



# Lakewood Church

*Project Spotlight: March 2007*



**LOCATION:**

Houston, TX

**OWNER:**

Pastor Joel Osteen, Houston, TX

**ARCHITECT:**

StudioRed Architects, Houston, TX

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:**

Tellepsen Builders, Houston, TX

**STONE SUPPLIER:**

BPI, Houston, TX

**STONE INSTALLATION  
SYSTEM:**

LATICRETE International, Inc., Bethany, CT

**LATICRETE DISTRIBUTOR:**

daltile, Houston, TX

## Lakewood Church: Rockets stadium reborn as city-wide family center

By Lesley Goddin

When Lakewood Church began in 1959 under the leadership of founding pastors John and Dodie Osteen, it met in a converted feed store on the outskirts of Houston. Today, led by son Joel Osteen and his wife Victoria, Lakewood draws over 30,000 adults to weekly worship services and 3,500 children and students to weekly programs, according to the church's website ([www.lakewood.cc](http://www.lakewood.cc)). That's in addition to over 200 million U.S. households and viewers in over 100 countries worldwide that receive Lakewood's positive message of hope each week through its television ministry.

To accommodate the multitudes in recent years, Lakewood added extra worship services at its 8,000-seat former site, built in 1988. But as the church's popularity and outreach grew, it became clear that it needed a new home. When the Houston Rockets basketball team vacated the 30-year old Compaq Center — formerly known as the Summit in Greenway Plaza — in favor of a different downtown location, the opportunity opened for Lakewood to retrofit the indoor stadium into a 16,000-seat church building.

Negotiations began in December of 2001, according to Joel Osteen's best selling book *Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential*. Osteen's ministry is about pushing ahead despite obstacles — and a project of this magnitude was no exception. But despite legal and practical hiccups along the way, the city of Houston gave Lakewood Church the green light on the Compaq Center on December 31, 2003.

Part of the appeal — besides the financial savings an existing facility would bring — was the multilevel structure lent itself to classroom space for 1,500 children as well as a 16,000-seat sanctuary and 10,000 square foot media suite for television broadcast.

"What we've done is take the existing arena, removed all the space below used for locker rooms and show prep, and built classrooms down there for 0-5 year olds," said Jared Wood, project architect for Studio Red Architects in Houston. "Every square inch is used for classrooms." The east end of the building houses more classrooms and there's a media suite on the fifth floor "where they do production and get everything ready for broadcast," Wood said.

The retrofit created 48 subterranean classrooms and 11 in the new east building, which was tied into the existing arena though the addition of a black granite wall. Plaster columns reduce the arena look and a fountain is planned for the future.

Enter LATICRETE. One of the goals of the project was to waterproof the 30,000 square feet of bathroom space on the lobby level and east building to prevent water from leaking into the classrooms below. "The construction was concrete plank with terrazzo on top of it," Wood said. "After 30 years of use, the terrazzo had cracked."

National Terrazzo Tile and Marble, with offices in Houston and Austin, was the original contractor for the Summit 30 years ago. Handling the tile, stone and terrazzo for The Lakewood Church project brought it face to face with its former handiwork. "When you've been in business for 80-plus years, we get to see a lot of our jobs a couple of times," said Ronnie Gonzales, vice president of operations.

The firm bead blasted the old terrazzo to prepare the surface and applied LATICRETE 9235 Waterproofing Membrane to safeguard classrooms below from any leakage from bathrooms above. "We recommended LATICRETE," he said. "We have used it before and have a lot of confidence in it."



Work progressed smoothly over about four months, with the biggest challenge being the short, intense bursts when work was scheduled. "The job was broken up into different sections — office buildings, underground classrooms, the ring section and ring restrooms," Gonzales said. "Each section had a different superintendent. So we were constantly on the job on working different aspects and phases continuously."

At the height of the project, about 40-45 of Gonzales' workers were on the job. They were in good company. The scope of the project included 32 design consultants, 26 architects, 70 subcontractors, and 500 people working on site at any given time.

Grout choice was important too, since acidic urine and other materials could stain sanded grout over time. To avoid this problem, SpectraLOCK Pro epoxy grout was specified in Platinum, Sauterne, Kashmir and Almond colors. MasterTile, Daltile and Walker Zanger supplied 12 X 12 porcelain tile and accent tiles.

The vast scope of the job and fast turnaround needed caused a minor glitch in the grouting phase that was easily rectified. To keep on schedule, grout needed to be sourced quickly from a number of different locations — and it was! The problem arose from the fact that — unbeknownst to the distributor — the same color grout came from different batches, causing extreme shade variations, Gonzales said. But the problem was caught quickly. "Laticrete stepped up and provided all the grout from one batch, and we scraped and removed existing grout," he said. "We had only done a couple of rooms."

Other challenges on the overall project revolved around bringing a warm homey atmosphere to a former stadium where concrete block had formed the ambiance. Studio Red sloped the basketball

floor to provide a sightline to view one person on the worship platform at the building's west end. Large screens behind the platform give everyone a good view of pastor Osteen and other worship leaders. The interior was carpeted — in fact, 50,000 square feet of carpet was used in the entire facility. New seating was added on the floor to coordinate with recently reupholstered existing seating that got a thorough cleaning. A blue-gold color theme throughout complemented existing blue-green seating and new plum colored seats. On the stage, an 11-foot diameter, spinning globe was positioned to provide a visual backdrop and focal point.

Another challenge was balancing materials used for broadcast with those present for live worship experience. In the world of television, cardboard and Styrofoam make convincing props, but look fake live. "We brought in specialty consultants skilled in broadcast lighting and designing for television — and a consultant for the worship platform areas to shape the space and make the worship area viable for television," Wood said. Through a major team effort, the project teams decided on materials that would be appropriate for both broadcast and live worship experiences.

Lakewood has a lease on this space for 30 years, with option to renew for another 30 at the end of the term. The 606,900 square foot space still has room for future expansion, specifically in the former food court area. The church celebrated with a grand opening during the weekend of July 16 — 17th, 2005 that attracted 57,000 people.

Lakewood Church's message and Osteen's ministry hinge on the belief that all things are possible. This reborn facility and the outreach it provides to the local community and the world, both prove the point and help spread the message.





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