

From creative worship to building program, rural Kentucky Baptist church shines



ABOVE: Pastor Tim Roberts preaches from the front steps to his congregation in the parking lot. AT LEFT: Parking lot services at Providence Baptist.

By MARK MAYNARD, Kentucky Today

IRVINE, Ky. (KT) – Providence Baptist Church didn't wring its collective hands over the coronavirus, says pastor Tim Roberts.

They got creative. The church has tried it all – drive-up services, online services, even drive-up services with pets in the car – in keeping its Sunday morning, Sunday

night and Wednesday night rotation of services going in some form or another since March 23.

"Everything just went right along the whole time," Roberts said. "We didn't have any areas of lapses in meeting together for worship. We just did it a little differently."

They've also continued a building program that started before the pandemic and, on most

weeks, have taken in more tithes than they did prior to the coronavirus.

So what has Roberts learned about his rural church?

"I've learned about their faithfulness," he said, using building the new life center as an example. "We are building a life center at the same time as this whole thing. We started that and planned for it before this all happened. We

just kept going. We haven't stopped. It's built. We just have to get the furnishing in there."

The 8,000-square-foot building is behind the church's sanctuary.

Roberts, who has been the pastor for 2 1/2 years, said, "The church is an amazing faithful church. I'm thankful to be part of it."

Estill County was one of the last counties in Kentucky to have even a single positive case of the coronavirus. But Roberts said they have taken every precaution when it comes to the virus.

"We've set up cleaning, have plenty of hand sanitizer and masks available for anybody who wants them," Roberts said. "I kept in contact with our county judge and we have a magistrate in our church. I wanted to make sure we were doing everything the way it was supposed to be done."

That started with the drive-up service, an idea that came from Roberts' wife's cousin in Texas. "We were going to try and do something so folks could meet together," he said. "We were one of the first ones around here that were doing it. We finally got a transmitter and that made a big difference. The first week, we had a guy who is a DJ and he had some speaker equipment."

The drive-up service averaged about 50 vehicles and more than 100 people, not to mention pets.

"We had Boone, a basset hound, and we had some dalmatians, and some other dogs," Roberts said. "People were comfortable. We've had visitors the whole time and now some of those visitors are coming back (to the in-person services)."

They are still broadcasting over the transmitter

for those not comfortable enough for in-person services, which he said drew about 70 last Sunday, the first one for in-person since the virus warnings started.

He said another member built wooden offering boxes so nobody had to touch an offering plate.

"We talked about it and he said, 'I can do that.' That's the kind of attitude we've had with our church leadership," he said. "I couldn't have designed anything like he designed. He had them done in a couple of days."

Roberts said the church rolled with the flow and took the attitude of "whatever it takes to share Jesus."

"It's been a real creative adventure for us," he said. "You have to do what you have to do to share the gospel. I think that's where we're at: Whatever it takes to share Jesus."



ABOVE: Boone the basset hound and a couple of canine friends attend parking lot services of Providence Baptist Church at Winston in western Estill County. BELOW: Pastor Roberts speaks to the parking lot congregation.



The Estill County Tribune

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