

From This Corner
Larry R. Baird

ELINOR'S HOUSE : New Cornerstone Outreach Ministry

A new outreach ministry is in the works on the Cornerstone District. Elinor's House is the vision of Amy Fitzgerald, who has recently completed licensing school and is eligible for an appointment as a local pastor. She is a member of Dunkirk UMC and has been an active volunteer with ministry to the female population at the Chautauqua County Jail in Mayville. The ministry in Dunkirk, New York is to be a safe house and transitional house for women and their children in time of need. The objective of the ministry will be to enable the women to emerge from their time of need to a victorious new life in Christ.

Elinor's House is named after The Rev. Dr. Elinor Hare, who is Amy's mentor. Rev. Hare is currently retired, but still active in ministry. She resides in Lakewood, NY. Previously she was a chaplain in New York City at Rikers Island in the Rosa Singer Prison ministering to female inmates. She is currently involved with the Visitor's Center at the Lakeview Shock Prison in Brocton, and has just recently been asked to join the Board of Chaplain Ministry at the Chautauqua County Jail. Amy's relationship with Elinor has inspired her to be active in similar kinds of outreach ministries.

Presently the Board of Elinor's House has its attorney writing articles of incorporation. Seed money is in place for filing a 501c3, which will enable them to accept donations under a non-profit status.

The community is also getting involved. A Dunkirk businessperson is reportedly interested in helping to underwrite a portion of the cost of the purchase of a house.

Future steps of development will include creating sources of financial support, staffing the ministry, and connecting with the Conference's Unity in Diversity Ministry Team.

What follows is a personal message from Amy regarding the vision and its development.

ELINOR'S HOUSE by: Amy FitzGerald

About 10 years ago God gave me the vision that one day I would need a house with many rooms. Since I was in the process of becoming a foster parent, I *assumed* the house was meant for that purpose. Well, I became a foster parent, but no occasion ever presented itself that I could utilize a house with many rooms. So, I put the vision on a back shelf in my mind and heart only to take it down every once in a while to recall the vision, to long for it, but sadly enough the vision was always put back on the shelf.

About 2 years ago a businessman in the Dunkirk area approached Pastor Cliff offering to purchase a house if there was interest in having a safe place for abused women. Pastor Cliff

invited me to work on the project. I went to work, anxiously dusting off my vision and doing much research on the feasibility of such an undertaking. However, the project never got off the ground.

This past June I started working at Chautauqua County Jail, ministering to the female inmates. That led me to see that a safe house, or a transitional house was very much needed in the Northern Chautauqua area. My vision was quickly dusted off and I turned to God in prayer. What happened next is so wonderful that God is the only explanation. Let me share with you... I was starting to contact different agencies in the Chautauqua area to see if they could offer any help or direction in getting some programs started in the jail to help the female inmates change their lives. One of the agencies I contacted was Every Woman's Opportunity. The director and I would meet for business lunches and it was during one those meetings that I mentioned my vision and the need that I was now seeing in the Dunkirk and surrounding areas. My new friend Susan Mackay quickly agreed and we decided to see what we could do. This was the beginning of the vision coming to life.

God brought to my memory Pastor Cliff's knowledge of the businessman two years ago wanting to provide the property. I made a phone call to Pastor and he set up an appointment with the businessman. The businessman expressed his interest and told us to get a board together and send him a proposal.

Well, just like God brought the animals for Noah to put on the boat, God brought wonderful men and women to me for the board of directors of this house. We are now going forward and one day soon this vision will open its doors to help women and their children in their time of need.

Have you wondered where the name "Elinor's House" came from? Let me tell you about another wonderful blessing that God has given me. My mentor is The Dr. Reverend Elinor Hare, whom I have come to truly love and respect. In case you are not familiar with that name, Rev. Hare spent many years in New York City at Rikers Island in the Rosa Singer Prison ministering to the female inmates. She is responsible for many women getting help and encouragement during their very long sentences there. Although Rev. Hare is now retired and living in Lakewood, NY, she never stops doing God's work. She is involved with the Visitor's Center at the Lakeview Shock Prison in Brocton, and just recently was asked to join the board of Chaplain Ministry at the Chautauqua County Jail.

One day as I sat reading a newsletter about different jail and prison ministries I was looking for an idea for a name for our house. In my spirit I clearly heard the Holy Spirit say, "Why are you doing this, you have Elinor." I smiled and thanked God for giving me the perfect name for our house.

But God wasn't done yet! I had to tell Elinor, but how, and when do I do that. God opened a door for me to tell Elinor on her birthday at a dCOM meeting. She was surprised!. In a few months, we are planning a dinner with Rev. Hare as guest of honor and at that time we will present her with a plaque honoring her.

God blesses all of us with a vision. We can live our dreams or visions if we remain faithful. God timing is perfect... we must be patient.

Keep Elinor's House in your prayers. I believe that God's will is to have many women and their children, in a time of need, be given a safe, warm, and loving house to be strengthened in and to one day be able go out and be victorious in their lives.

On May 13, 2004 I signed the papers for Elinor's House to be incorporated. We have not officially decided on a location yet, but God has brought a new possibility into the vision. There

is a place in Dunkirk that will be deeded over to an organization that the owner's feel will serve the community properly. At the first viewing, we and a few other prospects showed up. All parties were anxious about the possibility of working together and the new idea was born of having a Women and Children Center in the facility with Elinor's House being the cornerstone. Are you saying to yourself right now, she's taking on too much? John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." This is God's house, He is in control, and I know without a shadow of a doubt that not one thing is by my hand, I give Him absolute acknowledgement and I will not put God in a box.... Let his Glory and Miracles SHINE!!

As I go about to different women's groups and area churches to speak about my jail ministry and Elinor's House, God never fails to be there. The acceptance and eager anticipation to help is always there.

I will keep everyone informed on our progress and I look forward to where God will be leading us. Praise His Wonderful Name!