

# **TBM Builders' Utah project about more than a building**

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PANGUITCH, Utah—A new three-bedroom house now sits beside the worship center of Valley Christian Fellowship.

When Texas Baptist Men Builders, with support from the church, built the parsonage in three months, they constructed more than a building.

“We made relationships here,” said Wayne Pritchard, director of TBM Builders. “God has done stuff here that is just amazing. I almost get choked up every time I go to thinking about it.”

Pritchard fights back tears as he speaks.

“I’m excited to get to go home after three months, but I’m hating having to leave these people and the relationships we have established here,” he said. “In fact, the little girls have adopted me, a couple of them, as their grandfather, *ex officio*, and every time we talk about us leaving they go to crying. Emotionally it’s hard. It’s very hard.”

## **‘Like having family here’**

Tammi Newsted, Valley Fellowship clerk and planner of the project, said the three-month project with TBM’s volunteers had been “like having family here.” They have been “so gracious and so kind and so giving.”



Ray Cucancic (left) provides instruction to Randy Lloyd as TBM Builders work on a parsonage-building project in Utah. (TBM Photo)

“They’ve not only given hundreds and hundreds of hours of their time, but they’ve given their lives,” Newsted said. “We feel like family to them, and they feel like family to us. And it’s bittersweet saying goodbye.”

The church dedicated the parsonage, which includes a basement for Sunday school space, during a July 26 ribbon cutting ceremony. Lack of available housing in town has made it impossible for the church to secure a new pastor for more than two years.

It was not an easy building project. The challenges came in many forms, including unreliable subcontractors and the distance from obtaining needed supplies.

Contracted workers “wouldn’t show up when they were supposed to,” Pritchard said. And sometimes when they showed up, they messed up work already done.

Also, “there’s no materials right here in this town,” he said. Panguitch is in southwest Utah and is separated from larger towns by a drive across the mountains.

“It’s at least a two or three-hour round trip to get a board if you need it. So that’s been a real challenge, too,” he said.

## Crew pushed to overcome challenges

The difficulties “presented us with an opportunity to overcome those challenges, which is what drives us,” Pritchard said. “It just pushes us to overcome. So, it’s been a lot of challenges but a lot of fun overcoming them.”



Randy Lloyd uses a nailgun as he works on a parsonage-building project in Utah. (TBM Photo)

TBM volunteers pulled out of Panguitch at the end of July. They had arrived at the end of April after the church had begun initial concrete work for the house’s basement. Over the following months, the volunteers built the home from basement to roof, as well as all cabinet and trim work inside.

Some people said the TBM team “could never get everything finished, we couldn’t get the cabinets done, we couldn’t do this” in three months, Pritchard said. Pointing to the finished cabinets behind him, he said: “Well, you can see ... the cabinets are on the wall. We’re down to final trimming. Don’t tell us it can’t be done. With God it can be done.”

And again, he began to choke up.

His wife Annette said 22 TBM volunteers from 12 Texas cities participated in the project, and they drove more than 30,000 miles between Texas and Utah. They stayed from two weeks to three months.

When told that the circumference of Earth is almost 25,000 miles, she looked shocked. “So we’ve driven all the way around the world to do this project. Wow! Unbelievable!”

And that was just the TBM volunteers from Texas. Another five volunteers from Georgia and five more from Oklahoma also participated.

“They just fit right in and worked right with us,” Wayne Pritchard said. “In fact, we’ve kind of signed up a couple of those guys to join us as Builders, so it’s been really cool having those extra hands, and if we hadn’t had those, we would have really had a challenge finishing.”

Men did most of the carpentry work, but women are also an important part of TBM Builders, Pritchard said. The women “do a lot of the trim work, the paint work, a lot of the cleanup. ... They fill in anywhere and everywhere there’s an opportunity for them to help.”

## **‘God wanted TBM here’**



A new three-bedroom house now sits beside the worship center of Valley Christian Fellowship, thanks to TBM Builders. (TBM Photo)

Newsted saw the project from its start, when it began as one member's idea several years ago. When the local economy changed due to the expansion of tourism-related rental properties, "houses in this area became unavailable for rent or to purchase," she said. They took the idea and started planning.

TBM's role in the project has been "absolutely pivotal," Newsted said. "If TBM had not been here, I don't believe we would have been able to accomplish all of this. We would have had to go the way of the world, and we would have had to take out loans and hire general contractors and go through everything as the common, everyday person goes through.

"But God didn't want that," she continued. "With this project, he wanted TBM. He wanted TBM here. He wanted to make a statement to this community that our God is God, and he can make anything happen and nobody can stop him."

## **'This is the house that faith built'**

The project, from beginning to end, seemed at times to be undoable because of the varied challenges, but still it got done. "This is the house that faith built," Newsted said.

Church and volunteers saw themselves as working on God's project, not their own. And Pritchard has in mind God's broader purposes.

"This being a Mormon community is basically a [spiritually] lost community," the TBM Builders director said. "We're convinced that God

has something planned for this community. We don't know what it is, but we think we're a part of something that's way bigger than this house.

"I hope this house is instrumental in winning this community for God," Pritchard said. "And we'll see what happens once they get their pastor in here and get it going and get organized. We think we've been part of something that's way bigger than anything we've done before."

As the time approached for the house's dedication to God and a ribbon cutting, Newsted said: "Today, I'm really feeling happy and joyous. The culmination of all of the effort that it has taken to get this project off the ground and then the building process itself. It's nothing short of spectacular to be at this place at this moment in time and know that God's will is being accomplished and in record time."

Pritchard doesn't expect the sense of family to subside between the volunteers and church members. Tammi's husband, Bob, became an important part of the volunteer team in Utah, and now he is hoping to come to Texas this fall to help with another TBM Builders project.

"We're more like a family here with these people than we are here people working for them or working with them," Pritchard said. "It's really been emotionally attaching to be here, and I'll never forget this project. It's one of a kind."

As for Newsted, she said: "I truly hope that TBM sees this experiment as a success. I truly hope that this has been a success for them, because it's certainly been a success for us. And I'm so grateful that God has put both of us on the same path to meet and make this happen. There's no other way to explain how all of this could come about if God had not set everything in motion to make it happen."