

Possum Trot's National Impact

The success in Possum Trot is inspiring adoptions across the U.S.

For Bishop W.C. Martin, pastor of 200-member Bennett Chapel church in Possum Trot, Texas, 73 changed lives is not enough. He wants to help more children find homes.

So Martin is taking his message to the country, holding speaking engagements across the U.S. Many churches have started their own adoption programs after being inspired by Possum Trot's.

One is 4Kids of South Florida, a Fort Lauderdale-based ministry started by Calvary Chapel in 1997. It unites the local church community in orphan care, foster parenting and adoption. Executive Director Tom Lukasik and others used the Bennett Chapel story to inspire their 18,000-member church.

"Today, 4Kids works with 200 churches. They currently have 170 children in their care, and their SafePlace shelter has housed more than 9,000 children," Lukasik says.

Individuals too are inspired to action. "Many tell me this was the message they needed to help them make their decision to adopt," Martin says.

In Columbus, Ohio, he spoke up for five young children in a group home who needed a family to take them in: "After my talk, all of them were adopted."

Project , a Colorado organization that trains, supports and recruits adoptive parents, has been instrumental in getting children into loving homes.

"God has been lighting the fires of pastors all over this country on the orphan issue," says project assistant Sarah

Padbury.

Studies show 25 percent of children who age out of the foster care system will be incarcerated within the first two years. More than 20 percent will become homeless, while only 3 percent will earn a college degree, according to a recent Ad Council report.

Each stat is a reason Martin refuses to give up. To him, the message is clear: "We have all been adopted by God. If you can't adopt, support those who can. If we can do it in Possum Trot, you can do it right in your church."