

A Thriving Church in Small-Town America

God not only wants Christians to thrive;
God also wants churches to thrive.

Churches thrive when their members walk together in faithfulness, striving to grow in their discipleship. **Little River Baptist Church** has experienced abundant life over the past decade.

Tim Chrisman became the pastor of Little River Baptist Church in Bumpass, VA in 2009. Bumpass is a small town located about an hour from Charlottesville and 45 minutes from Richmond. Little River Baptist Church was established in 1791 and had experienced decline in the recent years before Chrisman came. Pastor Chrisman developed a vision for the church to thrive in its location.

“Coming to Little River was a miracle,” recalls Chrisman, because even getting to the church was through a series of unlikely connections and divine encounters. In a small community, door-to-door evangelism and visitation were still welcomed. Through the hard work of getting to know the community, the mission of the church moved forward. Two years of relational investments resulted in a harvest of disciples being made. “In 2011, we had 21 baptisms,” says Chrisman. “It was the largest in recent church history.”

Sunday morning church attendance rose to 70. As the church continued to grow, it had to adjust to the realities of small-town America. Some couples moved out of the

**“I HAVE COME
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& HAVE IT IN
ABUNDANCE.”**
JOHN 10:10

area for job opportunities and older members passed away.

Pastor Chrisman believed they needed a niche of ministry in the community. This came through engaging with area homeschoolers. A homeschool community developed, which opened a door to reach children. Each week, 50 children utilized Little River’s facility for a homeschool co-op. The church also reached 50 children through VBS and became engaged in Good News Clubs at local public schools.

In 2018, Chrisman joined the revitalization cohort of the SBC of Virginia. The cohort is a group of 8 to 10 pastors who partner for one year for mutual support and encouragement in church revitalization. That same year, 11 people joined the church in a four-month period, raising the church’s Sunday attendance to 80.

Little River Baptist Church has a fresh emphasis on Sunday School and an intentional plan to focus on the future growth of the church. This church proves that with a dedicated pastor, a faithful congregation, and a love for the community, churches can thrive in small-town America.

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*Scripture reference is from the Holman
Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)*

