

Hebron celebrates storied past in new surroundings

By MARK H. HUNTER

Regional Reporter

DENHAM SPRINGS – The oldest church in Livingston Parish just moved into a modern, spacious sanctuary that re-combined Hebron Baptist's two-service congregations.

The church, located just south of Denham Springs on Hwy. 16, also celebrated its 178th year with a May 3 homecoming service and, of course, dinner on the grounds – actually in the gym.

"I feel like we have one congregation again," said Joe Alain, senior pastor for the past nine years. "I kinda felt like I was pastoring two different churches. Now everything is together – which is a very

positive experience."

For the past several years, due mainly to space constraints, they had been holding two services, one traditional at 8 a.m., and a contemporary service at

10:30 a.m. Now they hold one service at 10 a.m. and they have "blended" the formats as well, Alain said.

"Our desire was to have the wisdom of our senior saints with the passion of our younger people," Alain said. "Wisdom and passion together is a pretty good combination."

Founded in 1837, the congregation has met in a log cabin, a larger log-frame building, and several brick buildings until their new, \$3 million,

25,000-square-foot sanctuary building was dedicated on March 22.



Hebron Baptist Church of Denham Springs senior Pastor Joe Alain and his wife Rhonda pose in the foyer of the church's new sanctuary.



Mark H. Hunter photo

Members leave the new sanctuary building of Hebron Baptist Church following their 178th homecoming service on May 3.

"We've been around a long time - but we don't have any charter members still living," Alain said with a laugh.

Church historian Mary Broussard, 72, has attended Hebron Baptist her entire life and has written extensively about it.

"We are the oldest church in Livingston Parish still in existence," Broussard said. "It was founded by eight members and their relatives still attend here. We have five Civil War veterans in the cemetery and their relatives still attend this church."

For homecoming, Broussard and their history team published a 30-page

booklet charting the deacons who have served over the decades and a few interesting stories.

In the early 1900's, according to one account, "Answered Prayer," no rain had fallen for four months and people were going hungry so church members called an all-day, July 4, prayer meeting. By late afternoon children playing outside reported hearing thunder, "but they went right on praying," the story goes. "A cloud moved in and everyone was drenched and they all left there singing

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