

THE HOPE CENTER
Ground-breaking
March 7, 2009

THIS is a sacred moment; another sacred moment in the history of the ministry God has trusted us with called GOOD WORKS! From the time we remodeled the basement of our home in the fall of 1980 through the years, God has given us sacred moments. And we must preserve them in our memory because they are intimately connected to the memory of God's faithfulness.

Ask me about these and I will tell you some of these stories:

- There is the story of 3 Elliott street and how this house was obtained in the era of 11% interest rates
- The miracle of zoning on Elliott Street
- The discovery of 91 Central Avenue which was the private home of my best man (in our wedding)
- The story of Lorene Avenue
- The story of our 80,000.00 addition on to our \$42,000.00 house in 1994 onto the Timothy House
- The story of the Good Works Luhrig Road property
- The story of a woman who, in 1996 give us a deed to a house that we later sell so that we can use the money to build our Administrative offices, B&B and Good Gifts store.
- And then there is the story of the transformation station beginning with how we obtained the land
- And the story of the renovation of the Hannah House
- The story of the retreat cabin
- The story of Friday Night Life's beginnings and growth
- The story of what is now called Samaritan Projects, Short term mission teams

And the story goes on. It is an endless story that will be told in eternity because it is a story about the faithfulness of God. And it is God who has sustained Good Works. This is God's work and we have been invited into it. And what a privilege it is to be invite into what God is doing in the earth, in SE Ohio, among the people The Lord loves here. How amazing it really is to experience the love of God and the kingdom of God!

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. We are breaking ground today as a symbolic expression of faith. God is increasing our capacity to trust in HIM! Where does this faith come from? Our faith emerges from the experience of God's faithfulness to us. Indeed, we trust God because we have seen God's faithfulness. And so we tell of his faithfulness, we sing of his faithfulness, we proclaim God's faithfulness to one another ... and our faith is enlarged. God increases our faith as we celebrate real experiences of his faithfulness.

Song—GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

This act of unearthing dirt is a symbolic act and serves as the beginning of a new era for the ministry we have been trusted with.

THE VISION for the Hope Center (a place where HOPE is at the center) ...

- **We want to set aside space to fill the gaps.** What do I mean? Our ministry is engaged with serving so many vulnerable populations (widows, at-risk children, people without a home, friends who are mentally challenged and physically disabled, people who struggle with illness of all kinds – we are engaged. And where is the gap? Space set aside for reflection so that the community can together ‘hear’ what the Spirit is saying. Therefore, we dedicate this space as a place for many reflective conversations (with God, with one another), we dedicate this space as a place set aside for community prayers, and for times of instruction so that we can keep growing in our understanding of and experience of the kingdom of God.
- **Secondly, the Center of HOPE will serve as a place for our many visiting groups (almost 40 a year now) to build up and strengthen *their* community as part of their visit with us.** In the end, we not only want our friends who visit to engage in serving others *with* us and say “*we could do this where we live*”, we also want them to experience individual and corporate transformation during their time—we want to set aside space for them to experience reflective and instructional conversations as well as create an atmosphere where insights and observations can be shared in an undistracted and intimate manner. This space will facilitate a new level of growth for the many communities who visit us.
- The Hope Center will serve as a place where HOPE can be experienced, discovered and nurtured. Can we set aside a PLACE where people can come and receive hope? Is that possible? Yes, because of God’s presence and this vision, yes. Because we know this is God’s will, we can pray this into reality.
- The Hope Center will become **new place and a new beginning to bring together in small groups people from our vulnerable populations for the purpose of giving our friends affirmation, encouragement and place.** Through the grace of ‘mutuality’, it is our intention to offer an atmosphere where the elderly, people with disabilities, the mentally and emotionally challenged (that includes many of us) and our friends who struggle with loneliness (which often surfaces into depression) can come together periodically to sing, share and encourage one another. As you may already, know, I am an environmentalist – I believe God has called me to create environments where the “unnoticed” and the ‘looked-over’ become recognized, affirmed and where they discover their God-given gifts and where they are able to share these gifts with the rest of us. In short, this place will “give place” to people who don’t believe they have anything to offer others. This place of HOPE can serve as a vehicle for our community to help our many friends discover their best self and the things they do have to offer the rest of us. Has God really chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and

to inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him? Has God? Do you believe this? I do. And I believe God will teach us about the kingdom of God through the very people he has called us to love and serve—those who Jesus calls “the least of these”

Conclusion: Heroic individuals vs. heroic communities

WE are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Let us therefore keep finding new ways to love God and love people! Said another way:

As learners, our mission is to discover new things to do that will give substance to the command of Jesus to ***“love one another as I have loved you”*** (John 13:34)

- Jesus prayer for unity is being fulfilled even on this day. – God has given us unity. It is a gift. It is our job to preserve this unity God has given as a gift. Listen to this prayer:

20"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us **so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity **to let the world know that you sent me** and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

God has given us unity. It is our job to preserve it. It takes work to preserve the unity God has given us. It is always the work of humility, patience, bearing with one another – picking up our cross (the place where our will and God’s will cross).

But hear me now: When we are in unity, when the body of Christ is in unity, --- Nothing can stop God’s people from fulfilling Jesus vision ***“ I will build my Christian community and even the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*** Nothing.

Let us travel together to the place of a city, set upon a hill which can not be hidden, let us become a heroic community. Amen.