The History of Open Door Community House

Open Door Community House, Inc. focuses on long-term solutions to poverty; and its community ministries, homeless ministries, and Circles initiative have made great strides in eradicating poverty and in empowering the impoverished people among us to meet their full potential as children of God. These long-term solutions have been developed and enhanced over the past 79 years. But this growing incarnational ministry that has touched and changed so many lives in this community grew from humble beginnings: two deaconesses in the basement of a church during the Great Depression.

Back then, Columbus was once a sleepy mill town and Bibb City was home to many of the mill workers. When one of the largest mills operating in the area shut down, its closing devastated the community. It was then that Deaconess Addie Greeley and Deaconess Lizzie Evans, having seen the suffering firsthand, were moved to minister to the needs of the workers and their families. They performed this act of generosity with humility from the basement of Hamp Stevens Methodist Church.

Later, with the help of Weeta Watts-Mathews, Martha King, and other members from St. Luke Methodist Church, a small cottage at the rear of Hamp Stevens was donated for the formation of what would become a community center. It is a testament to this group’s dedication that, even during the Great Depression, they were able to raise $10,000 to support ministries for children in the community.

In just a matter of years, the burgeoning ministry had outgrown its original location. More services were being provided. More activities were being offered. More volunteers were needed. So, a new building was bought and christened, a depiction of Christ knocking at a door was erected as a sign, and the ministry we know today as Open Door Community House first opened its doors to a growing community in need.

In the nearly 80 years since meeting in the basement at Hamp Stevens Methodist Church, this ministry has never ceased opening doors. Doors of faith. Doors of hope. And doors of opportunity to all neighbors in need of love, hope, and new beginnings.