

Cowboy church leaders have a place to hang their hats

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WAXAHACHIE—The western-heritage churches of Texas and their ever-increasing brethren outside the state now have a place to look toward to get their bearings.

The [Texas Fellowship of Cowboy Churches/American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches](#) dedicated its new headquarters, dubbed the Supply Depot, in Waxahachie.

“The key is that it gives us a hub to work from to meet the needs of everybody in every direction. It provides us with a central location to communicate with the many western-heritage churches. And that communication includes the Internet,” said Ron Nolen, executive director of the Texas Fellowship of Cowboy Churches.

Visitors prepare their plates in the serving line at the Texas Fellowship of Cowboy Churches Supply Depot dedication.

The facility also provides a place to store resources such as a tent, ministry trailers and a new mechanical roping calf. The “Sparky III” roping calf was a gift from Marv and Cathy Kaptain, All Around Performance Horse Weekly and RFD TV, and the Top Hand Cowboy Church of Valley Mills. The mechanical calf will be loaned out to about 50 churches a year to aid in their outreach ministries.

One important way the building will assist the western-heritage effort is by providing volunteers a location where they can come and assist, Nolen said.

“You can’t pay for all the help you need in a ministry like this, and this allows us to plug in many more people and provide them with avenues for ministry,” he said.

The facility also will provide a meeting place for Iglesia Vaquera of Ellis County, a Hispanic western-heritage church.

“Just like the Ellis County Cowboy Church was an example, a model, a flagship of success that other people could come and look and then say, ‘We can go back home and start one of those,’ we need one of those flagship-type models for the vaquero movement,” Nolen explained.

It took many hands to make the supply depot a reality, however. And it was the celebration of cooperation that marked the dedication day.

“What a privilege it has been for the BGCT to help not only with this building, but also the movement. We take no credit for that, but appreciate the opportunity to be a part,” said Steve Vernon, associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. “It is a joy to celebrate the way God is moving in the lives of so many.”

The 10,000-square-foot building is in large part due to the work of the Texas Baptist Men Retiree Builders.

“I can remember when we started dreaming of a facility like this,” TBM Executive Director Leo Smith said. “When this sort of started coming together, Ron said, ‘We want your builders to come help us.’ I said, ‘We’ll see what we can do.’ You can look around and see what TBM Retiree Builders can do.

“I am so excited about the cowboy church movement and the way it reaches so many people who have been overlooked. I think you have probably heard me say my dad would probably be in heaven today if there had been a cowboy church movement.”

As for the new building, Smith had only one instruction, "Let's just wear it out."

Lucy Havens, who along with her husband, Little George Havens, started the Cowboy Camp Meetings more than 40 years ago, said she was proud to say the reins for the camp were now in the hands of the cowboy churches.

The day also was one of remembrance as Jerry Dill, the TBM lead carpenter on the building, was honored. He died less than a month after the building was completed.

Iglesia Vaquera will be an crucial part of the movement's outreach to Hispanics, Pastor Tye Howard said.

"This is not just for our benefit, but will serve as a model for vaqueras all over," he said. The vaquera will reach more nominal Catholics than any other kind of church, "because we have a rodeo arena, and they don't."

The potential is limitless, especially if the movement stretches southward into Mexico, because most Hispanics have some connection to a rural lifestyle, he added.

Todd Hervey, regional director of the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches, said the facility will allow the growth outside the state to come at a greatly accelerated rate.

The building signals a continued movement of God among western-heritage churches.

"Nine years ago this past March, Texas Baptist people began to join the Lord in what he had chosen to do, a sovereign demonstration of his Spirit called western-heritage evangelism and ministries," Nolen said.

"Now in 2009, this movement of God's Spirit has resulted in 144 Baptist way cowboy churches being planted in Texas and some 20 more outside of

Texas with the probability that God will use Baptist people to plant and develop some 350 works in Texas and America by the end of 2011, with the hope that three quarters of a million souls will be won to Christ during the next 90 years."