



# BLUE-COLLAR • Church replant picks up the torch

**Thomas Gensler** wonders if his childhood church and pastor ever imagined him filling the same pulpit. “I don’t think so,” he said. “I think he was like, ‘Man, this kid, I just hope he stays with it.’”

But Gensler remembers those faithful leaders fondly. “They loved us and supported our family. And I think every generation there has to be torch carriers, right? I feel like this is what the Lord’s called me to do.”

What the Lord has called him to do is plant a new church, Logos Church, in what was once his childhood church, Calvary Southern Baptist of Decatur. Research across denominations shows about 4,500 churches close each year. Surprisingly, most are neighborhood churches in mid-size and large cities, like Decatur.

Gensler knew he wanted to plant a church and had a heart for his childhood neighborhood. He reached out to **Kevin Jones**, Church Planting Director at IBSA. “We contacted (Calvary’s) leadership and just started seeing where God was leading in the process,” Jones said. “Thankfully, they were wanting to see what God was willing to do.”

Extended decline can leave churches feeling hopeless. “They think there’s only one option, just closing the doors. I’m excited that we get to give them a different option,” Jones said. “What excites me is the fact that we can come in with you and help revive this and replant this church to where it’s a life-giving church again.”



JONES

After much prayer, Calvary decided to replant—to close the church, make big changes, then relaunch under a new name and ministry style and led by a new pastor, Gensler.

His roots in the church’s past and respect for former leaders makes Logos Church feel more like resurrection than new birth. “The mailbox out front, my grandfather hand-built. He was a sheet metal fabrica-



tor. My parents got married, they walked down these aisles,” he pointed out.

But with a new approach to ministry, the energetic church planter has his sights set on reaching unchurched people from the adjacent apartment complex and grade school. He sees the church as a missionary to this neighborhood. Yet his real goal is just to be faithful.

“I hope that the people who previously were a part of Calvary for the last 70 years would be thankful and proud that I was faithful to shepherd the people that God’s entrusted to my care under this new work.”

