

# Leader roped into service

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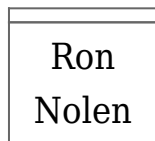
## Leader roped into service

**By Toby Druin**

*Editor Emeritus*

WAXAHACHIE—Ron Nolen got “roped” into the cowboy church business.

Nolen, coordinator of the [Texas Fellowship of Cowboy Churches](#), was working many hours as a church starter for the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1999, when his son, Matt, a roper, gave him a lariat to try as a means of relaxation.



“I would rope bedsteads and chairs at motels or anything else I could find,” Nolen recalled.

Then his son invited him to accompany him to a roping event in Glen Rose. When Nolen saw the 800 teams, he commented to his son, “I wonder where all these guys go to church.”

Matt initially replied, “Dad, can’t you ever relax and have some fun instead of thinking about starting churches all the time?”

But a few days later, Nolen’s son came to him and asked how he could help reach his friends and others in the cowboy culture and offered to help start

a western-heritage church in Ellis County.

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Over the next few weeks, Nolen, his wife, Jane, his son and others met to explore the interest in starting a cowboy church. In March 2000, Cowboy Church of Ellis County held its first worship service at the Ellis County Expo Center.

The church since has been through two building programs, averages about 1,500 in worship each Sunday, has an arena ministry that attracts hundreds every Thursday night and has been the model for starting more than 80 other congregations affiliated with the Texas Fellowship of Cowboy Churches.

It gives new meaning to the old western saying, "Get a rope."

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