

Moro Baptist Church experiences new life

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MORO—Moro Baptist Church believes in resurrection. After all, the congregation experienced it.

About four months ago, the church worshipped for the first time in a building shuttered for the last decade.



Cal and Ellen Walters (left) give thanks that Jacque and Kenny Smith (center) responded to God's call and began again holding worship services at the previously closed Moro Baptist Church. They are joined by worship leader Chris Smith and Truman Turk, longtime director of missions for Abilene-Callahan Baptist Association. Photo / George Henson Truman Turk, director of missions for Abilene-Callahan Baptist Association for 25 years, remembers Moro Baptist Church before it closed.

"They were a little country church. The thing that caught your attention first was that the only restroom facility they had was an outhouse," he recalled.

Closing but not disbanding

Eventually, the church built a fellowship hall, complete with a kitchen and

restrooms, but the congregation never grew to more than about 35 people. About 10 years ago, Moro Baptist closed its doors.

But at that time, Turk received a note detailing a telephone call from Ellen Walters he has saved all these years: “The church is closing, but we are not disbanding.”

Walters and her husband, Cal, kept the keys to the property, mowed the grounds and maintained the insurance—a significant commitment to a church where no one met for a decade.

Special to the family

“When you put something like this in your budget, you notice it,” Cal Walters admitted. “But this church is an icon to me.”

The church was special to their family. The couple met there 57 years ago when he was a student at Hardin-Simmons University and a friend invited him to church. His future bride-to-be—who grew up in the church—was part of a group of young people who had lunch after church, climbed a West Texas “mountain,” made it back to church that night, and then attended a movie afterward.

Six months later, the couple married in that same country church that still sits next to an unpaved road.

Involving children in worship

They remember a church that sported a good crop of children.

“When we went to Training Union events, we always won the award for having the most kids,” Ellen Walters recalled.

Turk also remembers how children played important roles in worship services at the church.

“The children would come up and sing, and participate in taking up the offering,” he said. Moro Baptist Church “really did care about children.”

But gradually, attendance and offerings spiraled downward, leaving the church’s doors locked, its parking lot empty and children’s voices a distant memory.

Obedient to God’s call

Then Kenny Smith began feeling God stirring him to begin a church in Moro, where he lives and participates in the volunteer fire department.

Six years ago, none of Smith’s family attended church, but then he and his family began worshipping at a cowboy church in Drasco, a community a little farther west.

One Sunday in June, his pastor’s sermon hit Smith and his wife, Jacque, directly: “You’re going to be miserable until you do what God is telling you to.”

Smith went home and started inviting people to church who he knew didn’t attend. By Sunday night, about 25 people had committed.

Use the vacant church building

He initially planned to begin holding church services in his living room, but one of the people he invited mentioned the possibility of using the vacant Moro Baptist Church.

He knew the Walters family and made the call. They talked and then prayed on the phone. At the end of the conversation, Ellen Walters said, “Why don’t you come by and get the keys?”

That night, he picked up the keys, went to the church and found a beautiful sanctuary—covered in 10 years of dust and dirt.

“We had a worship service the first night we opened those doors,” Jacque Smith said. “We had music, we sang, we praised God and we circled up and prayed over the church. And we started cleaning. And we cleaned every night for six days.”

Awakened after a decade

Moro Baptist Church woke from its slumber June 28.

Cal and Ellen Walters missed the first two Sundays due to vacation, but when they returned, it brought tears to her eyes.

“I couldn’t do anything but rejoice. We had come back home,” she said.

“It was fulfilling to see the doors open again,” her husband added. “I had always told her somebody would come and start a church here one day.” And 10 years later, they did.

Smith maintains he is interim pastor, since the church hasn’t voted to call him.

“It’s humbling,” he said. “I wasn’t a pastor. I was just a layperson. So, this is all new to me.”

He runs a muffler shop in Abilene—about 30 miles away, but almost an hour’s drive due to the rugged, unpaved roads.

Turk noted the Walters’ testimony of hope that someday the church would live again inspires many.

“You watch country churches die off, and it breaks your heart, but you thank the Lord for the history they’ve had and the impact they’ve obviously had,” he said.