For me, having evidence of answered prayer keeps me praying. I know it shouldn't matter, but it does.

Stuart, one of my advisors, challenged me over a year ago to make sure that I was spending enough time in prayer and ensuring that The Ladder Team was praying sufficiently for the work and the people of the Ladder. During the past two years, we have been inundated with prayer requests—so much so that, at times, we feel overwhelmed by that call to prayer.

Since The Ladder's inception, a prayer team has diligently prayed for The Ladder. Prayer requests are sent to the prayer team twice a month. We are so grateful that many of you have so faithfully served by praying for The Ladder because we know everything we have here is a result of prayer and God's provision. For the past year, we have stepped up our time in prayer. Weekdays at 9:15am and at twice-monthly staff meetings, we have been praying for our youth and community requests. We have even prayed for youth who attended in the past.

Evelyn*, a senior in high school, started attending The Ladder on October 23, 2018. She heard the daily devotionals, and Phil spent time reading the Bible and studying with her during youth hours. Evelyn was a delight. She attended 22 times, and the last we saw of her was May 7, 2019. She graduated soon after that, and then we lost contact with her. In March 2020, when Covid hit, we started praying for all the youth, past and present. Evelyn was one of them.

Fast forward to October 2021 at the Fall Festival in Shelby. I ran into Evelyn's mom, Nancy*, and I told her that The Ladder team has been praying for Evelyn. Nancy started crying and told me that Evelyn had left the area after graduation, and she hadn't seen her for two-and-a-half years. Evelyn became estranged from her Mom over accusations of trauma. So, we continued to pray more specifically for Evelyn.

Last week a staff member ran into Nancy at a local store. She reported that Evelyn has come back home. We are thankful to God for bringing her home! We are encouraged to pray fervently, because God has answered our prayer and the prayers of her mother.

Daily we pray for 15-20 students—past, present or absent—and specifically for five students who have been absent from The Huddle. Just recently these five youth have come back to Ladder activities. We are praising our Lord for the work He is doing through The Ladder. That work will not happen without prayer.

⁴“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Luke 15:4-7

The people who come through our doors are our neighbors who become family, and we are called to love them. We love them by praying for them, whether they come back to us or not. In the above parable, the shepherd went hunting for that one missing sheep. We pray for those missing youth because they are so dear to us, just as that one sheep was so dear to the shepherd. Stepping up our prayer time has been a blessing, and we are seeing fruit from our efforts. Thank you, Lord!

Brian Beckman

** This name has been changed to maintain privacy.*

YOUTH & FAMILY

Half-Time Celebration

By Beth Pranger

On February 17, The Ladder had a party to celebrate the mid-point of the school year for students. More than 20 youth attended, as well as several adult volunteers. Both the youth and adults enjoyed playing 9 Square in the Air in the gym area, which is the same activity The Ladder offered during the fall festival.

We topped off the celebration with chili-cheese dogs, banana splits and root beer floats. Coach Love gave a life-changing message of hope to all students who attended. There were many new faces at this celebration, some of whom are now attending The Ladder regularly after school. We are thankful for the generosity of New Era Reformed Church in allowing us to borrow their 9 Square in the Air equipment, as well as our staff and volunteers who made this such a successful event.



Top Photo: Youth and adults had a blast playing 9 Square in the Air. Bottom Photo: After the game, everyone gathered in the café to eat chili-cheese dogs, banana splits and root beer floats.

Winning Plays Called in The Huddle

By Troy Love

In sports, plays are called in the huddle. A coach or quarterback hopes every play will work, lead to a score, and help guide the team to victory. While sometimes plays don't seem to work, there are other plays that lead to exciting gains. Each day in The Huddle we call a play from God's playbook – the Bible. Here are a few winning plays that should make you want to stand up and applaud.

Last week I asked a 7th grade boy a few questions in a casual conversation. I said, "You've been coming to The Huddle pretty steady for the past several months. Have you learned something in The Huddle that has helped you in your life?"

"Oh yeah," he quickly responded, "the rocks in the backpack!"

He referenced a lesson I taught several weeks back on December 10, 2021. The play we called that day was Colossians 3:5-10. Verse 8 says, "But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips."

I explained that all of these are heart issues and then pulled out a backpack to represent our heart. I had five rocks in the backpack, which made it very heavy. When you're wearing a backpack, you can't take things out of it unless you take it off first. So, I took the backpack off and took each rock out, placing them at the base of the cross.

One of the rocks was labeled "ANGER" which resonated with this young man. He said, "I used to be angry all the time, and I would yell and sometimes hit my brothers and sisters and mom. I got rid of that rock."

I then asked, "What do you do when you feel anger coming on?"

"I exercise," he replied.

When I asked what his favorite exercise was, he said, "I go outside and walk, but my favorite exercise is dodgeball."

A great gain was achieved in this young man's life, family, and future by a play called two months ago. What a win! And we play dodgeball at The Huddle almost every day. Double win!!

I asked another young man what he has learned at The Huddle that has really helped him. He said, "The George Washington fog story and David and Goliath." Last week I told the true story of 8,000 of Washington's men miraculously escaping 30,000 British troops with the help of an "unexplainable" thick fog that settled on the water and beach. Washington gave credit to the protection of Divine Providence. Back in January, Beth Pranger taught a lesson out of the Bible on the familiar and miraculous story of David slaying Goliath. When I asked this young man what he learned from those stories, he said, "When things in life seem impossible and hopeless, there's always hope with God." He connected two plays called a month-and-a-half apart that will encourage him in the "impossible," difficult times ahead. Win!

Another winning play happened with a freshman in high school. I met him as I was standing outside The Ladder to welcome kids into The Huddle. He was walking home, and I started talking to him. I don't think he understood much of what I was saying, as Spanish is his primary language. Nonetheless, he came in! He has been a treasured, cared for and celebrated attendee of The Huddle for months. He sits in on every Huddle lesson, but I could never tell if he was understanding anything I was saying. Well, last month a Spanish-speaking liaison at Shelby High School shared the gospel of Jesus with him, and he eagerly accepted Jesus as Savior and King! He says, "I love to hear stories about Jesus." Good thing, because at The Huddle we will keep calling plays about The Winner that will lead to young people living in Victory!

The printing of this newsletter
(Mar. 2022) was made possible by



Our Mission

The Ladder helps people pursue God by building caring relationships and sharing God's Truth. The coaches enthusiastically guide adults and youth to love God by following Jesus, living in step with the Holy Spirit, reading God's Word, loving people, and making disciples.

CELEBRATING LIFE

Prayer Warrior Miriam Aebig

September 9, 1930 – February 28, 2022

By Brian Beckman

The staff at The Ladder was saddened to hear about the passing of our dear friend, Miriam Aebig. Miriam became an important part of The Ladder family by serving on the Prayer Team from the get-go. She apologized many times that she could not do more, but we assured her that praying for The Ladder was huge. Miriam's daughter Brenda said, "Mom loved The Ladder. She had the prayer sheet on her bed stand." We are grateful for Miriam's desire to serve The Ladder by praying. She was a true prayer warrior and a special blessing to The Ladder team.

We call Miriam a "Ladder Champion" because she championed The Ladder cause. She would tell others about happenings at the Ladder and recruit others to be involved. Even though we are saddened to say goodbye, we celebrate because we know she is in heaven with her Lord and Savior, Jesus.

Miriam loved Jesus, her husband Gordon, their three children (Monica, Scott, and Brenda) and their families. She was one of those people who were "all things Shelby." Her involvement in our community was beyond what most people would dare to undertake. She was involved in the library, her church, the school, the hospital, a cancer support group, Red Hats, and Relay for Life. As Miriam grew older, she transitioned away from many of her involvements, but she remained steadfast to the Lord by

praying for her family, friends, church, and The Ladder. Miriam's value to The Lord and to Shelby never diminished.

When Miriam lived at Rosewood Apartments in Shelby, The Ladder delivered meals to her. Ladder volunteer Charles Jensen remembered visiting with her whenever he delivered her meal. "Miriam probably enjoyed these daily visits as much as the meals," he said.

Nancy, Miriam's friend since youth, said, "Miriam was a special lady and served the Lord quietly." 1 Peter 3:4 sums up our friend Miriam: "A still and quiet spirit is of great worth to the LORD." Miriam's quiet spirit was of great worth to The Ladder Team and to the greater Shelby community, too! She was a real servant leader.



OUR FRIENDS

Diane Keeler

By Michelle Deuling

Smiling and having an upbeat attitude are two of the things that I first noticed about Diane (Moschke) Keeler. "I look at it this way," she mused, "you can either cry or smile, and I choose to smile."

Recently Diane had surgery on her shoulder. She commented that she has had many surgeries in her lifetime, but this one was special. With her beautiful smile, she told how the surgeon came in and asked if he could pray with her before her surgery. She gratefully accepted and told him that in all the surgeries she has been through, he was the only one to offer this service that brought her so much peace.

Diane married her brother's friend, Robert, on September 23, 1966 just before her 20th birthday. Together they had four boys. Two of them, Steven (died at birth) and Jerry (2020) have passed away while the other two, Larry and Jeff, make it home on Sunday for dinner and games with Diane's three brothers and their families.



Diane enjoys yard work, taking care of her flowers, doing search-a-words, and playing cards. The Ladder has also become important to her. Three days a week, Diane leaves Robert to work in the garage while she joins us at the Ladder to play Dominoes, Pinochle, Set-Back and other cards games. She seemed genuinely pleased that our community has a place where she and others can gather to play her favorite games.

"Everyone should come here," Diane said. "I love to meet old friends I haven't seen in years, and I get to make new friends, too."

Even though Diane was born in Shelby Hospital and only moved about 10 miles outside of town, she said that she has enjoyed traveling with a few of her girlfriends and went to several of the New England states, New Orleans, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Florida. One of the nicest things about Kentucky was leaving Michigan in a blizzard and arriving there, where the weather was beautiful and the sun was shining.

In 2001, Robert and Diane retired from Keeler Disposal, their business, as they passed it down to their boys. Now called Sons Disposal, they service from New Era to Pentwater. Diane said she is looking forward to her son's wedding coming up in April, as she will become an instant step-grandma, and their family gatherings will grow substantially.

Thank you, Diane, for being part of our Ladder family! It is obvious that family is very precious to you, and you are precious to us.

Our Vision

The Ladder is a friendly, intergenerational, and ethnically diverse community center aimed at loving God and knowing and serving neighbors, so that individuals and families are transformed. Together we will make Jesus famous in our community.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The Ladder needs volunteers to help serve our neighbors. In addition to English-speaking volunteers, we have a great need for **bilingual and Hispanic bilingual volunteers** to help serve our Spanish-speaking neighbors.

The Ladder is open Monday through Friday 8am-5pm. Whether you enjoy working with adults or hanging out with the youth, there are numerous opportunities to serve throughout the day.

Please contact Cathy to discuss the perfect volunteer opportunity for you: cathy@theladdercommunitycenter.com or (231) 259-0211.

ADULT HOURS: 8AM-3PM **YOUTH HOURS: 3-5PM**

CAFÉ VOLUNTEERS: 9-12 Tue, Wed, Fri **GREETERS: 3-5 Mon-Fri**

LUNCH SERVERS: 10:30-12 Tue **YOUTH VOLUNTEERS: 2:45-5 Mon-Fri**

LUNCH DELIVERERS: 11:30-12 Mon-Fri

GREETERS: 7:45-9/8:45-1:30 Mon-Fri

SUBSTITUTES NEEDED FOR ALL POSITIONS!

LIVE WELL Want to be Friends?

By Sue Beckman

In the midst of life, when we often think we want to be left alone, Jesus extends his nail-scarred hand and invites us to be His friend. I love this story told by Joseph Stowell III, Christian book author and former president of Cornerstone University:

Some time ago, I was flying from Europe back to the United States when I found myself sitting next to a little girl, doll and blanket in hand, who never stopped talking to me from the moment she sat down. I got the history of her family. She told me her little Rottweiler pup, Duke, was down in the hold of the plane. We took off, and she began, "Look at this, look at that...." I'm thinking, *eight hours...*

So, we played games and chatted until she got quiet. I thought maybe she was going to doze off. She pulled her blanket up a bit. I reached for a magazine, and as I did, I got a little elbow in my side. I looked down at her as she threw out her little hand and said, "Want to be friends?"

My heart melted. "Sure, Stephanie, let's be friends," I said, and I was reminded of Jesus (Maximized Living Bible, NCV).

At the age of 19, I found myself depressed and confused by life's twists and turns. I tried to control it, make it all better, but only found the depression and an eating disorder worsening. I felt alone and defeated.

I had heard about Jesus but didn't know much about Him. One night, lying in my top bunk, I sensed this Jesus say to me, "Want to be friends?" I reached under the mattress and pulled out a letter I had received from my friend Debbie. Debbie told me that I could have a relationship with God and a friendship with Jesus, not because I was good enough, but because *He* is. Jesus chooses to love me, forgive me, and be my friend. *Want to be friends?*

I knew less about Jesus than Joseph Stowell knew about Stephanie, but somewhere, somehow, I said Yes. My life has never been the same.

Over the years, God has shaped my heart, my breath, so that my great desire is to help others know this life with Jesus and walk it out together. Jesus said, "*I came so that you may have life and have it abundantly*" (John 10:10). That abundant life begins when He extends his hand to each of us and invites us. "*Want to be friends?*"



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