

10-1974

## 100 Largest Sunday Schools

Elmer Towns  
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# The 100 Largest

This 7th annual *Christian Life* listing of the 100 Largest Sunday Schools contains many surprises: Attendance at Jack Hyles' First Baptist Church jumped from an average of 7,837 each week to an almost unbelievable 11,303; two churches, begun the first year of the survey, are now on the list; and Bible Baptist churches no longer dominate the list.

BY ELMER TOWNS, Sunday School Editor, *Christian Life* magazine

**T**he 7th annual *Christian Life* listing of the 100 largest Sunday Schools contains many surprises. Although the Baptists still claim most of the large schools, the Pentecostals are growing. And enthusiasm is spilling over into other denominations. While large Sunday Schools continue to use buses to bring children to the house of God, there's a changing attitude toward Sunday morning greyhounds. The idea of super-aggressive evangelism is spreading across the super churches, and most of those with financial troubles appear to have weathered the storm.

If the annual listings were a stock

car race, the Hammond, Ind., Sunday School, pastored by Dr. Jack Hyles, would have almost lapped the field with an average attendance of 11,303, nearly double that of second place Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, with its average attendance of 6,787.

Hyles motivates the students at the church-owned Hyles-Anderson College to win souls and fill buses. Each week, more than 400 young evangelists spread out over Chicago to enlist Sunday School attendees. An average of 5,706 come by buses each week.

Last December 16, in the face of a threatening snow storm, 23,024 attended Hyles' Sunday School, a modern record. More than 11,500 riders

came on 204 buses, and more than 2,000 professed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Some criticize Hyles' 200 baptisms each week, claiming he force-feeds them into the water. But his growth of 3,466 per week over last year's average should silence his critics: Those who profess salvation remain in the church.

Of course, not everyone likes the listing of the 100 largest Sunday Schools. A critic recently accused pastors of the growing churches of "only desiring recognition by making the top 100 list." And advocates of small-group Christianity make fun of large churches, accusing them of being impersonal and shallow, more interested in statistics than people. However, it's

Rank	Rank Last Year	Church	City - State	Minister	Weekly Attendance	Change in Attendance From Last Year	Number of
1	1	First Baptist Church	Hammond, Ind.	Dr. Jack Hyles	11,303	+3,466	-
2	2	Highland Park Baptist Church	Chattanooga, Tenn.	Dr. Lee Roberson	6,787	+1,031	65
3	3	First Baptist Church	Dallas, Tex.	Dr. W. A. Criswell	5,970	+250	5
4	4	Canton Baptist Temple	Canton, Ohio	Dr. Harold Henniger	4,620	-	-
5	5	First Baptist Church of Van Nuys	Van Nuys, Calif.	Dr. Harold L. Fickett, Jr.	3,829	+134	1
6	8	Trinity Baptist Church	Jacksonville, Fla.	Dr. Robert C. Gray, Jr.	3,546	+203	-
7	6	Calvary Temple	Denver, Colo.	Dr. Charles E. Blair	3,380	-285	-
8	7	Indianapolis Baptist Temple	Indianapolis, Ind.	Dr. Greg Dixon	3,262	-143	-
9	16	Beth Haven Baptist Church	Louisville, Ky.	Dr. Thomas H. Wallace	3,239	+854	2
10	10	The Chapel in University Park	Akron, Ohio	Dr. David Burnham	2,996	+289	1
11	9	Madison Church of Christ	Madison, Tenn.	Dr. Ira North	2,973	+101	-
12	11	First Baptist Church	Jacksonville, Fla.	Dr. Homer G. Lindsay, Jr.	2,964	+309	-

# Sunday Schools

easier to criticize a survey than an actual church.

The annual listing of large Sunday Schools, begun in 1968, is credited by others with helping revise the pessimistic attitude toward Sunday Schools which was felt in the 1960s when *Life* magazine slurred, "Sunday School is the most wasted hour of the week." Whether or not the listing is the actual cause of the current Sunday School revival can never be measured, but by reflecting that mainline denominations were declining while the smaller evangelical denominations and independent churches were healthy, it seemed to give real impetus to growth. Both denominational and independent schools have been challenged by the success and techniques of the large churches.

An unbelievable story of two non-Baptist churches was begun the year the first survey of the 100 largest churches appeared. Dino Pedrone be-

came pastor of The Open Door Church, Chambersburg, Pa., with 150 persons at that time. As a young pastor, a few years out of Bible college, he was motivated by analyzing the similarities of the large churches. This year he jumped into the listing with an attendance of 1,284, had a high attendance of over 3,200, and

dedicated a new 1,400-seat auditorium. Their total assets are over one million dollars.

"When I first read the listing, it confirmed the deep conviction I had of what a church ought to be. It motivated me to hard work in the correct ways," Pedrone says.

Calvary Temple, Springfield, Ill., also was begun in 1968, the year the 100 largest survey first appeared. Pastor M.C. Johnson determined to make the listing, and this year averaged 1,330.

And the Sunday School renaissance is felt in other places besides America. Bahamian Pastor Howard Mills, Baptist Bible Church, Nassau, says he has read *Christian Life* for five years, and is inspired by the listing. Today, over 400 attend Sunday School, many coming on their three Sunday School buses. This fall, the all-black congregation occupies (continued on page 84)

## RUNNERS-UP

First Baptist Church .....	1,208
Anderson, S.C.	
Westside Assembly of God ...	1,207
Davenport, Iowa	
Northside Baptist .....	1,193
St. Petersburg, Fla.	
Abundant Life Memorial Church .....	1,193
Indianapolis, Ind.	
The Peoples Church .....	1,172
Fresno, Calif.	

	Number of Baptisms	Total Income	Number of Buses	Number of Riders	Denomination	Literature
14	8,04	\$2,997,000	165	5,706	Independent Baptist	Write their own
4	2,151	-	21	838	Independent Baptist	Write their own, Baptist Pub.
2	431	5,010,500	5	110	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
-	-	-	42	1,000	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Regular Baptist Press, Baptist Pub.
8	544	5,779,561	10	350	Baptist	Southern Baptist, Gospel Light Pub.
6	932	600,000	62	2,350	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Write their own
-	-	2,040,701	5	200	Interdenominational	Gospel Light Pub., Scripture Press
0	445	612,237	42	1,450	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Write their own
0	1,701	1,172,789	42	2,500	Independent Baptist	Write their own
1	168	700,000	5	165	Independent Baptist	Gospel Light, Scripture Press, Baptist Pub.
-	186	975,816	11	225	Church of Christ	20th Century Christian, Gospel Advocate
11	636	1,151,097	16	650	Southern Baptist	So. Bap., Scrip. Press, Bap. Pub., Ch. Evan.

(continued on page 88)

Rank	Rank Last Year	Church	City - State	Minister	Weekly Attendance	Change in Attendance From Last Year
13	13	First Baptist Church of W. Hollywood	Hollywood, Fla.	Dr. Verle S. Ackerman	2,679	+201
14	14	Emmanuel Baptist Church	Pontiac, Mich.	Dr. Tom Malone, Sr.		+28
15	18	First Baptist Church	Amarillo, Tex.	Dr. Winfred Moore	2,353	+82
16	21	First Southern Baptist Church	Del City, Okla.	Rev. Bailey E. Smith	2,346	+153
17	15	First Baptist Church	Riverdale, Md.	Dr. R. Herbert Fitzpatrick	2,332	-81
18	23	High Street Baptist Church	Springfield, Mo.	Dr. D. A. Cavin	2,289	+102
19	22	Northside Baptist Church	Charlotte, N. C.	Dr. W. Jack Hudson	2,248	+36
20	17	Forrest Hills Baptist Church	Decatur, Ga.	Dr. Curtis W. Hutson	2,139	-162
21	29	Allapattah Baptist Church	Miami, Fla.	Dr. Donald G. Manuel	2,119	+326
22		First Baptist Church of Temple Heights	Tampa, Fla.	Dr. Ronald L. Schaffer	2,055	+412
23	27	First Baptist Church	Lubbock, Tex.	Dr. Jaroy Weber	2,033	+97
24	26	Garden Grove Community Church	Garden Grove, Calif.	Dr. Robert H. Schuller	2,028	+81
25	25	Travis Avenue Baptist Church	Ft. Worth, Tex.	Dr. James E. Coggin	2,009	-38
26	24	Dauphin Way Baptist Church	Mobile, Ala.	None	1,958	-83
27	30	Park Cities Baptist Church	Dallas, Tex.	Dr. Herbert R. Howard	1,907	+57
28	38	Bellevue Baptist Church	Memphis, Tenn.	Dr. Adrian Rogers	1,859	+116
29	34	Tallowood Baptist Church	Houston, Tex.	Dr. Lester B. Collins, Jr.	1,836	+38
30	40	South Sheridan Baptist Church	Denver, Col.	Dr. Ed Nelson	1,835	+181
31	36	Dawson Memorial Baptist Church	Birmingham, Ala.	Dr. Edgar M. Arendall	1,829	+44
32	35	Kansas City Baptist Temple	Kansas City, Mo.	Rev. Truman E. Dollar	1,814	+27
33	39	Gospel Light Baptist Church	Walkertown, N. C.	Rev. Robert E. Roberson	1,808	+76

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	Number of Baptisms	Total Income	Number of Buses	Number of Riders	Denomination	Literature
3	856	904,673	39	1,050	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Write their own
	1,419	793,100	55	1,478	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Write their own
5	182	1,394,813	0	0	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
10	354	747,950	3	110	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
11	256	635,493	24	783	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Write their own
10	161	710,817	21	500	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Write their own
10	330	521,829	30	1,188	Independent Baptist	Write their own, Bapt. Pub., David C. Cook
18	841	570,788	30	1,180	Independent Baptist	Baptist Publications, Child Evangelism
12	622	700,000	19	675	Southern Baptist	Writes own, So. Baptist, Baptist Press
6	198	309,386	39	1,083	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Bap. Pub., Reg. Bap. Press, Writes own
2	82	980,994	1	35	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
7	201	1,041,749	0	0	Reformed Church in America	Gospel Light
	222	791,647	15	375	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	80	974,051	17	460	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
7	103	1,432,593	0	0	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
1	299	million plus	5	100	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
12	79	915,444	0	0	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
15	217	434,318	21	516	Independent Baptist	Writes own, Child Evan., Roper Press
15	155	942,477	6	102	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
6	344	447,110	10	636	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Baptist Pub., Child Evangelism
	-	-	37	800	Independent Baptist	Adult classes use Bible only.

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Rank	Rank Last Year	Church	City - State	Minister	Weekly Attendance	Change in Attendance From Last Year
34		North Phoenix Baptist Church	Phoenix, Ariz.	Dr. Richard A. Jackson	1,796	+282
35	41	Bethany First Ch. of the Nazarene	Bethany, Okla.	Dr. Ponder W. Gilliland	1,751	+93
36	36	Massillon Baptist Temple	Massillon, Ohio	Dr. Bruce D. Cummons	1,745	-40
37	33	First Baptist Church	Wichita Falls, Tex.	Dr. Landrum P. Leavell	1,735	-115
38	46	Broadway Church of Christ	Lubbock, Tex.	Dr. Joe R. Barnett	1,704	+89
39	48	First Baptist Church of Lakewood	Long Beach, Calif.	Dr. James A. Borrer	1,677	+92
40	47	Moline Gospel Temple	Moline, Ill.	Dr. Charles L. Hollis	1,676	+70
41	87	Scott Memorial Baptist Church	San Diego, Calif.	Dr. Tim F. LaHaye	1,659	+392
42	52	First Baptist Church	Columbia, S. C.	Dr. H. Edwin Young	1,615	+104
43	42	First Baptist Church	San Antonio, Tex.	Dr. Jimmy R. Allen	1,595	-55
44	49	Calvary Baptist Church	Hazel Park, Mich.	Dr. David D. Allen	1,545	-15
44	65	Bible Baptist Church	Savannah, Ga.	Dr. C. A. Hodges	1,545	+131
44	54	First Baptist Church	Nashville, Tenn.	Dr. H. Franklin Paschall	1,545	+47
47	68	The Peoples Church	Toronto, Canada	Rev. Paul B. Smith	1,544	+142
48		Greater First Pentecostal Church	Alexandria, La.	Rev. Gerald A. Mangun	1,528	+445
49		First Assembly of God Church	Oklahoma City, Okla.	Dr. Daniel T. Sheaffer	1,526	+732
50	53	Calvary Temple	Fort Wayne, Ind.	Rev. Paul E. Paino	1,522	+132
51	57	First Baptist Church	Midland, Tex.	Dr. L. L. Morriss	1,513	+50
52	61	Assembly of God Tabernacle	Atlanta, Ga.	Rev. James G. Mayo	1,499	+61
53	65	Broadmoor Baptist Church	Shreveport, La.	Dr. Scott L. Tatum	1,486	+72
54	75	Roswell Street Baptist Church	Marietta, Ga.	Dr. Nelson Price	1,475	+125
55	71	Northwest Baptist Church	Miami, Fla.	Rev. F. William Chapman	1,473	+90
56		Hyde Park Baptist Church	Austin, Tex.	Dr. Ralph M. Smith	1,472	+84
57		Grace Community Church	Tempe, Ariz.	Rev. Guy A. Davidson	1,470	+366
57	60	Tucson Baptist Temple	Tucson, Ariz.	Rev. Louis W. Johnson	1,470	+30
59	73	Bethesda Baptist Church	Brownsburg, Ind.	Rev. Donald Tyler	1,456	+86
60	63	First Baptist Church	Merritt Island, Fla.	Dr. Jimmy E. Jackson	1,454	+31
61	78	First Baptist Church	Orlando, Fla.	Dr. Henry Parker	1,453	+137
62	58	Second Ponce De Leon Baptist Ch.	Atlanta, Ga.	Dr. Russell H. Dilday, Jr.	1,441	-22
63	81	Bethany Bible Church	Phoenix, Ariz.	Dr. John L. Mitchell	1,420	+131
64	59	Curtis Baptist Church	Augusta, Ga.	Dr. Lawrence V. Bradley, Jr.	1,418	-27
65	54	First Baptist Church	New Castle, Del.	Dr. A. V. Henderson	1,416	-30
66		First Baptist Church	Birmingham, Ala.	Rev. Ralph D. Field	1,412	+87
67	50	Walnut Street Baptist Church	Louisville, Ky.	Dr. Wayne Dehoney	1,406	-60
68		Long Beach First Church of the Nazarene	Long Beach, Calif.	Rev. Bill E. Burch	1,405	+304
69	62	Broadmoor Baptist Church	Jackson, Miss.	Dr. David R. Grant	1,403	-29
70	69	Calvary Baptist Church	Bellflower, Calif.	Dr. H. Frank Collins	1,400	+3
71	74	First Baptist Church	Tulsa, Okla.	Dr. Warren C. Hultgren	1,392	+60
72	94	Life Tabernacle-United Pentecostal Ch.	Houston, Tex.	Rev. James L. Kilgore	1,389	+256
73	56	First Christian Church	Canton, Ohio	Dr. Richard Crabtree	1,376	-115
74	91	North Long Beach Brethren Ch.	Long Beach, Calif.	Dr. George O. Peek	1,367	+105
75	88	Andrews Memorial Baptist Church	Graham, N. C.	Rev. Donald R. Carter	1,366	+71
76	84	First Baptist Church	Arlington, Tex.	Dr. Henard E. East	1,344	-
77	80	Tabernacle Baptist Church	Greenville, S. C.	Dr. Harold B. Sightler	1,343	+75
78	70	Woodland Baptist Church	Winston Salem, N. C.	Rev. R. Zeno Grace	1,339	-46
79	92	First Baptist Church	Bossier City, La.	Dr. Damon V. Vaughn	1,335	+94
80		Calvary Temple Church	Springfield, Ill.	Rev. M. C. Johnson	1,330	+266

	Number of Baptisms	Total Revenue	Number of Buses	Number of Sisters	Denomination	Literature
	324	1,320,612	0	0	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	-	590,000	3	95	Church of the Nazarene	Nazarene Pub. House
	200	-	9	336	Independent Baptist	Write their own
	163	888,885	19	500	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	112	572,211	5	160	Church of Christ	20th Century Christian, Gospel Light
	11	560,822	-	-	Baptist General Conference	Harvest Pub., Scripture Press
	88	-	20	465	Intl. Church of Foursquare Gospel	Gospel Light, Scripture Press
	208	795,074	4	110	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Gospel Light, Baptist Pub.
	138	659,692	0	0	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	291	886,428	8	164	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	-	697,173	17	350	Baptist	Gospel Light, Scripture Press
	459	401,940	18	542	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Write their own
	71	720,400	4	115	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	-	1,095,205	3	80	Independent	Scripture Press
	320	267,000	15	500	United Pentecostal	Pentecostal Pub. House
	726	263,000	8	200	Assemblies of God	Gospel Pub. House
	265	1,300,000	38	650	Independent	Gospel Light, Scripture Press
	105	920,901	-	-	Southern Baptist	
	54	750,000	9	100	Assemblies of God	Gospel Pub. House, David C. Cook
	61	764,448	-	-	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	250	750,000	-	-	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	210	342,953	16	650	Southern Baptist	Baptist Pub., Southern Baptist
	172	682,618	6	175	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	100	653,000	0	0	Interdenominational	Gospel Light
	81	290,000	7	350	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Baptist Publications
	139	381,510	11	400	Gen'l Ass'n of Reg. Baptist Ch.	Reg. Baptist Press, Scripture Press
	264	522,609	11	275	Southern Baptist	So. Bap., Gospel Light, Union Gospel
	123	875,488	5	40	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	48	1 million plus	-	-	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	-	444,408	-	-	Non-Denominational	Scripture Press, Gospel Light
	178	988,546	10	180	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	100	196,000	15	500	Baptist Bible Fellowship	
	135	345,000	15	425	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	159	725,000	9	200	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	13	350,000	3	144	Church of the Nazarene	Gospel Light, Nazarene Pub. House
	105	127,682	6	100	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	178	430,000	12	475	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Gospel Light, Write their own
	40	836,627	0	0	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	-	265,000	20	750	United Pentecostal	Pentecostal Pub. House
	87	552,731	15	261	Christian Church	Standard Publishing
	80	382,000	6	225	Brethren	Gospel Light
	203	193,295	15	489	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Baptist Publications
	96	653,629	-	-	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	28	301,787	3	45	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Baptist Publications
	45	-	26	506	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Union Gospel Press
	102	486,753	7	226	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
	204	332,000	8	250	Assemblies of God	Gospel Light, Write their own

Rank	Rank Last Year	Church	City - State	Minister	Weekly Attendance	Change in Attendance from Last Year
81	79	Denver First Ch. of the Nazarene	Englewood, Colo.	Rev. W. Donald Wellman	1,325	+75
82		Briarlake Baptist Church	Decatur, Ga.	Rev. J. Hoffman Harris	1,324	+157
82	90	College Avenue Baptist Church	San Diego, Calif.	Rev. Robert E. Luther	1,324	+64
84		Willow Meadows Baptist Church	Houston, Tex.	Dr. Ralph H. Langley	1,322	+80
85	67	Limerick Chapel	Limerick, Pa.	Rev. Richard I. Gregory	1,310	+3
86	82	First Baptist Church	Oklahoma City, Okla.	Dr. Gene Garrison	1,287	+1
87		The Open Door Church	Chambersburg, Pa.	Rev. Dino J. Pedrone	1,284	+472
88	86	Mt. Carmel Christian Church	Decatur, Ga.	Jack H. Ballard	1,281	-
89		Plymouth Park Baptist Church	Irving, Tex.	Dr. B. O. Baker	1,279	+16
90		First Brethren Church	Long Beach, Calif.	Dr. David L. Hocking	1,274	-
91		Reimer Road Baptist Church	Wadsworth, Ohio	Rev. John Powell	1,272	+234
92	64	Cliff Temple Baptist Church	Dallas, Texas	Dr. A. Douglas Watterson	1,268	-41
93		Bethel Baptist Church	Memphis, Tenn.	Dr. Roy Westmoreland	1,252	+300
94	98	Emmanuel Faith Community Church	Escondido, Calif.	Dr. Richard L. Strauss	1,239	+20
95		Suncoast Cathedral	St. Petersburg, Fla.	Rev. Don Rippy	1,237	+302
95		First Baptist Church	Elkhart, Ind.	Rev. Daniel E. Gelatt	1,237	+163
97	99	First Baptist Church	Spartanburg, S. C.	Dr. Alastair C. Walker	1,225	+55
98		Ninth and O Baptist Church	Louisville, Ky.	Rev. LaVerne Butler	1,224	+5
99		Lavon Drive Baptist Church	Garland, Tex.	Dr. Gary L. Coleman	1,217	+139
100	96	Blue Ridge Baptist Temple	Kansas City, Mo.	Dr. Parker Dailey	1,216	+11

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Number of Baptisms	Total Income	Number of Buses	Number of Elders	Denomination	Literature
60	-	8	250	Nazarene	Nazarene Pub. House
146	695,500	-	-	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
79	-	-	-	Baptist General Conf.	Harvest Publication
100	495,226	1	60	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
36	369,651	8	150	Independent - Member IFCA	Gospel Light
26	724,505	5	120	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
313	-	20	650	Independent	Union Gospel Press
254	492,044	4	0	Christian	Standard Pub., Gospel Light
93	474,157	3	75	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
-	-	-	-	Nat'l Fellowship of Brethren Ch.	
197	192,400	17	650	Independent Baptist	Baptist Publications, Regular Baptist
31	881,059	-	-	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
421	204,000	16	552	Independent Baptist	Write their own, Regular Baptist Press
102	661,453	3	50	Indep. Fund. Churches of Am.	Scripture Press, Gospel Light
-	750,000	10	350	Assemblies of God	David C. Cook, Gospel Light
75	513,345	6	300	Independent Baptist (G.A.R.B.C.)	Regular Baptist Press, Baptist Pub.
48	717,661	1	35	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
104	481,467	15	475	Southern Baptist	Southern Baptist
225	367,316	12	415	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Baptist Pub., Scripture Press
83	260,596	7	218	Baptist Bible Fellowship	Baptist Publications

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