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The Little Church and How It's Growing

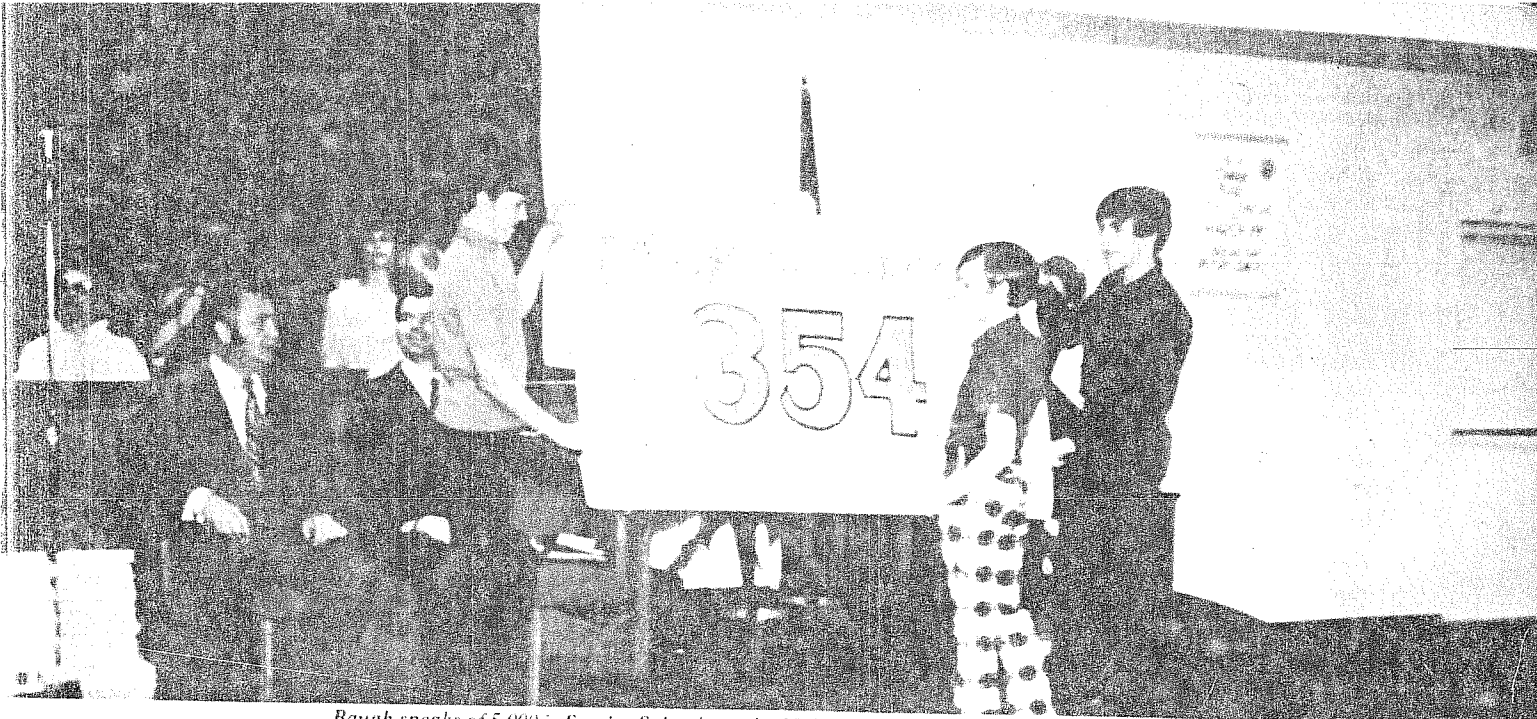
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THE LITTLE CHURCH AND HOW IT'S GROWING

Excitement is running higher than ever at Calvary Heights Baptist Temple, St. Louis, Mo., the church which *Christian Life* magazine has been watching grow.

When Carl Baugh, "pastor without a church," drove his Chevy into St. Louis three years ago, he was penniless. But he believed God was directing him—and that belief gave him courage to take out an option (for \$90,000) on 5.2 acres where two expressways intersect. With a handful of people, he organized a congregation. His salary for the first few months was underwritten by the Bible Baptist Church of Savannah, Ga.

Because Baugh had been successful in two previous pastorates, forecasts for the St. Louis church were optimistic. *Christian Life* reported the young pastor's predictions: an attendance of 300 at the end of the first year, and 500 at the end of the third. Some of his goals have been almost met; others have been exceeded. Sunday School attendance has reached a high of 719, although it averaged only 400 at the end of the first year. However, the second-year average climbed to 211, and the third-year average jumped to 415. Attendance at the morning service averages 150.

Since acquiring its initial 5.2 acres, the church has added a 3/8-acre plot and a 1.4-acre plot, bringing its total assets to over \$1,100,000, with an indebtedness of only \$300,000. Several months ago, Baugh looked at another two acres he felt were needed and, along with his two full-time staff members, took off his shoes and walked through the ground, claiming it for God (Joshua 1:3).

"The secret to building our church has been home visitation. This past year, 415 were led to Christ in the home; and over 200 of them have been baptized in public services," Baugh says.

Baugh optimistically talks of building an auditorium to seat 3,000 this year—its fourth. The congregation is giving slightly under \$2000 in weekly offerings, and this last summer 20 new families were added.

Baugh looks back nostalgically and says the commitment of *Christian Life* to report on his church has made him grow faster than he otherwise would have.

"I had a commitment to the Savannah church and my own self to grow, of course. But with the eyes of America focused on us via *Christian Life*, we did more than we thought humanly possible," he says. "*Christian Life* made us swim in deep water where otherwise we would have been wading ankle-deep."

Sunday School Editor Elmer Towns has preached in all four sanctuaries in the last three years: first in a rented classroom of Parkway North Junior High School, second in the reception area of an old rest home, third in a refurbished four-car garage, and finally in the new 400-seat auditorium. When Towns turned over the spade at the ground-breaking ceremony, he challenged, "This broken ground symbolizes the fact that we plan to plow the hearts of the community and sow the Word of God."

Recently the church bought 10 new buses to go with its other 5. As a result, the current 221 riders are expected to double soon.

In 1969, *Christian Life* first reported on this church which was starting from scratch. On their third anniversary recently they packed in 880, for a 43,900 percent increase.

BY ELMER TOWNS
Sunday School Editor

Baugh used an innovative promotion last fall—5,000 sound-sheet records which were distributed throughout the neighborhood. The jacket advertises the church. On one side of the record is gospel music and a sample of the church service. On the other side, Baugh actually leads a person to a commitment to Christ, including the prayer of repentance. One of the first results was reported by a blind boy who played the record for his friends—including a blind Jewish lad who received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

The infant congregation has received attention from media other than *Christian Life*. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* had a front-page article on the church, and on four occasions TV news reporters have televised functions of the church.

When President Nixon visited St. Louis his attention was called to the church and he wrote to them on March 27, 1972, congratulating them for having one of the fastest growing churches in America.

Last fall the church expanded out of its 400-seat auditorium, four-car garage and nursing home, back into the original quarters at the Parkway North Junior High School. According to Baugh, this will give them space to average 1,000 in Sunday School until their new facilities are finished this year.

Baugh, who goes visiting three nights a week and makes 30 calls every Saturday, is optimistic about the future. He envisions capturing the ear of the city for God. Already, his Friday and Saturday telecasts produce more contacts than can be followed up. He speaks of 5,000 in Sunday School, maybe 10,000... even 20,000. Who knows?

NEWS IN PICTURES



Former Cleveland Brown football player Bill Glass, now turned evangelist, held a three-day crusade in a Marion, Ind., prison with 200 of the 700 inmates making decisions for Christ.



Students from Febias Bible College in the Philippines package World Vision's "love kits" for distribution to the island's flood victims.



A 106-year-old Methodist Church is moved via motor boat to a Scott County historical site near Shakopee, Minn.



Dr. Jack Hyles (left) pastor of First Baptist Church, Hammond, Ind., was awarded Christian Life magazine's plaque for America's Largest Sunday School by editor Dr. Elmer Towns.