

Bear Lake United Methodist Church: Blessed to be a Blessing!

By Kevin D. Evers

"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." - 2 Corinthians 9:11 NIV

Bear Lake United Methodist Church in Apopka, FL is a smaller neighborhood church in the Orlando area. Average attendance is around 90 during Sunday worship. This congregation has been mission minded for quite some time, and is very involved with the neighborhood which surrounds this community of faith.

In the beginning of 2016, Lay Leader Dan Patterson, a member of the church, approached his pastor, Kevin Evers. Together, they discussed an idea that Dan had for raising money for their local missions. Instead of the usual "rummage and craft sale" which took place once a year, the church would do something different. Usually each year the rummage and craft sale would generate on average, \$3,000.

On a lightly attended Sunday worship on February 28, 2016, Dan handed out a one dollar bill to everyone in attendance that day. It was only a total of \$51. The challenge to everyone at Bear Lake United Methodist Church was to take "God's Dollar" and for each person to use their imagination, talents, and creativity and multiply their \$1.00. This "God's Dollar Mission" was an extremely fun and easy challenge as every person from the congregation could participate. From young children, active members, to those who were elderly or even homebound, everyone took part in multiplying their dollar for God.

Some of the ways in which members of the church multiplied their dollars was by offering various services, such as day labor, transportation, painting, and small house repairs. Others sold fresh grown garden produce, flowers, plants, original artwork, and crafts, as well as homemade baked goods, and even deer meat, and many other creative miscellaneous crafts.

On Sunday, November 20, as the church celebrated with their Thanksgiving Service, everyone was invited to bring back all of "God's Dollars" which they had multiplied to be collected in a special offering. After Pastor Kevin's sermon, he handed out "Thanksgiving" baskets that the ushers past around. Each person could place their special offering of what they had multiplied, or a note of "thankfulness." After worship, the entire congregation celebrated with a Thanksgiving potluck meal.

After the meal, the moment finally came. With a drum roll, Dan stepped back into the Fellowship Hall and announced what the congregation had accomplished: from an original \$51 those one dollar bills had multiplied into...\$6,621.60!

Bear Lake United Methodist Church donated all proceeds to local missions the church supports. One half of the total amount was given to "Loaves and Fishes" in Apopka, which is a ministry to

help those less fortunate. The other half was given to “The Russell Home for Atypical Children” in Orlando. As Pastor Kevin says during the benediction, let us “leave this beautiful church house and go be the church to the world!” May we always remember, that no matter what size or age of your congregation, nothing is impossible when you (as it says on the back of a one dollar bill) place your trust in God.