

Katy church sees rapid growth in baptisms

April 1, 2024

KATY—Bear Creek Baptist Church is seeing growth—the kind of growth many churches dream of. With 60 baptisms since the beginning of 2024, the church is baptizing new believers about every week.

Is this revival, or is there a secret recipe? Some of both, according to Tim Hill, executive pastor of Bear Creek.

Bear Creek's campus is located in an area of high visibility, Hill said. People pass by it regularly—many people.

In a video on the church website, Lead Pastor David Welch said the neighborhood within five miles of Bear Creek has grown by more than 15,000 households.

“That's over 35,000 people in just the last three years. And it is projected to grow by another 15,000 households in the next five-seven years,” he said.

Bear Creek invests in reaching out to those new arrivals, Hill said.

Building a reputation



Bear Creek Church (Courtesy Photo)

“Our church is really great about reaching out and inviting people,” Hill explained. “We also really try to have a strong presence in our community. We partner with two local elementary schools through our school district.”

Weekly worship services include clear presentations of the gospel, Hill said.

“Our vision statement is that we are a gospel-centered, disciple-making community. ... It’s not a light sharing of the gospel,” Hill said, noting the church clearly talks about sin, the need to turn from sin, and the gift of salvation.

“We share the gospel clearly, and people are responding,” he continued.

Hill credits the congregation’s work in the community, their visibility and their systems in helping to make Bear Creek become a place where seekers go.

Over time, they’ve developed a reputation for being a church where people feel like they belong, Hill said. Their membership process even is called “Belong.”

As prospective members move through this process, “they really find a home,” Hill explained. “And I think it’s kind of like momentum. Once you get that rolling and moving and you create that culture in your church, it just occurs organically [that people will come to your church].”

Vacation Bible School always has been a really big thing at Bear Creek, Hill said. They even carry it up through middle school age, which they call VBX.

Bear Creek is intentional about having invitation strategies. They are intentional about putting resources into the hands of their people to use in inviting.

And their staff is very goal-driven, which creates focus, Hill said. They set fall, spring and summer goals, which may be adjusted as needed. Each set of seasonal goals has three areas of focus. One current goal is focused on attendance.

“So then, you look at what drives attendance,” Hill said. “Invitation strategy, creating excellent experiences for people when they come to church—it’s making sure that when they come, we lead people to encounter Christ, grow in their faith and take next steps.”

Hill said they want to connect people to the church, not just see them make one-time decisions. Baptism is an important next step that is emphasized.

So, they set goals. “But then you have all the work to reach the goal. When someone visits our church, they go into a system where they are followed up with in specific ways in week one, week two,” Hill explained.

The system management falls to staff. And it is a part of every staff meeting every week.

Setting smart goals, which they check with a scorecard, they “track where

every person is in the system so that to the very best of their ability, they don't drop anyone through the cracks."

They utilize the church community builder database in [Pushpay](#), for systems management.

Hill said in order for laypeople to handle systems management, "you would have to have high-capacity volunteers who almost serve your church like it is their job. And there are some of those out there, but they are rare."

Trusting the Holy Spirit, too

"I think every church leader would recognize, we do all the work we can and we pray, and we seek the Lord and we work really hard. But in the end, we also just have to depend on the work of the Holy Spirit," Hill said.

For the last two years Bear Creek has been recognized as one of the 100 [fastest growing](#) churches in the United States by Lifeway and *Outreach* magazine. Presently, "attendance is 13 to 14 percent over last year's attendance at this time," Hill said.

More than half the 60 baptisms so far this year were of adults, from both the Spanish- and English-speaking services.



Danny Quintanilla, discipleship and missions director for Bear Creek, spoke about one Spanish-speaking man who recently joined Bear Creek and requested to join a life group.

When Quintanilla asked the man what brought him to Bear Creek, the man reported he regularly passed a large sign—written in Spanish—in front of the church, advertising the Spanish language service. He felt like he needed to come to church, and then decided to try this church.

Quintanilla and Hill spoke of other recent baptisms. One young woman is from a Muslim background. Her conversion to Christianity led to rejection from her family.

A church member offered her a safe place to stay and other members gave generously to secure a car for her to continue working.

Her family would allow her to come home if she renounced Jesus. But her commitment to Christ has not been shaken. She remains estranged from them, while praying for God to work in her family situation.

Carl Mayer is another who was recently baptized, at 75 years old. He said his Nigerian caregiver invited him to Bear Creek last year.

Many others had invited him to other churches through the years, but his past experiences in church and in life were negative.

He went to a couple of “holy roller” services with his grandparents in Kentucky as a child, he said, but “they scared him to death” and he had to go outside the tent and wait.

Then he tried a Baptist church where he came from, but the minister wanted more than \$300 to baptize him.

“So, my mom threw that minister out of the house, and that was the end of that.”

Mayer said he “never thought about church again until recently.”

His caregiver saw what he was dealing with, he said—sadness, anger, hurt

from a troubled life and trauma he endured in childhood that has “stayed with him.” So, she invited him to come with her to Bear Creek. This time, when a friend asked, he went.

It was Easter Sunday last year, and he was “blown away” by the minister. He visited several times, always thanking the preacher for the message that was so touching, but not giving his name. He was too “shy,” he said, due to all the hardships he faced in childhood.

But he decided he was ready to take the next steps and be baptized. He thought he was going to drown when his legs, which don’t work as well anymore, came up. But, he said, now he “feels entirely different.”

He feels calmer since trusting Jesus.

“I’m even singing now,” he said, quietly laughing.