

Still Strong



Celebrates . . .

*15 years as Kelly +
Woodlawn (2007 -
2022)*

&

*70 years of
ministry at 70th
Street (1952 - 2022)*

October 30th, 2022
Commemorative Booklet

**Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
(Ephesians 6:10)**



Kelly Woodlawn United Methodist Church
6955 S. Martin Luther King Dr.
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Kelly Woodlawn Church Key Information:

- Full name: Kelly Woodlawn United Methodist Church
- Pastor: Rev. Andrea E. Davidson (e-mail via pastor@kellywoodlawn.org)
- Address: 6955 S. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr., Chicago, IL 60637
- Phone numbers: voice (773) 873-9469; fax (773) 873-0049
- E-Mail: office@kellywoodlawn.org (synonymous with kellyumchurch@sbcglobal.net)
- Website: www.kellywoodlawn.org
- Facebook page: www.facebook.com/kellywoodlawn

The mission of Kelly Woodlawn Church

Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ by providing ministries for worship, spiritual growth, fellowship, outreach and social justice, to all people

Kelly Woodlawn Church's Statement of Vision

Our vision is to be a faithful, joyful, growing Christian community demonstrating deep spirituality, a passion for justice and making disciples.

Church history

Kelly Woodlawn Church began in 2007 with the “merger of equals” of the former Kelly United Methodist Church and the former Woodlawn United Methodist Church. The history of each of those institutions is described separately. The Woodlawn congregation no longer had use of their building which had been determined to be unsafe for continuing use years earlier. In the years leading up to the merger, the Woodlawn congregation had been meeting in various locations and at the time of the merger, the Woodlawn congregation worshiped in the current Kelly Woodlawn Church building (separately from the Kelly congregation). When the decision to merge was finalized, the two congregations underwent an arduous process which took over a year to complete. Finally in 2007, Kelly Woodlawn United Methodist Church came into being.



An image of the “breathtakingly beautiful edifice” (as described in the sidebar on the next page), from Betty Owens’ commemorative plate.

The Rev. Colleen M. Norman was the obvious choice to lead the merged congregation because prior to the merger she had been assigned as pastor for each of the congregations. She graciously accepted her calling and did an excellent job handling the complexities and emotions resulting from such a merger. Rev. Norman completed her pastoral duties at Kelly Woodlawn after July, 2015. Today Rev. Norman serves as pastor of Southlawn United Methodist Church, also in Chicago.

The Rev. Dr. Michelle Taylor Sanders followed Rev. Norman and became Kelly Woodlawn’s pastor in August 2015. Rev. Sanders enthusiastically applied her considerable pastoral gifts to grow and expand upon the work Rev. Norman had done with the new Kelly Woodlawn congregation. Rev. Sanders served as pastor of Kelly Woodlawn until her retirement after June 2022. It is said that Christians don’t really retire, they simply receive a different mission. In retirement, Rev. Sanders joined a church she served earlier in her career, St. Mark United Methodist Church, and works with their worship team.

Our current pastor, the Rev. Andrea Davidson came to us in July 2022 with a skill set that seems particularly appropriate for the challenges in ministry that African-American communities like ours face. We thank God for her considerable pastoral experience and personal talent. We excitedly await where God will lead Kelly Woodlawn Church given her passion, talent and spiritual gifts.

Woodlawn United Methodist Church Established 1884

The Woodlawn UMC was founded as a Sunday School in the home of community residents, John and Mary Lavender. In 1884 these weekly classes became incorporated as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Woodlawn Park. A small frame church was erected on the corner of Woodlawn and sixty-fourth streets in July 1886. The Columbian Exposition of 1893 brought thousands to the Woodlawn Community that necessitated a 24,000 sq. ft. building in 1906. The church membership grew to about 1500 by 1945. Shortly after WWII the Woodlawn Community underwent social change becoming interracial in 1955. In July of 1968 the Harriet McGee membership joined the Woodlawn Congregation. During the 1970's the Woodlawn Community experienced economic and social decline which took its toll on the church. The once breathtakingly beautiful edifice suffered deterioration due to the inability of a downsized congregation to provide adequate maintenance. After over one hundred years, thirty two pastors and two name changes, the Woodlawn UMC is on the verge of rebirth. So at God's direction and blessing this building is being replaced. Since July of 1993, spiritual and administrative leadership is being provided by Pastor Audrea Fumbanks Ivy.

Spring 1998

About the Woodlawn congregation

(The statement in the sidebar to the left came from the back side of the commemorative plate shown on the previous page.) Sadly, the Woodlawn congregation never got the new building hoped for in the statement of the sidebar. God had other plans. After Rev. Ivy (who is now known as the Rev. Dr. Audrea Fumbanks Nanabray and who is currently the pastor of First United Methodist Church, Des Plaines, Illinois) was assigned to a different mission early in the new millenium, the Woodlawn congregation received the Rev. Celeste C. Darey as pastor. She was followed by the Rev. B. Chris Dorsey, who is currently serving as President and CEO of Disciples Home Missions, part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Rev. Dorsey was followed by the Rev. Colleen M. Norman, Woodlawn's final pastor before the 2007 merger creating the current Kelly Woodlawn United Methodist Church.

About the Kelly congregation

(The historical sketch in the sidebar that begins on the next page came from Kelly UMC's program for its 25th Anniversary Banquet, held June 26th 1977.) After Rev. Zebbs, Rev. Paul L. Ayers became pastor in 1979. Under his leadership, the church reached its highest membership. The 1980s brought Rev. Julius Smith then Rev. Dr. Carroll M Felton. These two pastors introduced concepts of social justice to the congregation (in 1980, Dr. Felton wrote "The care of souls in the Black Church: A liberation perspective," Rev. Smith has a book currently available on Amazon, "Abundance Creed: Inspiration Through Reflection," June 2021). The 1990s saw the introduction of Rev. H.

Historical Sketch of Kelly United Methodist Church

Kelly United Methodist Church in Park Manor was established in June 1952. The church was named in honor of Bishop Edward W. Kelly, resident Bishop of the St. Louis area of the Methodist Church. Bishop Kelly made the first contribution toward the purchase of the church in the amount of \$10,000 from the St. Louis area of the Methodist Church. It was through the faithful guidance and negotiations of Dr. Sumpter Marion Riley, Jr., then our District Superintendent, that the church building was purchased from the Park Manor Methodist Church of the Rock River Annual Conference of the Methodist Church. The Rock River Conference and the Board of Missions also made contributions to the purchase of the church building located at 70th and Martin Luther King Jr Dr, Chicago, Illinois.

The new congregation grew rapidly under the leadership of its first pastor, Rev. Herman Zimmerman. When Rev. Zimmerman was first appointed as pastor of Kelly Church, he wrote this prayer for Kelly Church:

"Dear Lord, Merciful Father we thank Thee for this Thy Church; we thank Thee for the friends who made it possible. Fill the membership with Thy Holy Spirit, so they may have power to seek and to save sinners and prosperity to pay easily for the indebtedness. We ask in the name of Thy Son Jesus. Thy will be done. – Amen."

Bishop Matthew W. Clair, Jr., Resident Bishop of the St. Louis area of the Methodist church, succeeding Bishop Kelly, gave his support to our growing church. Rev. S. P. Jenkins, who became District Superintendent and later our pastor, gave strong and helpful advice during our formative years.

In May 1954, when the membership had grown to over 270 members, the Rev. George E. Rice was appointed pastor by Bishop Matthew W. Clair, Jr. In 1961, under the leadership of Rev. Rice, the prayer of Rev. Zimmerman was answered. The church succeeded in paying its indebtedness.

In 1964, the Lexington Conference, of which Kelly was a member, merged with the Rock River Conference. In 1968 The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged, at which time The Methodist Church changed its name to the United Methodist Church. Hence, Kelly Methodist became Kelly United Methodist.

The Rev. Simon P. Jenkins, our former District Superintendent, became the third pastor appointed to Kelly. His love, counsel and administrative skills strengthened the fellowship and organization of the church. Rev. Jenkins retired from the active ministry and Kelly was his last charge in a long and distinguished career in the United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Thomas R. Sumner was the fourth pastor appointed to serve Kelly. Rev. Sumner served the church in times of great unrest in the nation. He attempted to interpret the times to the congregation and became, himself a strong advocate of human rights. Rev. Sumner resigned from the ministry and went into private business.

During the period we were without a resident pastor, Dr Willie Clay, our district superintendent of the Northern Illinois conference, served along with his already overwhelming duties as District superintendent, as our interim pastor. His sermons and guidance brought a resurgence of life and a new spirit into our church. It was the first Sunday in April of 1976 that Dr. Clay introduced to the congregation Kelly's new pastor, appointed by Bishop Paul A. Washburn, Rev. Arthur A. Zebbs.

Rev. Zebbs transferred from the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. Rev. Zebbs has served churches in Ohio, including being a pastor at Corey United Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, under Dr. Sumpter Riley Jr., and pastor of the now Asbury United Methodist in Elyria, Ohio and Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Columbus, Ohio. Prior to coming to Kelly Rev. Zebbs was a teaching faculty member at Denison University for nearly five years.

Under our new pastor's leadership we feel the Rev. Zimmerman's prayer is still being heard by our Lord. Our church continues to grow and we feel that God's Holy Spirit is present in our fellowship as we continue to be the agent of God's caring in the world.

Bernard King, Rev. Wanda Y. Parker (no longer with us, but she left behind a bit of her wisdom in a series of 5 prayer books, also available on Amazon: "Prayers for the Lenten Season," "Morning Prayers," "Prayers from My Journey with Cancer," "Prayers for the Dance Ministry" and "Prayers and Meditations") and Rev. Darius Thomas. In the new millennium, Rev. Colleen M. Norman became Kelly UMC's final pastor before the merger created the current Kelly Woodlawn United Methodist Church.

Ministries

A local church's ministries can serve as a reminder that "God is in this place."



70 Years at 70th Street

Kelly Woodlawn Church sports a very distinguished sounding address, 6955 South Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior Drive. It sounds so proper when all written out like that, doesn't it? After all, King Drive here in Chicago was the very first of many such Drives, Boulevards or Avenues named for the esteemed African-American civil rights leader now celebrated with a national holiday. In many ways King Drive can be thought of as "Main Street" for the predominantly African-American portion of the South Side of Chicago, an area both famous and infamous but known throughout America and even in many other parts of the world. King Drive hosts the famed Bud Billiken Parade along an amazing stretch of boulevard once known as "Grand Boulevard" rivaling the great boulevards of Europe.

Meanwhile 70th Street, the cross street intersecting King Drive next to the church is a mere side street in a neighborhood, Park Manor, which has seen better days. The segment of 70th Street next to Kelly Woodlawn runs for less than three-quarters of a mile wedged between two interstate highways. The people of Park Manor are not particularly noteworthy. None of its residents can be found in glossy magazines touting the wealthiest Americans. No articles would describe it as a "most desirable" neighborhood to live in. It typically does not house lofty professionals such as doctors or lawyers, instead Park Manor is home to clerks, security guards and others closer to the bottom end of the socio-economic ladder. The neighborhood immediately to the north, called West Woodlawn, could be described in similar terms. In the Bible, Nathanael once sarcastically asked, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He might well have been speaking of Park Manor or West Woodlawn.

Yet, God lives in this place, too! In this place, among these people, God has given us a calling to minister. And while not as dramatically as Nathanael's Nazareth reference, good comes from places like Park Manor and West Woodlawn as well. In the 1930s, a man named Carl Hansberry believed in a better life for his family than could be found in what was then called "the Black Belt." After a long, bitter struggle that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court, restrictive covenants that allowed property owners to exclude buyers based on racial or other biases were ruled unconstitutional paving the way for African-Americans to potentially move into areas previously reserved for white people.

Mr. Hansberry's family, including his daughter Lorraine, moved into an area then known as the "Washington Park Subdivision" into a house located at 6140 S Rhodes Ave. in what is now the West Woodlawn neighborhood. The family's experiences influenced Lorraine Hansberry whose "Raisin in the Sun" play famously delved into issues and ideas around upward mobility and the sometimes harsh realities that accompany such dreams.

Poet Gwendolyn Brooks was another person who felt stifled by conditions in "the Black Belt." The award-winning, renowned poet once wrote a poem called "kitchenette building" describing dismal, soul-draining experiences surrounding the poverty that many felt and still feel. One might expect Ms. Brooks felt some

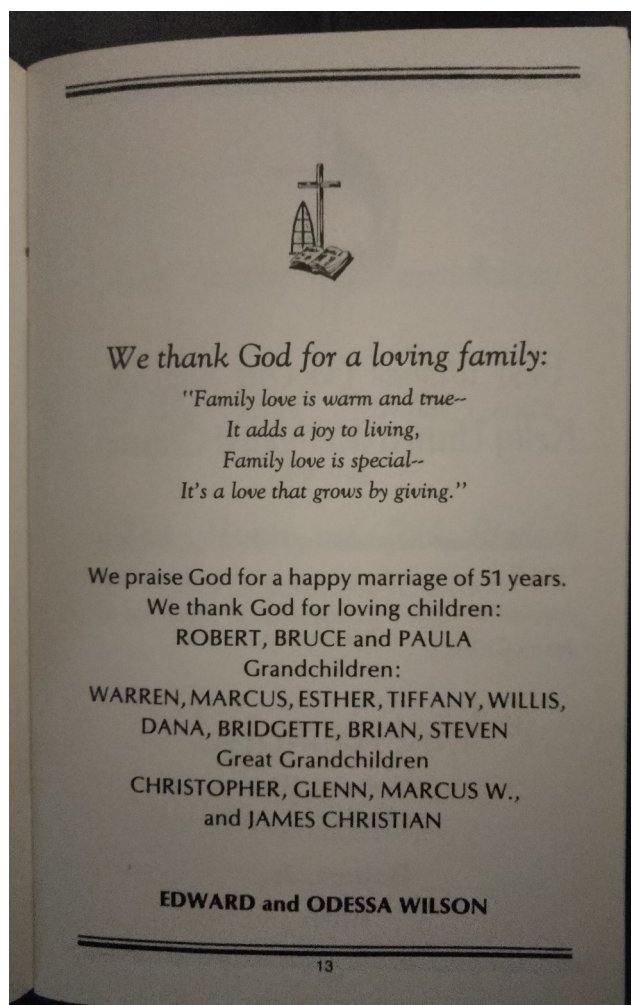
measure of happiness when she was finally able to move into her own home at 7428 S. Evans Ave. in Park Manor. Even after her talent was recognized and the awards flowed, the modest Ms. Brooks could still be seen on the #3 King Drive bus just like so many others in these modest neighborhoods.

Another person seen roaming the streets in and around Park Manor and West Woodlawn was a confident young teenager who lived at 6427 S. St. Lawrence Ave. in the West Woodlawn neighborhood with his mother, Mamie. This young person probably walked by our church on his way to play pickup basketball at Meyering Park just down the street. By the 1950s when Kelly Methodist Church was formed, African-Americans felt fortunate to live in neighborhoods newly opened to them such as West Woodlawn or Park Manor. They were the new African-American middle class something almost beyond imagination just a few years earlier. It was understandable that a teenager like Emmett Till might even feel a sense of boldness having come from such an environment. It was understandable that his elders and others in such areas might feel a sense of complacency at "having arrived."

Emmett's confidence did not serve him well when he was sent for a summer trip to family in Mississippi. His brutal murder was a spark plug in the civil rights movement and the complacency that some African-Americans had regarding their status in America was shattered.

Still, folks came, settled and raised families here. Sometime during this era a man named Edward Wilson and his wife Odessa secured property in the 7200 block of South Prairie Ave. for their developing family (the same block chosen a few decades earlier by the family of notorious gangster

Al Capone, although the Capone family was long gone by that point). They needed space for their children, they needed good schools for their children and they desired a church home to raise their children "in the way they should go." They chose to join Kelly where family members were faithful for decades. In 1993, for a church fundraiser, the Wilsons submitted an ad as shown on the previous page.



An ad submitted for Kelly UMC's 1993 "Tea Book"

God blessed this family. Mr. Wilson is still alive. At age 106 he is one of the oldest living citizens of the state of Illinois. Although he lost his wife, Odessa, his children are still alive. We chose to honor him today not only for the steadiness that helped this particular family to thrive and prosper, but in symbolic representation for all the men and women like him who gave structure to so many of our lives, helped raise us in the ways that we should go and helped lay the foundations for our own families and communities no matter how far away from Park Manor or West Woodlawn they might be.

These days our neighborhoods face tough challenges. Population decline is one such challenge; Chicago community districts such as Woodlawn and Greater Grand Crossing (to which Park Manor belongs) have lost 50 to 70% of the population they held in the 1950s. Disinvestment is another issue; once thriving business districts such as that of East 71st Street or East 63rd Street often have stretches where there are more vacant spaces than functioning businesses. Crime, both perceived and real discourage investment and prompt more to move away; further weakening the economic base of the area. But just as the problems are real, so too is the presence of our God. Churches like Kelly Woodlawn provide a type of stability just by being there. Businesses may come and go, but God's Church is a "Mighty Rock in a Weary Land." Our stretch of East 70th Street is less than three-quarters of a mile long, but is home to three churches (Shiloh 7th Day Adventist, The Congregational Church of Park Manor UCC and Kelly Woodlawn) that have been there for generations. God provides "shelter in a time of storm." We are happy that God chose us and chooses us to help provide some of that shelter for a neighborhood in need and for a world in need. We were blessed to be here in 1952 and we are blessed to be here in 2022.

Acknowledgements

(A statement by the Chairperson of the Church Anniversary Planning Committee)

I greet you in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ (for we know without “you” we are nothing). As we celebrate God’s blessings of ministry for 70 years on the corner of 70th and King Drive, we are still “standing strong.” We may be a little church on the corner, but we are more than we appear to be! God has blessed us with a rich history and presence in the Park Manor community. Today, we celebrate not only the milestone, 15 years as Kelly Woodlawn United Methodist Church, but also the 70 years of ministry to this community God placed us in. Thank you, Lord, for allowing us to be Your instruments in this place “for such a time as this.”

I would like to thank (in no particular order)

- the other members of the Church Anniversary Planning Committee: Lois Ray Travillion (our Lay Leader), Keith Laten Williams (my husband! And “de-facto” church historian), Betty Owens and Rev. Andrea Davidson (our beloved pastor). We had too little time, not enough money, too few skills, and yet . . . by God’s grace and mercy we are “still strong.”
- thank you hospitality committee and those who worked alongside them: Betty Owens, Barbara Stewart, Cathy Clark (also for helping put flyers all around the area),
- Ms. Lita McClinton for photographs, advice and administrative support
- Ms. Carolyn Christiel for her work toward “Trunk or Treat”
- Ms. Fara Taylor for her work toward “Trunk or Treat” and food preparation for the banquet
- our District Superintendent, the Rev. Dr. Jacques Conway, who graciously agreed to be our guest speaker
- the family of Mr. Edward Wilson, especially his children, Paula, Bruce and Bobby
- Mr. Maurice Hurst (the church’s custodian) for his help in contacting the The Congregational Church of Park Manor, and their men’s choir and for his own great performance
- Ms. Carolyn Christiel for her work toward “Trunk or Treat”
- the men of the church: Mr. Keith McClinton, Mr. Ralph Jones, Mr. Leslie Ashford and so many others
- the office of 6th Ward Alderman Roderick T. Sawyer and especially his Director of Constituent Services, Jasmine McCalpin
- the Chicago Crusader newspaper and especially editor Ms. Sharon Fountain
- CMS Trophies and Plaques, formerly on 75th now in West Woodlawn at 606 E. 61st St
- all the great choirs, their members and performers who sang and performed, sharing the good news in word and song (special thanks to Mrs. Andrea Moore-DeMartra and Mrs. Willinda Ringer)
- And to all those who may not be named, but God knows who you are and we praise Him for you and what you did

Deborah F. Williams,
Church Anniversary Planning Committee