
VISION FORWARD



Be Strong and Build: A New Vision

by Leighton Smith

“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” Galatians 6:9-10

I believe that one of the most common spiritual gifts the Lord gives to His people is “acts of service”. We were created to work and to care for one another, especially for our family of believers. We see examples of this throughout Acts, where believers are serving one another and combining their talents in order to accomplish a common goal of showing Christ’s love and growing His kingdom. I know there are many believers who are willing to use their giftings for God but maybe not quite sure where or how, which brings me to why I write to you today.

Most of you know me as the youth director, but what you may not know is that I spend a large majority of my time swinging a hammer. I grew up in a large family of those working in ministry, including my Uncle and Grandfather who are contractors with passions to use the trade to further the Kingdom. I spent many years learning from them both skill and motive. Over the past five years I have seen a need that I believe the Lord is prompting us to fill. **We are blessed to have so many servants in this community who are willing to run ministries, open their homes to those in need, and live beyond themselves for the sake of the gospel. Unfortunately, I see many being hindered by physical constructs and/or financial restraints.** A few other brothers in Christ (and my literal brothers) have been faithful to give their time and talents to try to meet some of these needs. However, the need is greater than we can fill alone. Through prayer, guidance, and the support of Elim Grace leadership, I believe the Lord prompting us to grow this dream. I call it...*Servant’s Heart North*.

Servant's Heart North's main goals would be to; **equip other organizations and ministries to better serve their target populations; to empower people to use and learn new skills through vocational training and mentorship; and cultivating a community of service with the ultimate goal of furthering the gospel of Jesus Christ.** This would be done through volunteers who would provide skilled, needed, and (what would be typically) very costly services at little to no expense. At this time, I envision 3 main opportunities to serve.

The **first** opportunity would be through: "**Servant's Heart Projects.**" These projects would consist of renovations and construction jobs for Oswego County ministries and churches in order to better assist them in their spreading the gospel to those they are ministering to.

An example of a Servant's Heart project would be like the one many of you came to be a part of a few years back in the basement of New Covenant Church. A local nonprofit, Bridge to Hope, was looking to launch a free furniture and clothing store and New Covenant Church was quick to provide a space to house this vision. Together, many folks worked together to frame up walls, sheetrock, assemble shelves, paint, install flooring, and more to create a functional space out of an old basement. Second Chances Furniture and Clothing has been thriving in their new space for 2 years now. This area of opportunity allows for those with different giftings to come in and serve, whether this be through painting and putting up sheetrock, to sweeping and pulling nails out of boards. Skilled workers, alongside faithful and willing servants will work side by side to complete these vital projects for ministry groups. Everyone's unique gifting and skillset is welcome.

The **second** area of outreach will be through "**teaching and training**". We are currently renovating an old pole barn to become a primary space for teaching basic construction skills. This will be a free resource to those who need to learn a new trade or desire to find a productive outlet outside of old unhealthy patterns and habits. The goal would be to utilize this teaching space for the under-resourced populations in Oswego County. We desire to have volunteer teachers of the trades (construction, carpentry, plumbing, electric, etc.) with a heart to teach skills as well as provide **discipleship and mentorship**. There are many men and women in our county who are in need of a practical skill, but more importantly, in need of knowing our Savior.

The **third** facet to Servant's Heart will be, "**equipping the poor and powerless.**" James 1:27 is one of many spots in the Bible that calls us to care for orphans and widows. Over the past year, we have installed railings, built bunk beds and bigger dining room tables, and are currently renovating a basement to accommodate the special needs of foster families. Through construction and renovations, we want to be able to assist widows, foster families, and others who are opening their homes for the gospel. Within our vision, these skilled services would be provided at minimal cost, none of which would go towards labor.

As Christians, we are called to come behind and support other believers. In order to truly live beyond ourselves, we need a community of those who are willing to give up their time, talents, and live out their faith daily. I am now calling on our church family:

1. I am looking for men and women to step out with me and sacrifice their time and energy to serve, whatever your giftings may be. **There is no one "unqualified" to serve!**
2. I am asking for prayer as we begin this new endeavor through Elim.

"Be careful now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it." 1 Chronicles 28:10

In Christ,

Leighton Smith