

# A Springboard to Practice **PERSONAL EVANGELISM**

## Reaching the Unchurched in Altavista

**It's** not often that you hear of a church leading 16 people to Christ at a singular outreach event, but that's just what happened with **Calvary Baptist Church** in Altavista, VA.

It all started at Uncle Billy's Day in June 2017, an annual community gathering to celebrate Billy Lane, one of the founders of the town. Food vendors and live music draw a crowd from all over Altavista. Led by 24-year-old Pastor Seth Peterson, Calvary used the two-day gathering as a springboard for church members to practice personal evangelism.

"What's been great about the salvations that we have experienced [20 in the summer of 2017 alone] is that these kids and adults are coming to our church now," Peterson said. "We've been able to plug many of them into our Next Steps membership class, and we have baptized six people with many more wanting to be baptized."

Uncle Billy's Day is not the only community event Calvary has used for outreach purposes. They also hosted a basketball tournament and barbeque to raise money for local firefighter David Cox, who was diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy. The church raised over \$6,500 from around 30 sponsors in just 5 days.

For Calvary Baptist Church, these outreach efforts have a specific and concentrated goal of reaching the unchurched in the Altavista community.

"We've had the opportunities that we've had because we've gone out into our community," Peterson shared. "There is a misconception that if we just wait for people to come to the church, then that's when we can get the Gospel to them, but I really think that Jesus always went to where the sinners and the lost were. That's what we want to do."



*Pastor Seth Peterson*

Peterson became Calvary's pastor in early 2017 after SBCV regional missionary Shawn Ames helped connect the two.

"We were able to identify a church that wanted to do what Seth had the ability to lead them to do," Ames explained. "We, as the SBCV, try to connect the dots for churches to try to find for them a candidate that fits what the church needs."

According to Peterson, SBCV was instrumental in last summer's outreaches, providing ministry experience and practical resources.

"We really could not have done the ministry, events, and community fundraisers that we did [last] summer if not for the SBCV," Peterson said. "Having people like Shawn Ames and Rusty Small available for help and advice is amazing."

Despite his young age, Peterson says he is confident—not because of his own ability but because of God's infinite ability. "We often overestimate what we can do and underestimate what God can do."

Uncle Billy's Day is evidence of what God can do with a church that is committed to sharing the Gospel in its community.

■ CALVARY'S WEBSITE: [calvarybaptistaltavista.com](http://calvarybaptistaltavista.com)

