

## Finishing what we started, preparing for the future

by Chad Birckelbaw

In an announcement to the congregation on May 31, our senior pastor, Dr. Ron Henderson, kicked off a church-wide capital campaign, Paid in Full, aimed primarily at reducing our



church's current debt and, as a secondary priority, enhancing our existing facilities – two steps that will clear the path for our future.

The campaign is partly the result of conversations Ron had with groups in our church last fall. As he spoke with Sunday school leaders, parents of youth, single adults, missions committees and others about their visions for the future, the overwhelming response was the desire to pay off debt incurred from previous projects.

Working with the Finance Committee, the Debt Reduction Committee was formed in early spring to address the issue. The committee comprises a diverse membership, which includes some who helped found our church 29 years ago as well as some more recent members.

After several weeks of discussion, the committee established \$4 million, a sum which is less than our annual operating budget, as a reasonable capital campaign goal. Achieving this goal over a 24-month period will allow us to retire our current debt of approximately \$3.2 million. The additional \$800,000 we hope to

raise will help us update aging heating and air-conditioning systems and some of our space to a level on par with our Sanctuary and other parts of our church. The benefit of a special campaign is that we don't adversely impact our annual operating budget. That annual campaign will take place in November this year.

This sacrificial effort by all of us is in keeping with the good stewardship that has guided Custer Road UMC throughout its history. In its 29 years, Custer Road UMC has undertaken six building projects tied to capital campaigns. Our current debt, incurred over two of those projects – the Sanctuary in 1990 and the Upper Room/offices/day school/Sunday school classrooms in 2001 – is not out of line with other United Methodist churches in our area. But our members have overwhelmingly said it's time to finish what we started 19 years ago and maintain our current facilities at a first-rate level.

This summer, the church will hold small-group events designed to educate and inform. These events will unite generations of church members in a common cause – finishing what we started, building our legacy and positioning our church to be ready when God calls us in the future. The Paid in Full campaign concludes with

Pledge Sunday on Sept. 27.

As you consider the hard work ahead of us, pray for God's hand in what we want to do for him. Become an informed advocate for the Paid in Full campaign. Talk with your family about the importance of living within our means, as families and as a church. Recognize that though the timing of this campaign in these tough times is not ideal, every month we carry this debt robs us of money – about \$500,000 a year for the next eight years – that we could use in ministry. Every dollar we give helps to reduce our debt.

Those of you who have participated in past campaigns understand that God has always taken us to levels we could only dream about as a congregation. Those of you who haven't participated in a campaign have a blessing to look forward to as God uses you to help prepare us for what he has in store for us in the future.

*Chad is chairman of the Debt Reduction Committee. For more information, visit [www.crumc.org/paidinfull](http://www.crumc.org/paidinfull).*

**PAID IN FULL**

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