

THE ASCENT™

sponsored by



Jacob's Ladder™

Community Development Corporation

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Come Up Higher...



A DREAM COME TRUE



A WORK IN PROGRESS



A MIRACLE IN THE MAKING

A REFLECTION by THE REV. L. NOLAND PIPES, JR.
BOARD MEMBER OF JACOB'S LADDER™

I have so entitled this reflection because it seems to me that the best way to describe Jacob's Ladder™ includes talking about dreams coming true, a work in progress and a miracle in the making. Let me begin with dreams. Perhaps you should know that I am convinced that God inspires dreams in us as a means of revealing His will and supporting our obedience to that will. Jacob's Ladder™ is named for the dream experienced by Jacob of the Old Testament that began in him a personal journey toward newness of life. We remember the two men named Joseph, the first being a son of Jacob gifted by God with the ability to interpret dreams including those of the Pharaoh of Egypt. The exercise of this gift by Joseph eventually led to his becoming the most powerful man in Egypt short of the Pharaoh himself and able to serve as God's agent of salvation for his own people and countless others in his world. The second Joseph was the earthly father of Jesus who was led in dreams to take Mary as his wife, to become the care-giver and provider for Jesus and to protect him from Herod by taking him to Egypt and then to Nazareth. Dreams and visions have long been recognized as having the possibility of originating with God.



Jacob's Ladder™ began as a dream in the heart and mind of Rev. Bill Marler. Bill had frequently been prompted to particular ministries by dreams and visions that revealed God's will. Unhappily, Bill often found himself exercising leadership as an ordained minister of the church among many people whose highest vision and greatest perception of God's will involved maintaining the status quo. However, God was faithful in each parish situation to provide Bill with a core group of visionary Christians to aid him in the task of implementing God's dream for them. But the full import of God's dream for Bill's life was yet to be revealed.

The new millennium launched Bill and his family in a new direction when he took a leave of absence from the itinerant ministry in the United Methodist Church and he began making plans for this new mission effort. He labored and learned for two years until the time finally came in 2002, when Bill and Lana, his primary companion in ministry, were able to test the dream that has become Jacob's Ladder™ Community Development Corporation. Using personal funds taken from savings, they purchased and rehabilitated a house in an area which they had targeted for the ministry of Jacob's Ladder™ and confirmed for themselves the viability of a model employing community partnerships in the rehabilitation of run-down or abandoned houses as a vehicle for ministry in the hearts and lives of its residents. At this point, *the dream that was coming true also became a work in progress.*

Bill started talking with those whom he believed might recognize his vision as being a gift of God. Just as in years past in his parish ministry, God quickly gathered around Bill people who had long been distressed by the exercise of unbridled greed as certain financial and real estate industries joined forces in taking advantage of typically poor and financially illiterate housing customers. The development of a new organization with such lofty goals was no easy task. In order to acquire funding, purchase available houses, engage in reconstruction and eventually the sale of these houses to qualified buyers likely to become successful as homeowners was a daunting task requiring the knowledge and skill of multiple vocations and disciplines. This new organization, conceived in Bill's waking dream, had received the name Jacob's Ladder™ some years before, but it needed a group of attendants to its birth that could assume the leadership typical of a board of directors and the legal structure that would allow it to accomplish its mission. The development of this organization and the pursuit of what had become a common vision has been a work in progress.

The most significant and far more visible work that has been in progress is to be seen in the seven houses, formerly either boarded-up or in considerable disrepair but now occupied by families living in comfort and security. But it goes beyond individual houses. Our concentration in a neighborhood around a cluster of streets (Marianna,

Josephine, Haynes, etc.) is gradually bringing renewal to the larger area.



Another aspect of our identity as a work in progress is the relationships with other agencies. From the beginning, we have been teamed with United Housing for funding, management of purchases and sales and the training of our prospective homeowners. We are now benefitting from relationships with the Hyde Family Foundation, the Kemmons Wilson Family Foundation and others. We have enjoyed a special relationship with St. John's Episcopal Church which has set-aside funds to be used for our purchase of houses, the funds repaid and then granted again for new work; a variation on the traditional revolving loan fund.

A dream has been coming true as a work in progress. When one steps back and remembers and considers what has happened under the direction of Jacob's Ladder™, it is also obvious that *we are standing in the middle of a miracle...a miracle in the making. God's hand is in this dream, and in this work.* The ladder which Jacob saw at Bethel connecting heaven and earth has found expression in this city through the vision of Jacob's Ladder™, as people are becoming re-connected to each other in their own neighborhoods and living as neighbors and people of faith who are realizing God's dream for their lives.

It is highly unlikely that the present state of Jacob's Ladder™ would exist and the accomplishments realized had it not been supported by the active and purposeful presence and support of God the Holy Spirit who enables us to be obedient to our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Regina Moore and family were one of ten's of thousands dislocated from their homes in New Orleans. Their exodus was unplanned, unwanted and a stark reminder of the fragileness of life when confronted by the unforgiving forces of nature. What would the future hold for the Moore family and so many like them?

In the early spring of 2006 United Housing, Inc. and Jacob's Ladder™ continued their revitalization efforts beginning our sixth house in the Beltline area. We never know the individual stories of new homeowners before we start on a house. All we know is the need for good housing exists and we combine that with a desire to reverse the blight in some of Memphis' older neighborhoods and rebuild a sense of community.

As we ponder the circumstances of families like the Moores and the seemingly miraculous fulfillment of those needs, it is difficult to resist the notion that we are part of a Creation which oversees the human situation and in the midst of despair and doubt offers tenderness and hope.

"I wake up in the night and all I can say is, Thank you Jesus!" Regina Moore told us after moving into her new home at 574 Josephine. "All of it has been God at work...How else can you

explain a 61 year-old woman who lost everything in Katrina, living on Social Security, and after a limited time in Memphis, having a new home to welcome myself, my daughter and granddaughter?" After meeting Rev. Marler, Executive Director of Jacob's Ladder™, Regina said, "I thanked God for Rev. Bill Marler because I knew he would make sure the restoration of my home would be done well."

She also thanks God for the people He sent to work on her home. Contributing businesses were: Shelby Millwork, ECI Electric, Angel Heat & Air, Howard Hines Painting, and Kiser Floor Fashions. St. John's Episcopal Church gave a generous cash contribution as well as sending many of its members to help. Also, volunteers from, Covenant United Methodist, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, First Baptist on Broad Street and Highland Heights United Methodist donated their time and talents to the project. "He sent people to work on my house that loved God. They put their hearts and souls into the renovations. I've never been in the midst of such a work of God where the volunteers took Communion together and prayed" said Mrs. Moore.

After several months of work, the new home was prepared to receive the Moore family. Prior to moving-in, a Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony took place on August 26th. The celebration began



Meet our Newest Homeowner: Regina Moore



Joshua Smith, son of Michelle Smith and Lana Marler, Song Leader

with prayer on the front porch of 574 Josephine. Red ribbons and flowers draped the area as the family and their friends and co-workers on the project gathered close together with bowed heads. It was a time to praise God for His goodness!

In addition to our theme song, "We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder™," we sang, "The Church Within Us" a song from Jacob's Ladder™ Neighborhood Festival Songbook: *Celebrating Community Harmony*. The lyrics include:

There's a church within us, O Lord;
Something stirring within us, O Lord;
Something straining to have birth,
To be visible on earth.
There's potential within us, O Lord!

There's a church within us, O Lord;
There's some building to be done, O Lord;
Not with steel, not with stone,
But with lives which are your own.
It's the church within us, O Lord.



Regina Moore assisted by Tim Bolding, Executive Director of United Housing, Inc.

Regina Moore introduced family members & thanked everyone for their love and care in this endeavor, after which the long-awaited cutting of the ceremonial ribbon ushered in a new chapter in the lives of the Moore Family.



The Homecoming Celebration was sweet indeed!

"As long as I live and then after I am gone, someone will be taking care of this home!" promises Mrs. Moore. She adds, "My neighbors have been so friendly...they keep dropping by to introduce themselves and see if I need anything."

What better testimony to the valuable efforts of Jacob's Ladder™ in Community Development than the commitment of this new homeowner and her new neighbors.

Everyone was invited inside the home for a tour and refreshments following the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony. One of Jacob's Ladder™ Board members, Fred Griffith and his family provided a delightful spread including the edible card (cake) pictured above.



Rhea Scott loves her room !

In the gospel of Matthew Jesus said, "If you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto Me." Truth is written on the face of a child...Rhea Scott, Regina's granddaughter beams with joy ! And so, "How great is our joy !"

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Judy Scott with daughter, Rhea Scott, Daughter and granddaughter of Regina



Travis Moore, son of Regina Moore holding his daughter, Travianna



Pictured above on right: Jill, Travis Moore's wife, was also present. On the left is Michelle Smith of 1st Baptist Broad, whom Regina says has become her "adopted" daughter



Marlyn & Fred Norton, Regina's sister and brother-in-law