



Lakewood United Methodist Church blessed with miraculous provision, pays off \$694K outstanding debt

Miracle Sunday prayers release God's power and provision

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, AR – August 28, 2023

Yesterday, Lakewood United Methodist Church Senior Pastor Rev. Roy Beth Kelley revealed to her congregation the results of a special campaign to pay off an outstanding building loan, taken out to construct the church's education building in 2006. This building supports worship, community events, children's Sunday school classes, after-school care and Mother's Day Out programs. Lakewood's pastors and Finance Committee revealed the enormous goal of paying off the then \$682,000 of loan debt, challenging members to contribute above and beyond normal giving, in order to release approximately \$12K per month for other ministry activities.

"At the beginning of this effort, many people doubted we'd have success," shared Debra Buckner, Finance Committee Co-Chairman and long-time LUMC member. "But as we discussed it more and more, and I heard the phrase 'Miracle Sunday,' my heart jumped and I just knew in my 'Knower' that the Holy Spirit was prompting us to ask for this miracle." As it turned out, Buckner was right.

Lakewood UMC used to average 375 attenders (6-year average prior to pandemic) between its multiple worship services. However, since 2020, as it has in most churches, attendance has not yet returned to pre-Covid levels, which means that giving has also been down. "Coupled with an interest rate hike, we just knew we needed to trust God and ask for something big," shared Rev. Todd Vick, executive pastor, who conceived of the idea, when he was part of a similar, though smaller, effort at another church where he had previously served.

Buckner narrated a video to share the idea with church members, which kicked off the campaign on July 16, *Miracle Sunday*. Faithful givers had been approached in advance to give so that seed money to "jump-start" the kick-off and build enthusiasm. Lakewood UMC had received gifts and pledges totaling \$217,000 before the big day.

Amounts accumulated on *Miracle Sunday's* July 16 services brought the total to \$317,000 – still far short of the goal. Donations continued to build. Then, on July 26, unbeknownst to anyone at

Lakewood, a check was received from the estate of Richard Homard, a member of Lakewood UMC who passed away on April 4, 2022 – over a year ago, in the amount of \$ 501, 570.48. The check was made payable to Lakewood United Methodist Church and Homard’s trust document imposed no restriction on the use of the funds. The executive team of Lakewood UMC, the Trustees and the Finance committee proposed using the funds for Miracle Sunday, and on August 23, the loan balance – now \$694,732.95, was paid in full, plus the church now has a surplus of over \$ 175,000!

As if this weren't blessing enough, Lakewood United Methodist Church was also named as a beneficiary of the charitable trust of Jill Pride Wiesner, a member of Lakewood United Methodist Church who passed away on May 18, 2022. Along with two other non-profit groups, Lakewood’s Endowment Committee is the beneficiary of 1/3 of the income of this trust in perpetuity. "While this amazing gift will not be immediately impactful because we will be waiting for income to generate and principal to build," shared Kelley in her report to the congregation, "this gift will ultimately ensure that Lakewood United Methodist Church will be able to expand the light of Christ into the world forever!"

As giving continued, an endowment gift was made from the estate of Jill Pride Weisner, and is expected to begin accumulating income which will offer quarterly gifts to Lakewood UMC to help them expand their ministries in perpetuity. “We are so thankful for the generosity of the late Richard Homard and Jill Wiesner, and we intend to be good stewards with what we’ve been entrusted,” continued Kelley, in her report. “Our faith is renewed and our enthusiasm for doing God’s work has had been revitalized! I am so thankful for all who gave, and I’m amazed by the power of the Holy Spirit!”

Kelley encouraged her congregation, at Sunday’s unveiling, to stay faithful to regular giving so they wouldn’t become complacent as a church. “We want to honor God with good stewardship now more than ever and ensure that we use our monthly savings to enhance our various ministries so we can continue to meet our mission of ‘expanding the light of Christ’ into the community and the world.”

Lakewood United Methodist Church serves the community of Lakewood and surrounding areas in North Little Rock. They offer three Sunday worship services: a classic service and a contemporary service – both at 9am, and a modern worship service at 11am. For more information, visit www.expandingthelight.org.

ACCOMPANYING PHOTOS:



CAPTION1:

Rev. Roy Beth Kelly shares the results of Lakewood United Methodist Church's Miracle Sunday campaign with the congregation during the church's 9am classic worship service.

CAPTION2:

Executive Trustee and long-time member of Lakewood United Methodist Church, Bruce Holstead, offers a prayer of thanksgiving for God's miraculous financial provision for Miracle Sunday during the church's 11am modern worship service.

+ For further information or questions, contact Ginger Kehler, LUMC Communications Director, at gkebler@lakewood-umc.org or 501-753-6186