

# The death of a Lubbock church sparks new life

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## The death of a Lubbock church sparks new life

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LUBBOCK—As deacons carried a casket out the sanctuary doors, worshippers marked the death of Trinity Baptist Church in Lubbock and the birth of The Family Church @ 34th and Boston.

When Pastor Dan Reynolds arrived at Trinity Baptist Church in June, he and the congregation agreed to start a new church in the declining church's facilities.

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Pallbearers carry away a casket bearing the bylaws for Trinity Baptist Church in Lubbock at a service marking the demise of that church and the birth of The Family Church @ 34th and Boston.

"As a church planter, I told them: 'We shut down Trinity Baptist Church, and you allow me to do what I need to do. We move into a mission status, partner with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Lubbock Area Baptist Association and start from scratch building a brand new church', " Reynolds said.

Reynolds, who has planted churches before, said members were considering shutting down Trinity Baptist Church before they called him. In its prime, the church had 1,000 members in Sunday school; by the time Reynolds came to Trinity, attendance had declined to around 25.

At the funeral, former pastors Bob Utley and George Ray shared eulogies.

Gene Hawkins, retired associational director of missions quoted a passage from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes, focusing on the theme: “a time to live and a time to die.”

Director of Missions Larry Jones gave the charge for the future of the new church. He preached from a text in the Old Testament book of Haggai: “This new house will be of greater glory than the former house.”

During the service, the church’s constitution and by-laws were placed in the casket, and the deacons of Trinity Baptist Church carried the coffin out of the sanctuary.

“This was a real unique thing—actually a funeral for the church,” Reynolds said. “It was just very encouraging seeing the excitement that the people had about the new start. It is a radical change from who Trinity Baptist has been in the past.”

At the service, 48 charter members agreed to a new covenant and signed it. More are expected to sign, as the charter remains open until Oct. 31. The Family Church is also working on partnering with other area churches.

“We have to think outside the box as far as ministry,” Reynolds said. “For one of our renovations, we remodeled our foyer and turned it into a coffee bar. We wanted something that didn’t resemble a church when you walk in.”

Soon, the church plans to install a wall of flat screen monitors, so visitors can sit in the coffee bar and watch the service in a nonthreatening environment.

“It’s really a way of dropping some of those barriers that exist and they can walk into a familiar environment,” Reynolds said.

They also plan to make the coffee shop wireless and open it during the

evenings for college students. The church will offer free coffee, Internet and printer use to attract students.

"We want to reach all aspects of the neighborhood that we live in. Free is the key," Reynolds said.

Because many Lubbock churches are moving to the outskirts of the city, The Family Church wants to focus its ministry in the inner city. Some of the ministries it hopes to launch in the next year include a soup kitchen, clothes closet, computer skills training class, day care center, before/after school programs, and a church planting launching center.

"The church planting [launching] center will be done in cooperation with the Lubbock Baptist Association," Reynolds said. "There is one wing of this building that can be completely isolated and has its own outside entrance. This section of the building has enough space to sustain an entire congregation up to 100 people.

"It has a room that will be remodeled into a kitchen. There is a fellowship hall, worship center, 12 to 14 classrooms, men's and women's restrooms and access to the baptistry when needed. The [church planting] launching center is the most vital part of the entire operation. While here, new churches will be able to witness ongoing, hands on ministry in us and reproduce it in themselves."

With the death of the old and the birth of the new, the church plans to embrace a less-traditional ministry and hopes to fill its once-overflowing halls.

"The gospel cannot change, but the method must constantly change," Reynolds said. "That's the philosophy I have lived by since I've gone into ministry."

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