



**Reflections**  
By Keith Wasserman

Good Works Timothy House  
Thanksgiving Day  
**Thursday November 25, 2021**



I stayed overnight at the Good Works Timothy House on Thanksgiving Day. As I am getting older, this has become more difficult for me. I don't sleep well and I feel very tired the next day. But I still consider it an "invitation" from God to spend time with the strangers we are serving and loving there --- strangers who are becoming friends. As most of you already know, I have many thoughts to share about the adults and children we are learning to love and their situations, but here is something brief:

In scripture we read that God is particularly concerned about widows, fatherless children and strangers. These three vulnerable "grouping" come up over and over again in scripture and have several things in common one of which is that, for the most part, they did not choose the

situation they are in. I know that is debatable for some people, especially when we measure personal choices against situations (often oppression) forced upon people. That is a essay for another day. Nevertheless, we can see that with widows and fatherless children, they did not bring their situation upon themselves. Take a look at James 1:26-27 where we are instructed to “look after” widows and fatherless children which is defined by James a pure religion. It does take a little more work to see that with strangers (sojourners, aliens, immigrants), they are often thrust into situations that they did not choose, were often not mentally, emotionally or physically prepared for and many times, respond with words and acts of desperation. In Deuteronomy 19, we learn that the Israelities who had experienced being strangers at one time were commanded to love the stranger because they were once strangers, and knew the feelings of strangers themselves.

As some of you know, I have chosen to stay in 11 different cities as a stranger for short periods of time to better understand the feelings and situations people experience from a “one of them” perspective. For me, this is continuing education. A few of these stories are published in the book GOOD WORKS, Hospitality and faithful discipleship and some are on the Good Works website.

Loving strangers can be hard for many of us. It takes work to learn how to love people who have been hurt. Someone has once said “hurt people hurt people” and this can be true. For this reason, we must learn to care for strangers in the context of community. I have more to say about that too. Sometimes the social challenges strangers experience along with fear, alienation, depression and the belief that “no one understands nor cares for me” causes them to act out in desperate ways. Here is what I shared in a recent Good Works Newsletter:

*The gap between the rich and the poor feels larger. I am not talking about economics right now. I am speaking about the growing social disconnect between people whose lives are stable, predictable (and even prosperous), and those whose daily struggle is simply survival. I see it, and I feel it as I work through the process of associating, serving, loving and knowing the stranger. We continue to talk with and see many people whose lives seem to be in chaos. What they all desire is a relationship with someone who cares about them, understands them and knows their name. They want to feel safe and trust someone, and have someone trust them. Many of us struggle between sharing and oversharing, but when your neediness is huge, it is easy to lose perspective and act in ways that are socially inappropriate. These days, I am hearing A LOT about all of the helpful services and programs available to people in need, especially those who choose recovery; and this is good. What I have learned however, is that those whose lives are broken and vulnerable need someone to simply be their friend. Years ago, I heard someone speak a word from God that impacted me: “I have not given you projects who are poor, I’ve given you friends”. LORD, help me, help us to be a friend to someone who needs a friend right now.*



Good Works Timothy House  
Labor Day Weekend  
**Sunday September 5, 2021**

I am on call this weekend. This is the first on-call weekend I have had in years. But we are short-staffed and I am stepping into the gaps. I do find JOY here most of the time and this too is because of God's grace. (Romans 14:17)

We have several adults who are experiencing homelessness staying here now. As I listen to their stories (which feels like a privilege), I can't help but feel compassion. I do my best to be attentive to their situations and we do the best we can to provide them a safe and clean home every day. They are going through things that most of us can not relate to. It is one thing to be without a place of your own and quite another to carry the emotional hardships related to the loss of a support system. As I get older, I am also more aware of how important it is for me to sleep well, to get a good night's sleep. There have been days when I have not slept well and I can feel it the next day. I'm not as patient and I feel vulnerable to sickness. So, an important aspect of our ministry is helping people get a good night's sleep. Another important aspect is helping people eat food that is healthy, good for them and tasty. This balance is quite a challenge most days.

Not everyone leaves well when they stay with us. There are two big "triggers" which often create tension and sometimes result in people leaving: drugs and money. We have a zero tolerance for any of our residents using unprescribed or illegal drugs or alcohol. Oftentimes, people are not as much "in recovery" as they first indicated and end up using again. We do our best to navigate the conversations when we suspect someone is using, but when people come in high, they tell us in colorful words what they really think of our questions. This is hard because we want a safe and clean place for everyone. TOO MANY TIMES I have seen a person in recovery for months (or longer) get sabotaged by someone who we let in the house a few days earlier. We feel grieved when this happens. People are also "triggered" by having money. We ask

those who stay with us to save any money they receive after they arrive, and to report it to us or leave when they get money. Sometimes they will not do either one. When people are desperate.... we see lots of desperate acts. We grieve at this too.

On a personal level, I feel compassion because sometimes, people just can't see around the corner of making good choices and taking responsibility. I might let them stay if it was my home and they were the only person staying here. I might. But we are a larger community now with different staff and different residents, and when we make an exception for something like this, it sets a precedent and also puts others at risk. These situations become emotional challenges for all of us, but they are made easier because we make these decisions in community.

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The Good Works Timothy House  
**Monday August 23, 2021**

This feels harder now, working overnights. I started doing these when I was much younger and had more energy and stamina. Working a full day and coming in to stay overnight feels more difficult than it used to be. But then I think of several of my co-workers who are also doing the same thing. LORD, help us all. The Good Works staff is stretched. We are feeling it. I am feeling it. So many things are difficult. We are helping each other see "the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13). But isn't that what we should do? We help one another see things (especially God's goodness) that our emotional and physical limitations blind us to.

The resident's tonight were all talking about those who are helping them. I could see their trust in the people who are trying to help them. There have been times when the residents were just complaining and blaming everyone. This is not one of those nights. The people staying here are in a hard and difficult situation. It is one thing to lose your place to live and quite another to lose the support from family and friends that you once had. The emotional hardship can sometime be more difficult than the physical hardship.

We are all wearing masks again. MOST of those who contact us to seek shelter are not vaccinated and say that they don't plan to be. This makes things much more difficult for those of us on the front lines. LORD, help me to see people as you see them. One of my former co-workers wrote me tonight to tell me she has Covid. She is my age. She has been vaccinated. I feel distressed for her.

Tomorrow is another day.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." – Matthew 6:34

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The Good Works Timothy House  
**Monday August 2, 2021**

I am back working overnights once a week at the Good Works Timothy House (TH). I come to the TH at 8:45 pm and after I am briefed in by the evening staff, I get to interact with our residents until around 11:00 pm. Tonight we welcomed two more adults who are experiencing homelessness into the TH. I am tired. It has been another long day. But I still find joy in talking with the people who come to stay here. They are grateful and this makes our work a lot easier. Even after all these years, we are still learning to love our neighbors which feels like the second most important aspect of our ministry. Love mean being patient with people when they are having a hard time figuring out how to navigate their lives. Love means grieving at what appears to be 'short-sighted' decisions some people make. Sometimes I want to shout at them "no...no", but I don't. Someone once said experience is the best teacher. I don't believe that. I think wisdom is the best teacher (see James 3:17-18). There are so many things we do not have to experience, tragic and harmful things, that wisdom can warn us about and protect us from. The TH is clean tonight thanks to the staff and volunteers. Residents have chores and most do them without any complaint. We are still very concerned about COVID. There are risks here. I feel them.



40 years feels like a long time to do anything. Over the years there have been several consistent "factors" in operating a home for people who do not have their own home. One aspect of this is how people say goodbye. I learned the hard way (and heartbreaking way) a lesson early on during the 1980s.

Dan came in on a cold wet snowy night much like tonight. I was running the shelter out of our re-modeled basement. I was around 23 years old. God had given me the gift of naivety. During the first few days of his stay, we built some trust and had good communication. He would come back each night around 7:00 pm and I would be present to ask how his day went and how he was doing. During these years, I worked during day with Central Avenue United Methodist Church in campus ministry and would open up Good Works each night around 7:00 pm. Over time, Dan shared more about himself, and his life, and I became more attached. I was learning about empathy, compassion and having an open heart towards the people who were experiencing what we would later call homelessness. Soon Dan had good news about a job and income and the hope of a place of his own. We continued to check in each day. I remember making him breakfast one morning and sitting in my kitchen just talking. I still remember this. Then one day, quite unexpectedly. Dan did not return to the house. I felt sad. I didn't realize that I had developed expectations (and hopes) for Dan and for our relationship until Dan didn't come back. And Dan never came back. I never saw or heard from him again.

Over the years I have had to face the reality of giving our time and energy and love and resources and then suddenly having the relationship come to an abrupt end. I can't say that having a social science explanation helped me too much. When you care for people and they "go dark", it hurts.

What did I do? Was it something I said? Questions kept going through my mind. I felt an emotional attachment, but could not explain it to myself.

When we love others and enter into their lives, we develop the desire to see them overcome things, find hope and succeed in their endeavors. It seems natural for the human spirit to want some kind of closure in these relationships. It was an experience like this which later caused an initiative Good Works established maybe 20+ years ago that we call Exit Interviews. These days, we invite every person who stays with us at The Timothy House to return after they move out and tell us about their experience, how they felt they were treated and any suggestions they have for us to improve the experience of others who will come after them. Many do come but some still go dark.

It is another cold and snowy night here in Athens. I am at the Good Works Timothy House again. I still feel grateful to be here and share a meal with those living here. It still feels like a gift to enter their lives.

**These are a few more reflections on doing night shift at Timothy House during COVID in 2020 and 2021.**





**Thursday January 14, 2021**

I AM DOING ANOTHER OVERNIGHT at the Good Works Timothy House tonight. I am grateful to be here. I did not want to come tonight. It has been a long day and I am tired. But now that I'm here, I feel grateful to be here. It always feels like a gift to be able to listen to, and talk with the people who are experiencing homelessness that stay here. The residents are very grateful for what we are providing them. This is a safe and clean (and warm) temporary "home", and it feels good to provide this kind of loving care. I can sense from all of them that they appreciate being able to stay here.

As amazing as it seems.... It was 45 years ago this month that I came home "glowing". I was 16 years old and in the 11th grade. My mother looked at me and asked "what did you take?". "Nothing mom" I replied. "I've just come back from church and I've given my life to Jesus Christ". Well... our family had NEVER been to church. I grew up going to synagogue. We hardly even knew anyone who went to a church. I grew up thinking there were two groups of people in the world: Jews and everyone else (which we called Gentiles).

I don't exactly remember my mom's reaction that night, but I think she thought that becoming a follower of Jesus was another stage I was going through. I had been through my rock & roll music stage, my drugs stage, my photography stage, and my Transcendental Meditation stage. I could imagine my mom saying 'great, my son the Jesus freak'. I later learned that Jesus doesn't make freaks out of people, he makes people out of freaks.

When I was in high school in Cleveland Heights, I hung out with a group that cherished the name freaks. We WERE the freaks and we wore the name as an honor badge. We took a lot drugs. I sold all kinds of illegal drugs to 7th and 8th graders when I was in the 8th and 9th grades. I was part of a group that prided themselves on being wild and crazy and "cool" at all costs. I was the kind of kid your parents hoped you would never meet.

That was 45 years ago – 1975. I look back and marvel at how the love and mercy and accountability I experience in my relationship with Jesus and scripture has changed me. At least that is how I perceive it. (see Psalm 23:6)

Early on in my journey, I became aware that I wanted to use this new energy (and joy) in my life to DO GOOD. And so, we started welcoming strangers initially just for meals and later provided shelter for people without homes. Then (years later), we started a public meal in our city to provide a hot dinner for people who were hungry (this is the 28th year of Friday Night Life), and years later created a way for people to get cars by volunteering to help others (we have provided 185 vehicles to people so far). As a community, we have done lots of good things over the past 40 years to help our neighbors. And we have learned a lot from our neighbors. Yet in my heart, I still want to do MORE. I still want to create and sustain ways not only to love and help my neighbors, but to facilitate a way where my neighbors love and help THEIR neighbors too.

But what is next? I am asking questions about how we can continue to bring people together to love one another, enjoy one another, inspire one another.... and encourage and assist THEIR neighbors. And these questions linger.

There is no laundromat in The Plains, Ohio. This bothers me. It has been gone for several years. Where do people go to do laundry there? Something in me wants to see the people of The Plains have a laundromat, and to do it in way that helps the people who live there help THEIR neighbors.

What is your “I have a dream” speech? What desires for good are in your heart to DO? You must talk about them. Do you dream about impacting a neighborhood in your community for good? Tell someone. What are the good and beautiful things you dream about to help others? Share it with someone. My desire is to link arms with people who want to do good things for their neighbors and their neighborhood, and to do it in a way that celebrates both mutuality and reciprocity.

Every volunteer that we have had the privilege of working alongside (and we had 1,100 in 2019) — every volunteer brought a unique blend of creativity and love as they learned, listened, served and cared for the people Good Works serves. And every volunteer had multiple abilities (gifts) that when unpacked, unleashed hope into the lives of the people around them. And it is HOPE the moves and motivates people. It is HOPE along with love which guides people into things which are GOOD for them, oftentimes, things they never thought possible.

Don't you want to find ways to do good and change someone's lie? I want to be involved in the things that unleash the joy and creativity and innovation people have inside them! (see Acts 10:38)

COVID has forced a re-ordering, a rethinking and hopefully a renewal when we come through this. What will the church look like in 2021? Will we return to what we have always done? OR will we find new and innovative ways to put the “new wine” of the Holy Spirit into new wineskins or new structures? Can we begin to spell faith e x p e r i



m e n t a t i o n and try things together which we have never done before, because we are moved by the love of God? In my desperation to bring people the hope and healing of Jesus, I want to be crazy and innovative! (See Mark 2:1-4). I am still hoping and dreaming of ways to love and improve the lives of my neighbors who struggle with economic, social and spiritual poverty. I will say more about this on another day.

You?

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### **Sunday December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

Tonight, I am working overnight again at The Good Works Timothy House. These days.... during this season of my life, this feels a bit nostalgic. I worked almost every overnight when we started from 1981 to 1984 when the shelter was in our basement. When Good Works moved from our home to the house we now call The Timothy House, I worked a lot of overnights in those early years.

Gradually, we were fortunate enough to have overnight workers and my role at doing night shift diminished. But there are seasons when our full-time staff need to step in to cover the overnights and I am doing my part tonight. I will also spend most of Christmas day this year with the residents staying here. I am looking forward to that.

I continue to find JOY in welcoming strangers, even after all these years. I still find myself interested in learning about the people who stay with us and I enjoy the privilege of learning both about them and from them. I also find joy bringing Kermit the Frog to visit with the children here. Most of the time after talking for a little while, we find something we have in common. I recently had a conversation with one of our residents who knew about my uncle's pool (Rock Lake Pool) near Charleston WVA. I still see the

relationships as a trust that must be earned. I find most of the people staying with us right now to be remarkably open.

This is an odd season for all of us, but especially for those of us who provide care and shelter for adults and children experiencing homelessness. The risks are different now, especially for those of us over 60, as we interact with people that we don't know, and don't know where they've been or who they've been with. For me, it feels awkward to meet someone on our porch for the first time and have to take their temperature. I don't like this part of my role, but this is the new normal. People come in with masks on, wash their hands and then we provide them with something to eat.

The community continues to be very gracious to Good Works providing financial support and offering food and supplies from our needs list almost every day. We are all filled with the joy of gratitude!

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### **Sunday December 16, 2020**

This is a photo of a house. It is only a house. But it was this house I had the opportunity to purchase when I was a college student, primary because of an inheritance I received when I turned 21. My father died when he 44 years old. I was 12. When I turned 21, some money came to me that I used as a down payment on this house.

In 1979, I asked several men to live with me and invited them into an adventure of welcoming strangers into our home. I had read about this in the bible (see Isaiah 58:6-7), but had zero experience with anything like this. Indeed, not one of my housemates had any background or knowledge in what we ended up doing. Looking back, God used this house combined with our faith to start something that has rippled into the lives of many people over many years. Many.

In December 1980 I was a senior at OU. I had asked my friend Mike if he could remodeling a space in the basement. We remodeled one room and added a bathroom. This is where we welcomed adults and children and provided them a temporary place to live.

I didn't really know then what I know now: That there are no laws prohibiting home owners from having guests in your home. And there are no laws limiting the number of guests you can have in your home as long as you do not charge your guests to stay there.

Darlene and I were married in September 1981 and in the 3rd year of Good Works, we provided shelter to 114 adults and children. I'm really not sure how we did that, but I know we had a lot of zeal and we were pretty naïve. We were both working part-time jobs during those early years in addition to our work with Good Works. Darlene worked for the Senior Center and I worked with Central Avenue United Methodist Church in campus ministry.

When we started, we used the language of "displaced persons" to describe the people who stayed with us. No one I knew at that time had heard the word "homeless". We did not have the language in 1980 that we would later use to describe the people we welcomed into our home. And years later, we no longer use the word homeless in an intentional effort to separate what has happened to someone from their identity as a person. And these days, we use the language of hospitality learned from our friend Christine Pohl in her book MAKNG ROOM to describe the process of welcoming strangers.

On January 1st, 2021 we will celebrate 40 years. I was 22 when I started. I will turn 63 in February. As a famous rock and roll group once said "what a long strange trip it has been". I am so grateful for years and years of the experience of God's love and faithfulness, the kindness of those who have supported us and the g r a c e I have received from God and the body of Christ which has sustained us ALL of these years.

This photo is only a photo of a house.

Looking back, I can say that through what I like to call 'the grace of relinquishment', God used what I "threw down" (See Exodus 4:1-3) and turned it into something far beyond my wildest dreams. I had no idea that a house combined with faith would turn into something so good for so many people.

What's in your hand?

Along the way there have been many hard and difficult seasons and situations. But I truly believe we have received a special grace to persevere in love.

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## Sunday October 11, 2020

Over the years, we have cared for a lot of children at The Good Works Timothy House. Actually, we will reach the marker of 40 years this December 31st! Right now, we have several kids under the age of 2. Of course, they come with their parents. While we believe we are doing what is right and just as we care for these families, it is very difficult for these single mom's and also for the kids to be in the situation of homelessness.

We have created structure with some rules (and routines) which can be helpful to most of those who stay with us. Each family has its own bedtime routine. What is especially difficult for everyone is when the family does not have a car (or a stroller). The Timothy House does have closure times. When the weather is good, this is not as problematic. When the weather is cold or raining, everyone feels a great deal of stress. With COVID, there are fewer public places open for our residents to go to during the day. Athens has a very good bus system (a heart-felt thank you to everyone who donates bus tickets for our residents) but the bus does not run on Sundays.

Being in the situation of homelessness is a time of distress for the families and their children. We are doing everything we can to create a safe and clean and temporary home for everyone.

Last night as I was greeting our residents on the front porch when they arrived, I felt a need to explain (kind of apologize) for having to get so close to them physically to take their temperature. I did not know one of the residents and this just felt awkward. But they understood.

The work we are doing is hard. It is almost entirely hard because loving people is difficult sometimes, especially when people have been abused or "beaten up" by the world. But God gives us grace. For this we give thanks!

When I first received Jesus into my life at the age of 16, one of my first prayers was "Dear God, please don't make me be religious". No kidding. I really did pray that. I had seen religious people and from what I observed, nothing in me wanted to be like them. Through time, I began to understand the difference between religion that is entirely ritualistic, glued to buildings and confined to Sunday's; and the kind of 'religion' the New Testament prophet James speaks about which is infused with God's love and motivated by a personal relationship with Christ. I am still learning to discern what Jesus refers to as the difference between the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46).

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" - James 1:27*

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### **Monday September 28, 2020**

Many years ago, I realized how important language is, especially when we are talking about someone who is experiencing homelessness. I'm not exactly sure how things transpired, but we started calling "homeless people", "PEOPLE without homes", a phrase which feels much more awkward to say. However, when someone who is experiencing homelessness is in the room, the phrase gives them dignity. Think about it. Would we introduce our friend Bill to someone by saying 'meet my disabled friend Bill'? No. We say 'meet my friend Bill, who has a disability'. It feels real important --- as a tangible expression of love -- to separate with our language what has happened to someone from their primary identity as a human being.

And so, I say unto you "Watch your language".

Now we talk about people without homes instead of homeless people. This gives people dignity and giving people dignity with language has become very important in how I talk with and about others.

I was sitting with Kevin at a local restaurant years ago. While we were eating, he said to me as part of our conversation.... "well, I'm homeless". I corrected him and said "Kevin, you are not homeless". He replied with "well, I'm living in y o u r shelter". I responded with this: "Kevin you are not a homeless person. You are a man who right now is without a home".

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### **Sunday September 27, 2020**

Many people are surprised when I tell them that I've never had a burden for the homeless.

The adults and children that we provided shelter for beginning in 1981 were simply our neighbors who needed a place to stay. Soon after I began to follow Jesus, I read/heard "Love God and Love your neighbor". I also saw Isaiah 58:6-7. The people we welcomed into our home in the basement of #3 Elliott Street in Athens were simply our neighbors, and a starting place for this obedience.

Today, all these years later I can say that caring for our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness is a matter of the heart. It is hard work and can be physically and mentally exhausting at times. But those of us on the 'front lines' are helping each other to keep perspective. The hardest work is keeping the right attitude. For me, gratitude is a kind of 'force field' against the temptation to complain. I'm thankful I have a home where I feel safe. I'm thankful I have food to eat.

The Timothy House has a structure in place. The hard work is the work of love – how we interact and respond to those who call us every day or stay with us, and how we structure the relationships. We really want people to do as much for themselves as they can. The Timothy House has several families with very young children and several single adults tonight. I'm working overnight again.

When someone doesn't have their own place to live, they often become dependent upon others in ways which make them uncomfortable. This makes a lot of sense to me. I don't think people like being dependent in this way. Too much dependency robs people of their dignity. Maybe you can relate by remembering a time when you did not like being dependent upon someone, but had to.

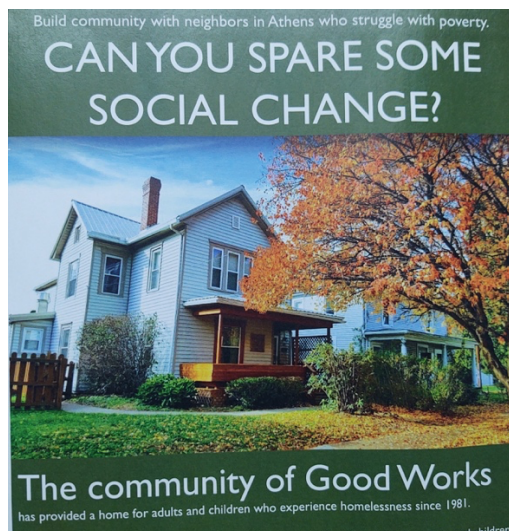
Hopefully, those in charge of the shelter are kind. If they are not kind, it makes the situation even more difficult for those who stay there. I think kindness on the part of those who have authority or control is very important, especially when people are dependent on you.

Then there are the rules that every organization must put into place. Our rules all aim for a safe, clean and stable (predictable) place for people to stay, people who often don't know one another. We ended up with only seven hundred thousand rules. Just kidding. But we could have a rule about everything if we are not wise. We must pick the BIG ones and rely upon the good will of those who stay with us to function with respect. And for the most part, people do. And for the most part, people are grateful.

I am especially interested in making sure people get a good night's sleep, healthy food and feel safe. I want everyone to feel respected too. It's a bigger goal, but I desire for people to feel understood, because they were listened to. I think this is the environment for healing to take place.

I want to share my own story of how Jesus changed my life and gave me HOPE, but I must wait for the right timing. I also want those I'm sharing with to give me permission before I assume they are interested in my story. Sometimes, the right time doesn't come and I don't get to share. I'm not on the Timothy House property every day and I don't get to meet all of our residents any more. We have a really great staff team and they oversee the day-to-day operations of The Timothy House. I am really thankful for their hard work, integrity and diligence. Most of the time, unless the residents find out otherwise, they just see me as another night shift guy. I'm okay with that. Last year, one of the teens asked me who I was since I was around a lot. I asked the young woman if she had ever heard of or seen Charlie's Angels. She said yes. I told her that I was Charlie.

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## Monday September 21, 2020

Loving people who are experiencing homelessness can be pretty mundane at times. I answer the door, say something like “welcome home” and often ask how their day went. Sometimes people will share from their heart. Other times, people are pretty guarded. We sit and visit over a meal (at socially appropriate distances these days), and do dishes. There are chores to be done and paperwork to be completed. In my view, love involves providing a safe place for people to stay, where they can relax and take care of themselves (do their laundry); and where their children can play and do their homework. Love can feel like a routine at times but what we do is still important, like making sure that the bathroom stays clean. Love always involves a willingness to be helpful. Love means we seek to learn how to be a better listener.

I am spending another night of my “regularly scheduled life” at The Good Works Timothy House. I’m tired but I have a willing spirit. We are serving several families with children and also single adults. Everyone seems to be making an intentional effort to get along with one another. The attitudes here are really positive and I can sense the gratitude. This is not always the case, but it is the case tonight.

People’s situations regarding why they needed to stay with us are all very different. I’ve said this many times, but half of homelessness is becoming homeless. The other half is having to live with strangers in a house with structure and rules (and chores). Many people really don’t want to go into a shelter if they can avoid it. Some of the reason for this is the preconceived notions they have about shelters. Other reasons involve fear, the need for privacy and the stress of being in a place where you have little control. But it’s reasonable that people prefer their own place to stay. I do.

I have been homeless by choice in 11 cities to better understand what it is like to be on the streets. It is hard. It is emotionally stressful. You lose a lot of your privacy and you



don't know if the people you are staying with are safe until you get to know them. Are those who operate the shelters going to be friendly and welcoming?

The more I learn, the more I learn how much I need to learn; and the more I know, the more I know how much I don't know.

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### **Wednesday September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

11:00 pm - Good Works Timothy House

It feels like a privilege when I get to talk with someone who is in recovery. As I listen, I often sense their sincerity and struggle; and also their fear of a relapse, and how it will crush their hopes for the future. I can often see some of the hard work they have already done, and I can sense the battle ahead. I see and sense their vulnerability.

I get to watch them make the hard choices which move them forward. I get to “cheer them on” verbally and silently. I get to encourage them and pray for them. (Sometimes I get to pray with them.) I “get” to use my power for good. That is what happens from time to time at The Timothy House. I am glad we have created and are able to sustain a structure which provides incentives to people who want to be well. This is what God is doing and I am grateful to have been invited into it.

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### **Wednesday September 2, 2020**

I'm spending another night with people who are experiencing homelessness. I am grateful to be here at The Good Works Timothy House again. But after a long day, I feel tired. The residents are very nice and appreciative of having a safe place to stay, a

shower, food, friendship and a place to do laundry. And we are grateful to provide all of these things.

Many years ago, I traveled in England where the announcer on the “Underground” (the subway) would remind us to “mind the gap” over and over again. Right now, I feel like I am “minding” or standing in the gap; actually, many gaps. I think that is the role of leadership in a ministry like Good Works. We pray and God sends us people to work alongside us and as they transition to what is next for them, they often leave a gap. Sometimes the gap is just who they were. They were so unique and because of who they were, it may take a long time before someone can come along to fill the gap. Other times, the gap was what they did and now someone has to step into their duties.

Because of God's grace, I accepted this responsibility years ago when the word leadership was defined. But it is never easy. I feel fortunate to know how to do some things, and this makes the work a bit easier. Oftentimes, they had a unique role in the community; and I don't know how to step into what they were doing. Sometimes it was their unique knowledge or experience; other times it was their giftedness or their unique personality. In any case, the process of leadership, stepping into gaps for a season is the normal ebb and flow of an organization's growth and maturity. It is not easy and at times can be exhausting. Over the years, I have come to greatly appreciate and respect those who have unique abilities to do things here at Good Works that I cannot do. And I feel very grateful for the years of their lives people have shared here. But now we are in a time where I am stepping into a lot of gaps. I am weary LORD but grateful.

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**Sunday August 30, 2020**

In addition to my “regularly scheduled life”, I am working several “overnights” at the Good Works Timothy House (TH) these days. The situation here is much different now

primarily due to COVID 19. I am very aware of some of the health risks for our staff, especially because we don't know where our residents go during the day or who they are with. This creates some anxiety in all of us but we continue to "watch each other's backs" every day. We all wear masks and we do temperature checks with our residents (with the staff too) every day. Everyone washes their hands upon entering the house and we keep social distances. We are trying our best to balance our vision for hospitality with our need to be cautious right now. This too feels stressful.

Since COVID began, the Timothy House has remained open. But we thought it was wise to ask all of our volunteers (about 35 people each month) to "pause" volunteering. That was in March 2020. So, this year is the first time we are operating the Timothy House without any volunteers to assist the staff.

It is d i f f e r e n t.... and difficult.

We are asking for wisdom to discern when to invite volunteers back.

We are grateful that we can serve adults and children without homes right now. We continue to see the many challenges and struggles of people who experience homelessness here in rural Ohio and the difficulties they face. And we are really trying to do the best we can to help them. We are still the only home for people without homes in 8 southeast Ohio counties.

During the past month, several from our staff team at the Timothy House have finished their season with us and have transitioned to other employment. We are giving thanks for the blessing of their lives and how they each helped lighten the burden of caring for people whose lives are often out of control. But our team at The Timothy House is much smaller at a time when the burden is much greater. WE welcome your prayers for sustaining grace (and for our emotional and mental health) and also for new interns. In the past, our interns would step in to these gaps.

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