

# Making the most of every

How Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale is harnessing technology to expand their reach

## QuickFACTS

- location: Ft. Lauderdale, FL
- began in 1985 with 4 people who moved to Ft. Lauderdale from Calvary Chapel of Las Vegas
- second largest of 850 North American churches affiliated with Calvary Chapel
- attendance: over 17,000 every week!
- growth: added 6,050 in attendance since 2000
- average 100 salvation decisions per week!

# message



**“Do things with technology that still get the Word out, but don’t go away from the Word.”**

— **BOB COY, SR. PASTOR,**  
CALVARY CHAPEL FORT LAUDERDALE

### Who is Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale?

“Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale is an outreach fellowship of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, California. The senior pastor there is Chuck Smith, and he, in the late ‘60s, early ‘70s was incredibly instrumental in saving “hippies.” By providing a place for the outcast to call home, some of those hippies have become the pastors of large churches today. I wasn’t in that mix, but then shortly afterward I became a part of that mix, and I could tell that in the Calvary Chapel atmosphere, there was an acceptance and a welcome to anyone and everyone. It was that, I think, that lead me to believe that we could do something similar on this coast.” - Pastor Bob Coy

Watch clips from our exclusive interviews with the Calvary Chapel team at [www.visionondemand.net](http://www.visionondemand.net). Free to subscribers!

Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale was listed as number 12 in a study of the 100 Largest Churches in America and number 13 on the list of 100 Fastest-Growing U.S. Churches of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.\* In fact, hundreds of visitors come to Calvary Chapel, with about 100 people getting saved each weekend. The multi-ethnic flavor of the congregation and staff reflect the surrounding community of Ft. Lauderdale (out of 45,000 new residents last year,

\*Dr. John N. Vaughan's 2004 Church Growth Today Survey, [www.churchgrowthtoday.com](http://www.churchgrowthtoday.com)



over half of them were born in another country!)

With success indicators like this, it would be easy to think that this church has it all figured out. Yet, we found that Calvary Chapel is asking many of the same questions that are sparking debate among churches throughout the United States about creativity and multimedia: How much is too much? How do you avoid getting stuck in the cycle of having to “beat yourself” with something more elaborate every weekend? How should the style of their services change as culture changes?

Calvary Chapel is dedicated to keeping their main thing – teaching the Word – the main thing, and it shows. From Senior Pastor Bob Coy down to the techiest technician, everyone we spoke with was concerned first and foremost with making disciples through solid Biblical preaching and teaching. Everything they do is measured against that goal, including their use of technology.

Their willingness to learn and grow with technology is part of what makes Calvary Chapel so authentic, a quality attractive to younger people. Concerning the sanctuary’s environment, for example, Pastor Bob intentionally takes a laid-back approach: “This is the house of God, and if it’s a house, we need to behave like it’s a house.” To make their 4,000-seat auditorium feel as welcoming as a living room, they turned to IMAG technology. It’s a paradox that is nonetheless true: A big face on a big screen makes a big room feel like a living room.

Their worship also reflects this sense of community and emphasizes participation. Clay Hecoeks, Pastor of Worship, strategically de-emphasizes his role as worship leader. His team includes about eight other worship leaders on one side of the stage while he stays seated at the piano on the opposite side of the stage. This naturally draws the congregation’s eye to the cross in the center. With IMAG during worship, they rarely show close-ups of Clay or other worship leaders, choosing instead to focus on song lyrics and close-ups of people playing instruments (hands on a keyboard, for example).

While the screens play a prominent role in drawing a

### Meet Rod Percy – Director of “Are Not”



“You know the scripture that says ‘And he uses the things that are not to nullify those that are’? ...I’m the guy that “are not”. I “are not” the video guy, I “are not” the art guy, I “are not” the web guy, but God has put me in a position that I’m able to communicate ideas to those folks that free them up to do what they do well. Even though I don’t do it, I’m the conduit.”

Check out video clips of our in-depth interview with Rod to see how he helps creative people focus on the Message. Free to paid subscribers on [www.visionondemand.net](http://www.visionondemand.net).

large congregation together, you won’t find much glitz on them, and the sanctuary won’t feel like a concert. You will find over 17,000 people getting together every weekend to hear the Word. Forget multimedia and creativity? NO WAY – it’s still part of what they do, but it’s tailored to help them do what they do. In fact, Calvary has strategically invested in high-quality technology

because it provides an extension for teaching the Word that wouldn’t otherwise be possible.

For example, their cameras serve quadruple duty providing IMAG in the sanctuary, video for four on-site overflow auditoriums, and recording for streaming on the web and their television broadcast, called *The Active Word*. Calvary Chapel places a high value on making sure technical shortcomings don’t get in the way of the Message. As a result, they’ve invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in the four cameras they use for each service. As their TV broadcast grows, they plan to invest in even more cameras.

Is that large of an investment worth it? While *The Active*



Weekend worship at Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale.

# SEACOAST CHURCH

## CONFERENCE

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Word is reaching people across the country, [calvaryftl.org](http://calvaryftl.org) is already reaching people around the world. The website features a complete archive of Pastor Bob's weekend and Wednesday night Messages dating back to 1991. Carl Mims, Director of Communications, tells us, "There are no less than 100 people at any time watching the archive – 24 hours a day." Great teaching and content is not just used in one weekend. It can speak to people's lives over and over around the world. Web visitors can search by subject, book of the Bible, name, etc. These online messages have become very popular for use in small groups, Carl says, not just at Calvary Chapel, but at churches around the country.

Calvary Chapel also uses technology extensively in one of the most innovative children's programs we've seen yet. Their use of technology is focused on using creativity to keep kids' attention and get them involved. The role of technology is still the same... to teach the Word. Since



kids are accustomed to video everywhere they go, the children's ministry teaches the Word using media that kids understand.

Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale has found a way to use technology in a manner that suits their style and calling. Pastor Bob says, "Do those kinds of things with technology that still get the Word out, but don't go away from the Word. Otherwise we'll just be a performing

arts center, and there's no power in a performing arts center if God's Word is not going to be honored." As our society becomes increasingly visual, how will Calvary Chapel continue to reach young people? Bob candidly says, "Let me tell you something, I'm learning. I'm learning from the guys that you guys are taking the time to go out and investigate. I think we all are." ■