

Final service before relocation planned at First Baptist Church of El Reno

The congregation has sold the 1926 building and will dedicate a new location.

BY HENRY DOLIVE • Modified: September 7, 2013 at 3:00 pm • Published: September 7, 2013

EL RENO — Sunday will be a big day for members of First Baptist Church in El Reno as they prepare to give up the downtown presence they have maintained for more than a century and begin looking toward the future.



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Architectural rendering of the new First Baptist Church of El Reno.
IMAGE PROVIDED BY CHURCH

Sunday's combined 10 a.m. worship service will be the final one in the building First Baptist Church has occupied at 401 S Bickford Ave. since 1926. The church property at the southern edge of downtown is being sold to El Reno Public Schools. The buildings will be razed for an expansion of El Reno High School.

Nearly 700 people are expected for the final service. The 450-seat auditorium is expected to be full, and church officials will accommodate an overflow crowd of worshippers, said lead pastor Charlie Blount.

Retired pastor John Chennault, who served the church from 1983 to 2006, will be present, Blount said.

After the service, a photo will be taken outside the building and a barbecue lunch will be served. At 6:30 p.m., members will gather at the construction site of a new church complex for a dedication service.

"This is a great time in our church," Blount said. "Our church is not dying. We are just changing our location. It will be an exciting day but a bittersweet one."

Glen Chapman, administration and worship pastor, echoed that feeling.

"There will be sorrow involved but great joy," Chapman said. "Our people are very unified (about the decision to relocate)."

Dirt work is scheduled to begin Monday at the site of the new church, south of El Reno's Public Safety Center just off SW 27.

Friday, 13 Reding's Auction Service will conduct an auction of items that won't be taken to the new church.

Owner Ken Reding said two auction rings will be going at once. Four auctioneers will be employed for the sale starting at 10 a.m.

There will be close to 700 items offered, he said, including pews, tables, chairs, stained glass windows, lighting fixtures, heating, air conditioning and kitchen equipment and some musical instruments, including pianos.

"There may be some things that will be bid a little higher because they have sentimental as well as monetary value," Reding said.

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