

Texas Baptist Men, pastor rebuild in hope

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NEMO—Texas Baptist Men builders have nearly finished reconstructing New Prospect Baptist Church, which was partially destroyed in an April storm.

“Things have been going great. We’ve been here two and a half days, and we’ve got a lot done!” said Bill Pigott, director of retiree builders with Texas Baptist Men.

Bill Pigott of Texas Baptist Men and Pastor Denver Dugle check on volunteer Builders’ progress at New Prospect Baptist Church in Nemo
(Photos by Carrie Joynton)

Pigott heard about the project from builder Ray Keller, who attends New Prospect with his wife Anita. Builders received word through a prayer chain managed by one of the TBM wives. In no time, Pigott began receiving volunteers.

“That’s just how it is with builders; they’re willing to step up and do what needs to be done,” Pigott said.

The new church buildings at New Prospect replace two temporary buildings swept away by high winds. Founded in 1892, the church with its new buildings will tell quite a story of generosity and survival. But it’s not the only survivor in the picture.

Pastor Denver Dugle, at New Prospect since January 2007, said he answered the call to ministry at his family’s prompting.

“They told me, ‘The Lord’s called you to be a pastor, and you ain’t sending your resumes out!’”

From Iraq to New Prospect

Dugle had returned from three combat tours in Iraq and was working in construction in Aubrey. Migraines—a result of his years in combat—made his work nearly impossible, and he had used up his sick days. Dugle decided to resign and look for something new.



Texas Baptist Men retiree builders
work on reconstructing New Prospect
Baptist Church in Nemo.

“I asked the Lord to take care of us. The day I ran out of money, we got 100 percent disability” from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Dugle said.

When New Prospect called Dugle as pastor, he accepted the part-time position.

“The Lord’s worked it out,” Dugle explained. “The church couldn’t afford a full-time pastor, and the Lord provided me the money with the VA disability. I used to feel like I was on welfare, but I don’t anymore. I just did what my country wanted me to do, and I earned that disability.”

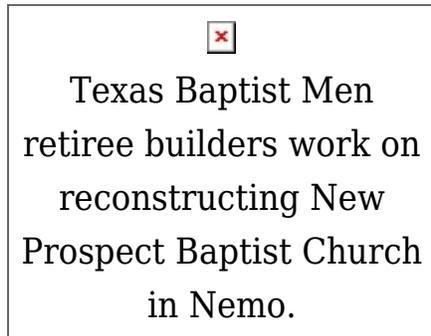
The church understands Dugle’s situation and has been very flexible, he said. Although he suffers from migraines three to five times a week, each lasting up to 48 hours, Dugle said that at New Prospect, he’s never had a migraine on a Sunday.

“I’ll wake up with one, and just pray, ‘Lord, I need to preach your word.’ It sometimes comes back at night, but in the morning it goes away. He takes

them away,” Dugle said.

Not long after he arrived, Dugle said he received specific instructions from God about his ministry at New Prospect.

Disciple the flock



“The Holy Spirit told me he wants me to disciple the flock that’s here, to get the soil fertile, so that when others come into that church, they’ll be able to disciple them,” Dugle said.

“Instead of addition, the church should multiply. That’s what the New Testament church did.”

New Prospect ministers primarily to farmers and the surrounding rural community. The church also rents out its building during the week to a special-needs school that graduated 58 students this past year. The superintendent told Dugle he thought the church had a positive influence on the students, Dugle said.

The students certainly were helpful on the morning after the storm.

“They showed up about 8. They were like fire ants—just started cleaning up debris from around the church and other houses,” Dugle said. Their arrival ended a long morning for Dugle, who had watched the storm from his bedroom window when it hit at 3 a.m.

“I had finished building a barn that night, hammered the last nail in at

dusk," Dugle said.

"At 3 a.m. I looked out and watched it get taken up in the air, and slammed back down."

Surviving the storm

The storm flattened a gazebo on church property, destroyed a bus barn, and uprooted seven cedars that were deposited about 30 feet away.

Despite heavy damage, New Prospect survived the storm and is reemerging with a strong foundation—and so is its pastor. Relying on God's strength and the strength of others reinforces Dugle's dedication to his ministry.

The call hasn't been an easy one, Dugle said.

"I thought the hardest job I'd ever have was doing three tours in Iraq. It's not. It's pastoring a church—spiritual warfare goes on every day."

"Satan wants to destroy me, my church, and my family," but his church and his family give him the support he needs, he said.

He and his wife, Sarah, have grown especially close, he noted.

"She's a trooper," Dugle said.

Pigott of TBM noted his 33 years in military service helped him bond quickly with Dugle.

"It's tough to be a Christian in the military," Pigott said.

Though Dugle agreed that being in combat "is the ultimate fire and brimstone," he also said the experience has formed him personally and influences his leadership in ministry.

"I say to the church, 'I have nothing to hide.' I know if you do that, it opens

up the opportunity to get hurt, but the military taught me to lead by example. If I lead by being open and honest and transparent, I hope they'll learn to live by that example."