

White's Chapel UMC Endorses the Legacy Ministry Webinar



White's Chapel has the distinction of being the only black United Methodist church in Rockdale County. For 142 years, generations have fulfilled the Church's mission by loving God and neighbors, introducing the world to Christ, helping struggling families, and ministering to the homeless.

Like Apostle Paul, the faithful disciples of White's Chapel have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. When faced with foreclosure, White's Chapel prayed for a solution to save their church. Relief came unexpectedly when the Georgia United Methodist Foundation found a way to help them avoid foreclosure so that they can continue to positively influence their community.

Although the idea of developing a building fund had been on senior pastor Rev. Harold Cobb's heart for quite some time, this was the wake-up call White's Chapel needed to provide for the long-term financial stability of their church. "We look around the world, our community and the State of Georgia and see churches are disappearing from the landscape," said Avon Hamm, church council chairman. "When the Foundation invited us to participate in a pilot Legacy Ministry Webinar to start an endowment, we thought it was a great idea because we want to be around for another 142 years."

A personal experience also reinforced Avon's passion for the Legacy Ministry program. "When my aunt passed, she gave her money to a college," he said. "She hadn't even thought about giving it to her church, and she had been a member of White's Chapel all of her life."

The Legacy Ministry Webinar helps churches jumpstart their endowment, which is a fund that can be invested to establish a permanent source of income to support programs and ministries such as missions, scholarships, building maintenance, and other needs. Each month for 12 months during a 45-minute interactive webinar, the Foundation provides step-by-step instructions for designing and implementing a customized Legacy Ministry program. White's Chapel, along with Bethlehem First UMC, Decatur First UMC, and Riverside UMC in Macon, has completed nine of the 12 webinars.

"The Legacy Ministry helps the church in a number of ways. It has brought forth ideas from other participants outside of our community. It has helped me understand The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, the role of the pastor and the leaders of our church, resolutions, charge conferences, and gift acceptance policies," Avon said. "The webinar has also taught us how to introduce planned giving while overcoming skepticism of the local church. You have to understand in the black community and the black church, this type of program is very rare. We usually don't have any money in reserve. I recommend that all United Methodist churches participate in the Legacy Ministry in order to accomplish the goals of the Church and fulfill its mission."