

When it comes to missions, thereâ¬s something in the water in Red Springs

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Red
Springs
Baptist
Church
Pastor Gary
Godkin and
long-time
members
Bobbie
Morgan
and Senna
Winn stand
before a
brush arbor
constructed
for the
church's
recent
centennial
celebration.
Many of
the former
pastors
who went
on to
mission
service
returned to
participate.

When it comes to missions, there's something in the water in Red Springs

By **George Henson**

Staff Writer

ED SPRINGS—Hay fields surround Red Springs Baptist Church, stretching as far as the eye can see.

Looking out the front door of the church, located more than 60 miles southwest of Wichita Falls, some might become so entranced by the wide-open spaces of the Northwest Texas Plains that they never would want to leave. But at least 10 of its pastors have walked through its doorway with a missionary calling and a vision to change a much larger world.



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Consider the roll call of pastors who have left Red Springs Baptist Church and the distant fields in which they served: Keith Parks, missionary to Indonesia, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board and Global Missions Coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellow-

ship; Merle Stephens, Canada; Bob Tremaine, Florida, California and director of missions in Parker-Palo Pinto Baptist Area; Harry Garvin, Uganda; James Oliver, Colombia; Bud Edmonds, Canada; Randall Parks, Egypt; Robert Harper, Leeward Islands, St. Martin; Gary Wester, Ecuador; and Jack Bennett, Middle East and North Africa.

Bobbie Morgan, a member of the church since 1943, said Keith Parks launched the church's enthusiasm for missions when he came as pastor.

"He influenced the church and all of us," she said. "We were young and impressionable back then. I was still in high school when Keith came. Young people can really get on fire, and Keith was so excited about what he was learning at the seminary and seeing God do around the world."



Parks likewise recalls fervency for missions.

"When we were at Red Springs, we were missions volunteers and emphasized missions and their importance. The church seemed to take hold of that and gave generously to the missions offerings," he said.

Members of the small, rural church, have continued to maintain a global mindset, Parks added.

Senna Winn, a 76-year member of the church, agreed missions has remained important to the church.

"Keith Parks started our church's focus on missions. At one time, we even had two Woman's Missionary Unions —an older group and a younger group," she said.

The church was so interested in missions, it sent groups many times to New Mexico to participate in Missions Week at Glorieta Encampment, she noted.

Even now, the church takes time during Sunday morning services for “Mission Moments,” when the work of missionaries around the world are spotlighted and prayed for.

“For a few minutes, that brings our attention to what is going on in the lives of missionaries,” Morgan said. “People hear how God is moving and say, ‘I can be a part of that.’”

Pastor Gary Godkin was aware of the church’s missions heritage before he arrived and has seen it lived out in his own life since becoming the church’s pastor. Earlier this year, he traveled to Niger, West Africa, for a three-week mission tour, and during the summer, the congregation sent him to Belize.

“When I thought about it, the church had sent me or allowed me off for six weeks to focus on missions. That’s not an ordinary circumstance,” Godkin said.

The church has maintained giving to missions as a top priority, not only to Southern Baptists’ Lottie Moon Christ-mas Offering for International Missions and Annie Arm-strong Easter Offering for North American Missions, as well as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Global Missions Offering, but also with support for the Seymour Area Ministerial Alliance, Salt Fork Baptist Association and the Seymour Organization for Helping Others.

Also, women of the church, which runs about 65 in attendance most Sundays, make up about one-third of the volunteers at the hospital in Seymour, 10 miles away.

“I think it’s just a reflection that they really want to help others in the community and aren’t afraid to share the love of Christ with people outside the walls of the church in secular situations,” Godkin said.

Since 2005, members of the church have served in Del Rio and across the

Rio Grande in Acuña.

The church also has contributed to the cause of Christ by serving as a training ground for young pastors, Morgan added.

"As far back as I can remember," she said, "we've had seminary pastors."

Red Springs was the first church Tremaine served as pastor and recalls the help he was given. When he had been at the church only a few weeks, a young girl died, and her family called to ask if he would preach at the funeral. As pastor, he naturally accepted. Shortly after that, a deacon called to make sure the pastor had heard about the death and to ask if he needed any help.

"I told him I not only had never preached a funeral, but I had never even attended one," Tremaine remembered.

The deacon sent him to see Wesley Harrison, who owned both the hardware store and funeral home in town.

"I went in, and he didn't even look up," Tremaine recalled.

"He said, 'You don't know how to preach a funeral do you?' I told him I didn't, and he put a list of things on a piece of paper for me.

"By the time I got to the funeral, you would have thought I'd have done a hundred of them, because I had been so well equipped by the people of that church.

"In today's jargon, they had a mission and a vision," he continued.

"Their concept was that they had a purpose—No. 1 was to convert the people of their community; that was primary. The second item was that they felt like their mission was to train up preacher boys. Most of them, like myself, it was their first church."

The church also has provided Morgan and her husband with a long-term opportunity for service.

“We married in June 1954, and in September the church asked us to be custodians. We’re still doing it 53 years later—so I’m very proud and possessive of my church,” she said.

Considering Red Springs’ missions heritage, Morgan and many others believe they have good reason.

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