

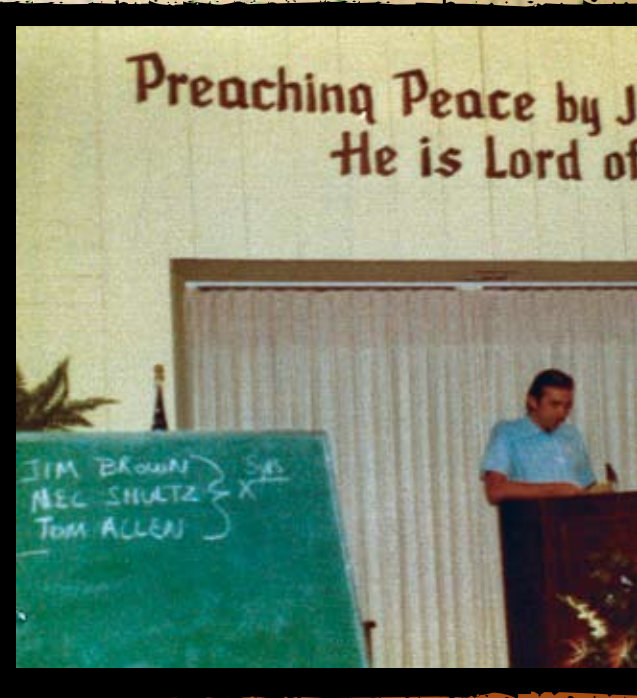
Deuteronomy 15:7-11

"If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart, and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near, and your eye is turned to your poor brother, so that you give him not; he will cry to the Lord your God, and it will be a curse to you. You shall give him, and your heart will not be grudging to him; because the Lord your God will be with you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

11 For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land.

Here the writer passes from the exactness of legal expression to an urgent appeal to Israel to treat the poor at all times with an open heart. The law required the obligations even more than a continuous reaction described towards the poor. The absence of reaction described to protect the poor.



INCUBATION

"I was never so happy, never so at home, as when I was there" 1972-1984

...cause they perceive the and intents of the heart. Obedience towards God inevitably issues in generosity towards one's fellows. Indeed, in I John 3:17 hardness of heart is reckoned as a denial of every profession that the love of God abides in a man's heart. A mean and grudging spirit which provokes a cry of distress from a man is sinful in God's sight and prevents divine...



The two 14-year-old girls were canvassing the neighborhood for VISTA, going door to door to let residents of the public housing complex know about the services soon to be available at the new health clinic at 16th Street and Van Buren. The students, Mary Katherine “Kit” Fellman and Maryanne Warren, were from Scottsdale High. Inner-city Phoenix was a strange place to find these affluent students on a Saturday. Even more to the point, these girls were not of the kind one might have thought of as VISTA volunteers. The two high schoolers were wild kids—known for skipping school, drinking, hanging out in the streets, and experimenting with cigarettes and boys. Their behavior emerged out of lonely and often unsupervised home lives. Kit had already lost her dad to suicide at age 7, and by the time she was a teenager, her mother was drinking heavily. But underneath the street behavior was a hunger for meaning, a longing to count. Remembering those Saturdays, Kit explains: “I had a deep desire for my life to have meaning and purpose.”



Gazette Staff Photo

TEEN-AGERS PASS THE WORD

Invitation to open house at Neighborhood Doctors Office-East, a part-pay clinic sponsored by St. Luke's Hospital and Citizens Committee for Better Health, is handed to Mrs. Goldie McKissack, 1926 E. Polk, by Mary Ann Warren (left), 14, and Kit Fellman, 14. The teen-agers were among volunteers from Scottsdale High School who went from door-to-door in the East Phoenix area, notifying residents of the open house from 2 to 4 p.m. Friday.

The environment in urban Phoenix was startlingly different from Scottsdale, but neither girl felt afraid. "I loved it—meeting the moms, talking with the kids," Kit recalls. "I was never so happy, never so at home, as when I was there."

Fear of death plagued Kit at age 14. Two years earlier, she had nearly died in a serious auto accident, awakening only after a 4-day coma. Her sister was also traumatized by the crash. It seemed a metaphor for their lives: their worlds had caved in with their dad's death and their mother's plunge into alcoholism. They felt like orphans. The two of them regularly decorated religious altars in their bedroom and said prayers every night. "We were looking for God," Kit explains. "We collected religious paraphernalia—necklaces and laminated pictures of the saints. We were desperate for God to show up and speak into our situation."

He did begin to work. By her freshman year in high school, Kit decided to make some life changes. She left the wild crowd and made new friends, stopped smoking, and even joined the cheerleading squad. Although she can't explain exactly the reasons for the shift, she believes it stemmed from God's work in her heart, which had begun when she first heard the Gospel in a Sunday School class at an Episcopal church at age twelve. She remembers raising her hand to pray the salvation prayer then mainly because of her fear of death. It wasn't what she cites as her conversion moment, but it was the time when her heart was opened to God. A seed had been planted, and she returned to it in high school. She attended Young Life meetings faithfully and enrolled in just about every extra-curricular club she could. She was no longer a street kid.

The phone rang on the dorm floor at Colorado College and a suite mate called out to Kit that it was for her. Entering the booth and picking up the phone, Kit recognized the voice of her friend Bill, calling from the nearby Air Force Academy. The two had struck up a relationship some months earlier at the beginning of Kit's freshman year. Bill was active in a Christian group and had his evangelistic sights set on her. She explained that she'd already "asked Jesus into her heart" as a child, but Bill pushed her to explore what that really meant in her present day life. As their conversations continued, Kit began to be more honest with Bill. Her prayers, she admitted, had often just been "bargaining"

ones, making promises to God in return for His getting her out of tight spots. And while she wanted salvation from death, she wasn't that interested in surrendering control of her life to God. One evening, the two really got to the heart of the matter. As Bill probed Kit's level of trust in God, she finally verbalized what had been holding her back from a genuine commitment to Jesus as Lord. "If your God is so loving," she asked Bill heatedly, "then why is there so much suffering in the world?" It was a thorny and age-old question, one that a 19-year-old Air Force cadet couldn't answer readily. But his concern for Kit was palpable. She remembers, "I was struggling, and really kind of hopeless about God. That broke Bill's heart." The young man pondered and prayed for a few days, then felt God had given him a verse to share with Kit. So he rung her up at her dorm. The ensuing conversation set the path for the rest of Kit's life.

Bill had come to the notion that perhaps Kit's life felt empty and hopeless because of her privileged background. Perhaps, he reasoned, this rich kid needed to serve others in order to find some sense of purpose. So as Kit greeted him that night from the phone booth, he told her he had a verse to share with her. He read her Luke 12: 48, "from everyone who has been given much, much will be required." And then Bill added, "I think you will find meaning as you give back."

"I got light-headed. I was trembling and started sweating," Kit remembers. "I was completely overcome. It wasn't the specific words Bill was saying—I don't hardly remember what he said." Instead, she explains, what happened in the phone booth that night was that God Himself spoke to her heart. Only years later could Kit accurately articulate "the phone booth moment," but it was radically life changing. Following that momentous conversation, she immediately joined a Bible study, starting riding her bike to a church several miles from campus, and attached herself to a Christian fellowship group called Campus Ambassadors.

Looking back, Kit says that, essentially, God revealed three critical things to her in that phone booth. First, He

assured her that He was not afraid of her tough questions, and that He wanted her always to bring them to Him. Second, He offered her at least a partial answer to the "laying-down-the-gauntlet" query she had thrown at Bill. Where was God in suffering? *There. Present.* "You will find Me in the suffering," He assured her. Finally, He issued her an invitation: "Do you want to join Me there?"

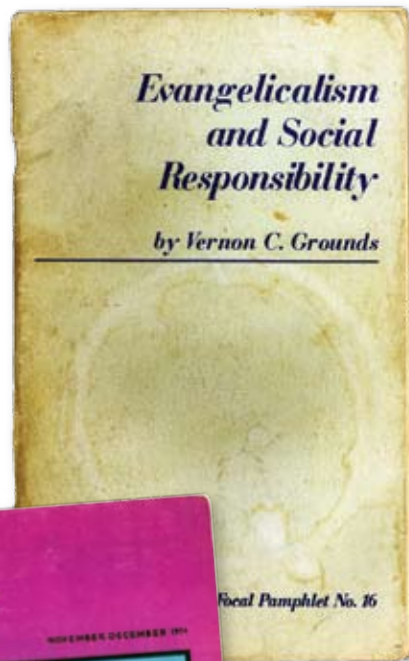
"This was my first sense of being called to the poor," Kit says.

After the "phone booth" conversion, Kit no longer felt angry with God. Instead, she was on fire for Him. She transferred to Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff (following her high school boyfriend) and immediately got plugged into the Campus Ambassadors chapter there. She availed herself of every discipleship opportunity and began reading the early works of John Perkins, the "grandfather" of Christian community development.

In 1974, she and other members of Campus Ambassadors had the opportunity to spend the summer in Denver. There, professor Vernon Grounds from Denver Seminary had organized a Summer Institute for young evangelicals. He and his colleagues, Rufus Jones and Don Davis, were at that time the leading edge of the "evangelical social concern" movement. Kit took in all that they had to say about God's heart for the poor like a thirsty man finding water in the desert. She remembers sobbing, wishing that Jones could somehow move into her home and be with her 100% of the time, to teach her everything he knew. "What he was saying—I just had to have it. It belonged to me somehow," she explains.

The following summer, Kit petitioned the Summer Institute to permit her to work in an internship in urban Denver at Don Davis' congregation, Neighborhood Church of the Master. Davis was pioneering Evangelical inner-city ministry,





and Kit wanted to pour herself into the life of the community. That summer, she describes, “I read everything I could get my hands on about holistic outreach ministry. And I essentially asset-mapped the neighborhood, though I didn’t know that term for it then.”

An urban minister had been born. Kit began to tell her friends of her calling to “Christian community development,” a phrase that no one really understood. But her sociology professor was sympathetic and let her write her senior thesis on what the Bible has to say about social

problems. He also gave her permission to complete a hands-on internship at the Flagstaff Mission to the Navajos, thus engendering what has become her life-long love of Native Americans and burden for their struggles. Toward the close of her senior year at Northern Arizona University, Kit contacted Interchristo, the Evangelical nonprofit that tries to connect job seekers with Christian ministry opportunities. She wrote in her paperwork that she was looking for work in “Christian community development,” and they responded saying they were unfamiliar with the term. The best guidance they could offer her was to point her towards the Salvation Army or Wycliffe Bible Translators. But their lack of advice didn’t hinder God’s leading.

To her surprise, Kit felt God instruct her that His will for her after college was to return to Scottsdale and work on loving her mother better.

For the zealot for the poor who’d given away all her earthly possessions a few days before graduation, the return to well-heeled Scottsdale was uncomfortable. But Kit obeyed. She began scouting for jobs and learned of an opening for a new

teacher at an exclusive boarding school for the children of the opulent. At her job interview with the boarding school director, Kit admitted that she felt called to serve the poor, not the rich, but was here in Scottsdale to be obedient to God’s call. “She probably thought this was the funniest interview she’d ever held,” Kit recalls with a laugh. “But she was smart and savvy. She looked at me and said, ‘These rich kids are poorer than you think.’ So I took the job.”

Kit found the woman’s words were true. The children at Judson School were well provided for materially but virtually bereft of parents. “Their moms and dads were jet-setters,” Kit explains. “Some of these kids had been in boarding school since the first grade and in 8-week camps every summer. They were practically orphans.”

So, at 21, Kit became a “dorm mother” at the school. And with the exuberance of one only 4-years-old in Christ, during her first week on the job she marched down the street to the nearest church and asked to speak with a pastor. She told the church secretary that she’d just taken employment at the school—“where the rich kids are poorer than you think”—and that she



Top: Kit at the Judson School
Bottom: Kit with the Judson kids

anticipated leading many of them to Christ. Kit explained to the woman that she would soon need a church to take all her young converts to, and so wished to discuss this with the church leadership. Somewhat stunned, the secretary asked Kit to wait in the foyer while she went searching for the youth pastor, Tim Kimmel. He listened to Kit with a mixture of admiration and amusement and then invited her to volunteer as part of his youth leaders' team, welcoming her to bring Judson School kids to services whenever she wished. Thus in 1977 began Kit's association with Scottsdale Bible Church—the suburban congregation God would call nearly a decade later to a deep and enduring partnership with what eventually became Neighborhood Ministries.

Kit attended Scottsdale Bible regularly, bringing groups of Judson School students to both the morning and evening services. But it was not her only church home. She also frequented the services at the tiny Open Door Fellowship congregation. There, pastor Bill Thrall, Sr. was discipling about 30 young Evangelicals, many of them hippies, and several of them friends from Kit's college days. One young man, Wayne Danley, was especially involved at Open Door. The church was tightly tied to a music ministry called "Hand in Hand." This nonprofit sponsored evangelistic concerts throughout Arizona, using contemporary Christian music to win thousands of searching young people to Christ. Wayne was a member of the first band engaged by Hand in Hand, a rock group called *The New Beginning*. The band had been a frequent performer at Northern Arizona University, and there Wayne and Kit had first met. Their paths crossed again at Open Door, and then even more often as Kit coordinated a special summer program with her Judson School kids at which one of the Hand in Hand bands held a concert. The two began dating.

"All I had money for was to take her out for a cup of coffee," Wayne recalls with a laugh. The first date wasn't too nerve-racking, since the two were already friends. But Kit's "energizer-bunny-level" passion for solving the world's social problems overwhelmed Wayne, who was exhausted from his schedule of working for Hand in Hand, volunteer service at Open Door, and his college education. "At the

end of the night, after listening to her talk for hours on God's kingdom, I was completely worn out by her energy," Wayne recalls. "I walked her to her house and I told her: 'I think you are a wonderful Christian woman, and I had a good time tonight. But I just need to tell you that I will never ask you out again.'"

The two were married several months later, in January 1978, with Bill Thrall from Open Door and Tim Kimmel from Scottsdale Bible officiating.

The young couple moved into a home near the Open Door Fellowship building. They were as poor as church mice, but generally didn't notice. Wayne continued working at Hand in Hand and served as the church janitor. Pastor Bill Thrall asked the Danleys to lead the church's budding youth group and they said yes. Soon kids were regularly in their home, hanging out with them and daughter Heather, born in late November, 1978.

Given the demographics at Open Door Fellowship, it was no wonder that the late '70s and early '80s were filled with weddings and baby dedications. By 1981, the youthful (and fertile!) congregation was bursting at the seams. Sunday school classes were being held in the kitchen and hallways. The elders began a new property search. They had little money, but with many mainline churches leaving inner-city Phoenix for the suburbs, there were empty church



Wayne manning the sound board at "Hand in Hand"

NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRIES
CORE VALUE:

God's Heart for the Poor
We share God's preferential posture toward the poor, convinced that He is present in suffering, that He has imbued the poor with dignity, and that He desires us to learn from them.

buildings going begging for new ownership. ODF's leaders finally settled on the old Palmcroft Bible Baptist Church building at 16th Avenue and McDowell.

With its new location in urban Phoenix, the time was ripe for ODF to consider the needs of its neighbors. Near the end of 1981, Kit was asked by the ODF leadership to serve as the primary teacher at the church's Women's Retreat. She accepted, and then taught powerfully on the subject closest to her heart: God's passion for the poor. The women responded enthusiastically, but also with wonderings. What should they do?

"The women told me, 'We want to get started. We want to minister to the poor in our neighborhood,'" Kit remembers. Within one week, some of them collected

food and shared it with two neighborhood families that had begun attending the church. Kit reported to Bill Thrall on the women's enthusiasm; he asked her to put down on paper her dreams for ODF's response to God's call to love the poor. And so she wrote. And wrote. "It was a very lengthy proposal for us to tackle practically all the problems of the world," Kit laughs. "It was far too broad, but I was trying to get my heart down on paper."

She made several copies of the huge report and left them for each of the church's elders on their desks. Several weeks went by but she received no response. Then one Sunday, a couple's car broke down two blocks from the church. They walked over to ODF and asked for help. The

man had a job interview the next day, and needed to get cleaned up. He and his friend also had no food and were hungry. "It was overwhelming for our church leadership to be hit with this situation on a Sunday afternoon—they wanted to get home," Kit recalls. "Bill Thrall walked me to the parking lot, and asked me, 'Where's the plan?' 'What plan?' I replied. And he responded, 'You know, the plan for how we're going to take care of these people who keep coming to us for help.' And I said: 'It's been on your desk for two months!'"

The church elders and deacons spent all afternoon trying to figure out how to help the stranded couple. "It was the impetus for our leadership," Kit remembers. "They were feeling the pressure of the people in the neighborhood who had needs."

The elders apologized for failing to read Kit's tome, then gathered with her to try to narrow down a focus for ministry. They decided to launch a food and clothing drive that holiday season and ODF members responded enthusiastically. Kit and other volunteers delivered the donated goods that Christmas to needy families they learned of through other local churches. She remembers one delivery in particular, where the young African-American recipients seemed even more interested in the volunteers' blue eyes than they were in the food. "It was a wonderful moment," Kit says. "I thought, 'Lord, we can enter this community and do this. We can serve people like it is upon our heart to do.'"

In January 1982, Kit and her team decided to call the new ministry the Food & Clothing Bank. They set up in room 210 at Open Door Fellowship, installing shelving to hold canned goods and other grocery items. Announcements for donations were made every six weeks from the pulpit. Kit organized volunteers to man the Bank three days a week. The young ministry made plenty of mistakes—balancing outreach to the physical and spiritual needs of supplicants was a constant challenge and source of discussion—but slowly the church was learning how to love people who were hurting and offer them hope in Jesus.

Wayne and Kit's wedding photo—January 7, 1978



ODF's move to the inner city couldn't have thrilled the Danleys more. Their close friends, John and Linda Adams, began talking with them about the possibility of moving together into the poor neighborhood surrounding the church. John and Kit spent months asset-mapping the community, while the two couples dreamed about sharing a duplex—and a ministry of hospitality and service. The dreaming, researching, and planning continued for over a year. The Danleys then welcomed their second child, Ian, into the fold. Later, the Adams felt called to leave Phoenix in order for Linda to pursue seminary studies. Though disappointed with the change of plans, the Danleys remained committed to relocating into the inner city.

After serving the wealthy students of Judson School and the well-beloved kids of Open Door, Wayne and Kit longed to truly integrate into the lives of struggling urban families by living alongside them. After wishing the Adams goodbye, they continued their real estate hunt. Their desire was for a place big enough for their own kids—plus more. Already, they anticipated taking in foster children and being a virtual drop-in center for neighborhood youth, so a good-sized house was a necessity. The only problem was that it had to cost less than \$60,000.

In her 1992 Christmas prayer letter, Kit looked back nearly a decade to the day she and Wayne found “the perfect house.” It was “perfect” in the sense that it had four bedrooms, was affordable on their modest budget, and was located just ten doors down from Open Door Fellowship. Otherwise, “perfect” was a singularly inappropriate descriptor. The house had 27 broken windows, four outside doors that did not lock, very old plumbing, kitchen cabinets that were falling off their hinges, a living room carpet that had been used to catch oil from a motorcycle while it was being repaired, and an old stove that took 16 hours to clean. But once all the trash was removed, the mice killed, and gallons of bleach poured down the toilets, it was habitable. The year ahead brought challenges: a house where everything needed fixing but no money was available for repairs. Despite that

reality, the twenty-something Danleys were impatient to get on with their sense of calling to foster abandoned kids. Shortly after moving into their new home, they signed up for the training and certification program for becoming foster parents. In 1983, baby Reuben entered their lives.

The Native American infant had no last name, but cigarette burns on his legs and feet. He also suffered digestive problems. “He was a big crier,” Kit remembers, “very sick, very fussy.” Two-year old Ian quickly became fed up with this noisy interloper. Fostering was also more than Kit had anticipated. “It was really tough going from two to three kids,” she says. Wayne's health, meanwhile, was “off.” The



One of the first Food and Clothing Bank flyers



The Danley Family, 1981

young family was living on next to nothing. The house's utilities were so old that the Danleys quickly discovered that their monthly electric bill was bigger than their mortgage payment. And between a cranky 2-year-old and a screaming infant, no one was getting much sleep. Needless to say, the stress level in the home was extreme. "It was a rude awakening for us as a family," Kit describes. Here they were, living their dream of inner-city ministry and foster care, and in reality, it often felt like a nightmare. And then, in 1984, Wayne's doctor delivered the news: Wayne had cancer. A new season had begun. ●

Aug. 4

Monday

Lord I've wanted to use this book also to record the real struggle of these days

for Wayne and "the pain and growth of our wilderness experience"

- the fear of not being able to envision our future

- the require credential for ministry

BEING AND COMMUNITY

Leadership development specialists speak of the “shallow grave syndrome” to describe on-fire Christian leaders who, lacking community, accountability, and an environment of grace, burn out in a short time. A core value at Neighborhood Ministries is avoiding this tragedy by creating a culture that promotes vulnerability, permits failure, and celebrates relationships.

Kit Danley believes she was headed for the “shallow grave syndrome” as a young Christian, but was saved from it in large measure because of the core values she absorbed through Open Door Fellowship. They were mediated first through Wayne. He and other young believers were being mentored in the importance of community and accountability by Open Door founder Bill Thrall, Sr. “When we started officially dating,” Kit reports, “I found out that instead of being in awe of my sleepless nights and long, long days of serving the Lord, Wayne would ask me: ‘Where is your team?’ and ‘Does anyone know how you really live?’” She had never really considered such questions before.

“In your life,” says Thrall, “your ultimate influence will come more from who you are than from what you do—more from your relationships than from the position you occupy or titles you hold.” In the 1980s, such words were new to Kit. “Bill would ask me questions about me,” Kit recalls. “Eventually, I came to understand that what I did was not as important to him as who I was.”

Today at NM, the idea of “being, over doing” is engrained in the very atmosphere. Senior leaders are attentive not just to the competencies of young staff but also to their character development. The approach outlined in books like Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and John Lynch’s *The Ascent of a Leader* and *True Faced* is concretely put into action at Neighborhood, revealing the enduring legacy from Open Door Fellowship. Additional



“principles of grace” learned from Bill fundamentally shaped NM’s organizational culture. “What we practice now in terms of leadership development is what was practiced on me,” Kit explains. Just as Bill took risks with Kit, and gave her responsibility even as a young leader, so NM allows its interns, most of whom are in their 20s, considerable responsibility over many different programs. But this is exercised in the context of community. The “lone ranger” mentality is discouraged. NM isn’t only about being in the community; it’s about being in community. To advance that, the interns meet together every Friday and also attend spiritual retreats. Leadership teams rather than single individuals make key decisions. As Kit sums up, “Leadership happens in and through team here. That requires dependancy on each other, and a great deal of trust. But for us, it’s the only way.”