

# Dallas church plans to rise from ashes and rebuild ministry\_51704

May 14, 2004

Posted: 5/14/04

A fire in 2002 left the east Dallas landmark Ross Avenue Baptist Church building a burned-out shell of its former glory. The church will demolish the old building and rebuild on the site.

# Dallas church plans to rise from ashes and rebuild ministry

**By John Hall**

*Texas Baptist Communications*

DALLAS-Ross Avenue Baptist Church's building stands a shell of its former glory. Its walls are propped up with large beams. A stained-glass dome that once called a community to Christ is now but a memory.

But a powerful ministry and testimony in Christ's name will rise from what remains of the facilities following a 2002 electrical fire, church leaders pledge.

After two years of planning and working with the local government, the historic landmark soon will be destroyed, and construction of new facilities will begin. The church currently meets in a portable building that sits in the shadow of its former building.



Pastor Eddie Sanchez shows BGCT staff the burned-out remains of Ross Avenue Baptist Church.

Though the congregation is sad to see the old facilities go, members are

ready to move forward, said Pastor Eddie Sanchez. The loss of their building has meant decreasing many of the ministries that made the church a staple in the community.

The smaller-than-100-member church served more than 500 people when its facilities were sound. Members are eager to do so again through English-as-a-second-language classes, medical clinics, parenting classes and homeless aid.

The demolition of the building and subsequent construction will testify to the congregation's determination and power of Christ's work in a neighborhood that has wondered if the church would rebuild, the pastor said.

“We're saying to ourselves and the community, 'Enough is enough,'” Sanchez said. “We're not leaving. We need to have a continued visibility in the community. They are waiting for us.”

With the help of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Church Facilities Center, church leaders have designed new, more manageable facilities. The old building, constructed in 1917, consumed 40 percent of the church's operating budget.

The new design will incorporate elements of the old buildings while implementing an updated floor plan that will be more useful for ministry. The cornerstone of the original building also will serve as the base of the new construction.

Before the congregation moved forward with the demolition plans, it took Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter typically celebrated by Christians as the day of the first Lord's Supper, as one last official opportunity to remember the ministry that occurred in the old building and give thanks to God.

Church members, as well as community, city and religious leaders came together to reflect on what the church meant to the neighborhood.

Joyce Clower, a 50-year member of the church, later remembered polishing the pews of the sanctuary, vacuuming the floors of the facilities and pruning the plants on the grounds. The majestic building was to be an immaculate representation of God's greatness and beauty.

“I spent 48 wonderful years worshipping in that building,” Clower said in an interview. “The spiritual rewards you get from a setting like that-it was glorious. It was enlightening.”

The building will continue through the memories of many of the church members, Sanchez said. They will remember the glory of the building while reconstructing a ministry that outshines that image.

“It was kind of like saying, 'Thank you, Lord, for the 85 years of ministry, but it's time to move on,'” Sanchez said.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention ( SBC ) and around the world.