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## Still Growing

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# STILL GROWING

*Christian Life*, which pledged itself to "church watching," presents its exciting yearly report. BY ELMER TOWNS

(St. Louis Globe-Democrat Photo)

Four years ago, *Christian Life* reported how Carl Baugh pulled his loaded Chevy station wagon into St. Louis, Mo., with the unthinkable dream of building a church large enough to reach that great Mississippi river metropolis. As he drove down I-244 he saw 5.2 acres for sale and signed a \$90,000 option before getting one person to hear him preach. Another church gave \$175 a week for his salary.

Baugh predicted he would average 600 in his fourth year, and *Christian Life*, pledging itself to "church-watching," has published a yearly report.

Today, Calvary Heights Baptist Temple has 753 members (who give approximately \$3,000 each Sunday) and owns 17 acres of land. Construction at the tract has begun. According to a feature story in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, "A 36-foot waterfall will flow into a reflecting pool in front of the auditorium. The reflecting pool will be surrounded by a garden area creating a setting for weddings and individual meditation.

"Through the use of camera equipment, the image of Christ with arms outstretched, will be projected into the mist of the waterfall, Ralph Green, Calvary Heights Minister of Music, said last week. It will appear Christ is walking on the water.

"At the base of the waterfall will be the verse: 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely' (Rev. 22:17)."

As the soft-spoken pastor reviews this last year, he says, "I can't remember a week without someone walking the aisle to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Our fourth year has been exciting."

Baugh claims an all-time high attendance record of 1117 in March. Two full-time staff members were hired to minister to youth and senior citizens, bringing the total full-time staff to five; a 170-acre youth camp was purchased in Jefferson County for \$66,000; the church adopted plans for a 3,000-seat auditorium, a 51,000-square-foot educational wing and (in the future) a 200-unit retirement home; and they have secured a loan for \$1.7 million.

"Breath-taking," according to a St. Louis newspaper reporter.

Bulldozers are already clearing the property for the first phase, to be finished next fall: a three-story auditorium and educational wings. Plans on the drawing board call for a five-story parking garage to nestle in a ravine, making all land usable.

Next fall Calvary Heights Christian Schools will open in the new educational facilities with 300 pupils and 20 teachers for kindergarten through grade 12. Rental from the school paid to the church will be applied toward the mortgage.



Carl Baugh (pointing to proposed auditorium): "I still have an insatiable desire to reach St. Louis."

When asked why he undertook such financial entrepreneurship, the young preacher replied, "I still have an insatiable desire to reach St. Louis." Baugh remembers the telegram received from the mayor at the first building dedication: "All the eyes of St. Louis are on you." Then, noting the *Christian Life* articles, Baugh remarked, "The eyes of all Christendom are on us. The printed goals in the magazine put me under pressure to produce. We would have gone this route, but probably at a more leisurely pace."

Baugh comments on the necessity of a pastor to examine his track record before he undertakes bold financing. "Since we have won souls in the past, grown in attendance and offering, we know that we can fill the facilities and pay for them."

The first phase of the new auditorium will seat 1800, and Baugh says he will fill it the first Sunday. He already has alerted 50 families to rent and fill a bus, which will gather a crowd of 2500 for its dedication.

The church originally met in a public school, next moved to a refurbished four-car garage and nursing home. I preached the dedication services October 1970 and broke ground for a 400-seat auditorium. Since then, the church has purchased additional acreage. Today, its 17 acres are valued at \$100,000 per acre, because a \$30 million shopping center is being built across the expressway. The church also owns 10 buses which bring in 42 percent of its attendance.

"I was challenged at our organizational meeting," the aggressive Baugh confesses, "when the Reverend Cecil Hodges said, 'Within this charter membership (37 members) there is sufficient money to do everything you ever want to do.' Our infant congregation was meeting in a rented Junior High School and was being subsidized. But Hodges insisted, 'If you will tithe and win to Christ others who follow your example, you can build the greatest church in America.'"

Baugh believes he can do it.