

Good Works, Inc. — A Community of Hope

Celebrating 39 Years!



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Keith Wasserman, Founder/Executive Director

"I made the WIDOW'S heart sing, I took up the case of the STRANGER, I was a father to the FATHERLESS."
(Job 29:12-13)

Greetings with JOY and gratitude!

November 2020

On January 1, Good Works will be 40. That feels like a long time to do anything. Darlene and I are really grateful for the *grace* from God to persevere in loving people, the kindness of those who love and support us, and the community, which has formed over all of these years that sustains us. I'm smiling. It really is quite amazing.

We started with a simple act of faith – taking strangers into the basement of our home. I was a college student living with other college students. I had the gift of naiveté. I had no idea what I was doing, but as I look back, I can see that faith and hope and love were actively growing in my life. We were learners. We are still learners. We opened in January of 1981 and Darlene and I were married in September of 1981. She moved from her college house into our home on Elliott Street. We both worked other jobs and volunteered to operate Good Works, welcoming adults and children into our home from 7:00 pm each night to 9:00 am the next morning. It would be a few years before we heard the word "homeless." It was not until the 3rd year that we began receiving \$300.00 per month income. In early 1984 we realized that we needed to move Good Works out of our home. It was going to die or we were going to die. By December of that year, in answer to our prayers, we were able to relocate to the west side of Athens and purchase the house on Central Avenue now known as The Timothy House.



Keith & Darlene in the early 1980's

God's wisdom has guided us to keep our integrity as our greatest asset. We are stewards of a lot of property and resources now, and I feel like a pastor as I care for the people that I work alongside who are on the front lines of risk and love. Years ago, we learned how to add the word "intentional" to our ministry. And we are still practicing the vision of intentionality. We are certain God has called us to care for the stranger, the widow and children who are struggling with poverty. We are confident both in God's calling and in the beautiful way good works flow out of all of our lives (in 2019, we had 1,100 volunteers). We know that the insights and perspectives we have received to develop Good Works and the innovative initiatives, are evidence of the way God has led us these 40 years. We have learned that the work we do must be done in community, where we share responsibility as we love people who are often overwhelmed by their own brokenness and the broken systems around them.

So, we give thanks.

Through the years (beginning in 1984) Good Works has been governed by a board, which has been the backbone of our work. Many people have served in this capacity over the years, guiding us, providing nurture, accountability and wisdom. For this I give thanks.

In 1994 we were able to purchase the Good Works property on Luhrig Road (another miracle story) and we began to expand our work further. From the beginning, the ministry God has trusted us with has been primarily about relationships, purposely building relationships based on trust. We see ourselves as ordinary people who are yielded to one another, allowing God to work in us and through us.

During those years, we began to understand the 4 questions that we now ask everyone to consider when they make a commitment to Good Works; (1) Can I learn something from these people? (2) Are these the kind of people that I believe can learn something from me? (3) Is this community as concerned about my growth and development as the growth and development of those it reaches out to? (4) Can I get healing here too? These questions sustain us and guide us to focus on being a healthy community where the love of Christ flows through us, and the structures we work through.

Friday Night Life flowed naturally out of our desire to stay connected with the people who experienced homelessness who were staying at The Timothy House. We invited, and they came back for dinner and community. And they still come. That was 28 years ago. We started welcoming volunteer teams to stay with us for weekends and week-long service opportunities in the late 1990s. This evolved into what we now call Work Retreats. On an average year (and 2020 is not an average year), we host around 35 groups (300-400 hundred volunteers) and serve almost 60 widows, widowers or adults with a disability at their homes. We built what we now call The Transformation Station in 2003 and launched it in 2004. Our vision was to help adults struggling with poverty to get things they need (cars, appliances, furniture, bicycles) by inviting them into a new identity of “volunteer”, where they are clothed with dignity, brought into community, and can earn these things. This initiative has gone far better than we expected.

Our Country Bed and Breakfast and the Carter Cabin have continued to provide another refreshing form of hospitality for those who stay with us. When completed, Sign of HOPE will offer a new form of *welcome* for those we cannot serve through The Timothy House, especially adults with physical disabilities.

Spiritual Formation Retreats, Praxis (our partnership with OU classes), Internships, Life-Together and Senior Friends are all initiatives which have slowed down or been placed on “pause”, but we are expecting to resume in 2021.

I could go on to speak about Good Gifts, Good Works Gardens, Service Living, Hope and Possibilities, and Kids Discovery Club – initiatives which were fruitful in the past but are not functioning right now because we are praying and waiting on new leadership.

In retrospect, the ministry we call Good Works has been full – our cup is full, our hearts are full. We are thankful. This fall season has been very difficult for all of us and especially for me. Darlene and I are both feeling a weariness in our souls as we try to navigate these days. We seek and welcome your prayers, your words of encouragement, your invitations to come and rest, and your support.

Love is still a verb,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Kw' or 'Keith'.

Keith Wasserman

P.S. THANK YOU, each of you for walking alongside us as you have been able, and for your love and patience and kindness.