

The greatest miracle

There is a sense, in which, if one is a follower of Jesus Christ, he or she is the recipient of his miraculous favor and grace every day. However, there are times when God chooses to bring about things in our lives that are beyond a doubt, “a miraculous intervention of divine favor.”

A few years ago, I wrote a little book titled, “But God.” It recounts the many, many times God intervened into the process of building and relocating Hephzibah Children’s Home in Macon, Georgia.

The task was monumental. The amount of money needed was beyond anyone’s possible imagination. The skills were minimal. From a human point of view, it looked way beyond any possibility.

But God.

For a period of 12 or more years, God intervened to bring about one of the most unbelievable achievements of modern times. The people of God from all across this great nation and in the local community responded with a “whatever it took” attitude which threw into motion unlimited funds, an abundance of skilled labor and a leadership determined to see it through by the grace of God.

For nearly a century, Hephzibah Children’s Home was a relatively small, nonprofit organization in Macon, with its history going as far back as 1900. Located on a 15-acre plot of land near downtown, its mission was to provide loving care to abused and neglected children. They were owned by The Wesleyan Church (TWC) and, over the years, they had garnered a large funding base in the local community and in TWC.

In the late 1970s, Hephzibah leaders purchased a 175-acre plot of land (for less than \$185,000) located on the northwest side of the county. Of course, this set the sails of the ministry toward a vision for relocating to a beautiful new site.

As time drew on, it became pretty obvious that relocating to this new site was a formidable task, especially when it came to the cost as opposed to the amount of funds available. As a result, the new property became an “off in the distant” dream. It was too much with too little.

In the early 1990s, the board of directors, under the leadership of Dr. Ronald R. Brannon, bravely moved the ministry to a new direction. With the appointment of a new general director (the author, Dr. Freels), the board set their minds on a “make or break” course of action. It would be now or never.



**Dr. Larry Freels and
Mrs. Shirley Duncan**

Editor’s Note:

These reflections were written by Dr. Larry Freels, the widely respected General Director of Hephzibah Children’s Home from 1993–2008, who led the miraculous development of and relocation to the Zebulon Road property with bold faith and courageous leadership.

During the early stages of the new director's leadership, God began to move in the hearts and minds of people all across the nation. A very positive, forward-moving, progressive attitude became obvious. It was a "we can get this done" kind of attitude.

Before long, trees were being cut, dirt was being moved, roads were being built, water and electric lines installed, foundations poured and buildings were under construction. It was an unbelievable, beyond comprehension movement. An impossible task.

But God.

Before the start of the new century, the old property had been sold and the new site was ready to be moved into. By the spring of 2008, the infrastructure was complete and there was a total of 15 buildings on the new location at a cost of approximately \$15,000,000. At the same time, miraculously, everything was paid in full.

Over the next decade, the winds of change were relentless in Georgia. Child care in group homes was the least likely place for children to be placed. This new mandate by the state was a direct blow to the very core of the Hephzibah ministry. The leadership found themselves in deep and troubled water. Funds were drying up. The ministry was being threatened. For a couple of years closing the home was almost inevitable. Paying the bills and making employee payroll became most challenging at best.

It's hard to believe, but in 2018 the property was sold and Hephzibah Children's Home — as it was known for over 100 years — no longer existed.

Let's pause for a moment of reflection. No doubt about it, closing the home was a very difficult issue for a lot of reasons — but two specifically. One, how could something that God had so marvelously blessed and miraculously brought about become non-existent? It just didn't make sense. Secondly, now that the home was closed, what would TWC do with the property and the money from the sale? Speculation ran wild.

There was widespread frustration, disbelief and anger. The "blame game" was in full throttle. But the one thing that maybe none of us were able to see was this: is God in the process of doing something great? It's my belief that God never does something bad in order to achieve something good. But sometimes he does something good in order to do something great.

In recent days, I had the privilege of talking to my friend, Shirley Duncan, the beloved Director of Church Relations from 1989 to 2018. To my amazement, I discovered that our hearts and minds had been running on the same spiritual track. We were both rejoicing over what God was doing with the "old Hephzibah property" and the new and exciting endeavor of The Wesleyan Church and Hephzibah62:4. God is at work. Looking forward, God is doing great things on three different levels.

First of all, the sale of the property was a big issue. Would the buildings go up in flames to be replaced by new homes? Would they be beaten into the ground by the long arms of an excavator? No, God had another plan.

The property was purchased by one of the greatest nonprofits in the area — the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia. Today, the entire property along with all the buildings, are intact and are being used to assist broken families, drug abuse, alcohol abuse and the homeless. In big letters on their website, it says: “Providing a path of hope, redemption and empowerment through Jesus Christ.”

The second exciting thing that has taken place on the campus is the organizing of a Christ-centered, Bible-believing church. The gymnasium and pool have been transformed into a beautiful sanctuary and youth center. Every week it is buzzing with hundreds of people who worship God, believe in prayer, and witness the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, here is my point when it comes to the property. Sometimes we try to put God in our little box. Of course, the campus was built with the blood, sweat and tears of God’s people from all across the nation. And it was done with the mission in mind. Most of us were terribly disappointed at the closing of Hephzibah.

But God.

Today, that property is being used to an even greater extent for the glory of God than it could have even been under the influence of Hephzibah. It’s God’s way of making sure that whatever investment someone made into the relocation of Hephzibah Children Home, it was not in vain.

Today, God is being glorified on the “old Hephzibah campus.” These two thriving ministries capture the spirit of Hephzibah. This transformation should resonate with the heart and mind of all believers. It is, indeed, a miracle in the making.

The third and final miracle that is even more exciting concerns the money from the sale of the property. That money (millions of dollars) after paying all the bills, has been set aside for the advancement of an exciting new arm of ministry by The Wesleyan Church — Hephzibah62:4. TWC leadership has mandated that those funds maintain the historical heritage of Hephzibah — for the cause and care of families and at-risk children in our society.

Under the superb leadership of Dr. Anita Eastlack and Mrs. Jodi Lewis, this new and exciting endeavor will move forward to bring the spirit of Hephzibah into every Wesleyan church in America.

The mission of Hephzibah62:4 is “Equipping and mobilizing local Wesleyan churches to transform the lives of vulnerable children.” This new ministry is Wesleyan-centered, local church-focused, North America in scope and faithful to the vision and spirit of Hephzibah.

In 2008, it would have been beyond my wildest imagination to think that something like this could happen. Kingdom building through the multiplication of ministries. It just may be “the greatest miracle of all.”

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