



First Baptist Dallas

How Cloud Storage Helps One Texas Church Deliver a Modern Digital Ministry



250TB

Backed Up

Situation

First Baptist Dallas, a large multi-generational church community, was storing over 250TB of archival footage on physical tape in a server room. They needed an affordable way to create an active archive of fresh footage while also backing up historical files, without interrupting video production for their highly popular broadcast ministry.

600GB

Synced Weekly

Solution

First Baptist Dallas didn't want to keep expanding their on-premises storage indefinitely and committing to forever ballooning hardware costs. Their media workflow integrator CineSys recommended Backblaze B2 Cloud Storage combined with Axle.ai, a media asset management system, to streamline their workflow and give them a storage solution that would scale with them as their media footprint grew.

100%

Instant Access

Result

The church started backing up new sermons immediately upon implementing Backblaze, and they have already backed up 10+ years of handpicked archival footage. Accessibility was also a major benefit for the video production team; editors can immediately access and download footage as often as they need to, with no interruptions to the workflow that produces broadcast-ready versions of each sermon.



First Baptist Dallas is a large, multi-generational church community dating back to 1890. Their mission is to transform the world with God's word, one life at a time. Across their local, national, and international ministries, First Baptist Dallas uses four key strategies to empower their congregation: worship, equip, serve, and influence. From worship services and Sunday school programs to discipleship, fellowship, and mission opportunities, the church conducts programs both in-person and through streaming and broadcast media to keep their community connected and engaged, no matter where they reside.



All Images Provided by First Baptist Dallas

Migrating Years of Church Footage to the Cloud

First Baptist Dallas has been ahead of the media curve since they issued their first radio broadcast in 1921. Over the past 100+ years, the church has expanded from a consistent radio presence into satellite, broadcast, and streaming audio and video ministries that reach a global audience. First Baptist Dallas' broadcast ministry, Pathway to Victory, recently became the most watched program on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, the world's largest religious television network.

"The church has always felt that media is an important part of the things we do," says Steve Reed, First Baptist Dallas' Minister of Worship

Production. When he joined the team in 2018, Reed found that he had inherited a huge on-premises content archive crammed into a single server room on the church's physical campus. Much of it was stored on physical media, from 1940s era reel-to-reel tapes to Betacam cassettes.

"One of the things that used to keep us up at night was that if anything happened in that room, we would have lost everything," Reed says. When he explained that dire situation to the First Baptist Dallas executive and administrative teams, everyone was on board with finding a better solution. It was time to move to the cloud.

“ If somebody needs the clean feed from last Sunday in Apple ProRes LT, they can just go to Backblaze and download it right there.

Dean Hemmeline, Video Asset Manager, First Baptist Dallas

Two Sunday Worship Services Means More Than 1.4TB of Footage Each Week

First Baptist Dallas runs a complex camera setup. Until about 2013, worship events held in the church's historic sanctuary were recorded using five SD cameras shooting 480p. On Easter of 2013, the church moved into a brand new worship center and upgraded to seven HD cameras shooting at 720p. "That more than quadrupled the size of each Sunday's capture files," says Dean Hemmeline, First Baptist Dallas' Video Asset Manager. The video team went from capturing about 300GB of footage to as much as 1.4TB in a single Sunday.

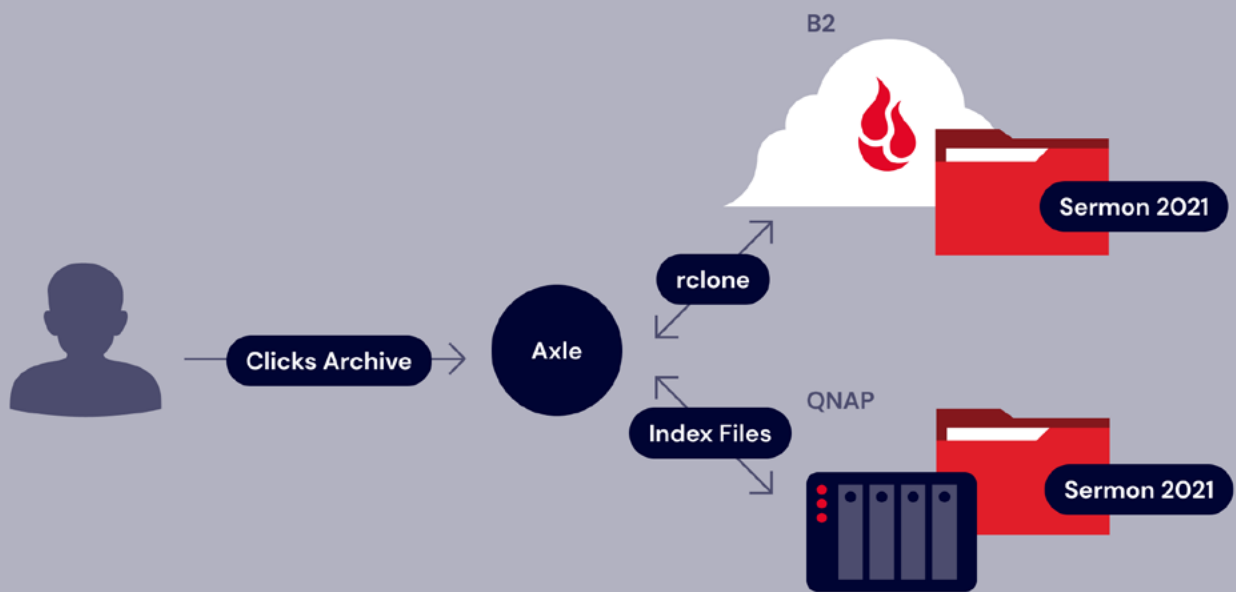
James Johnson, First Baptist Dallas' Chief Video Engineer, manages that vast content archive. In addition to overseeing backups and retrievals, Johnson has to ensure that the church's team of video editors have read and write access to the files they need with minimal downtime. To balance accessibility concerns with cost efficiency and the nightmare of disaster striking their physical storage, the church considered two options:

either expand their on-premises storage space with redundancy rooms and a whole slate of new hardware, or migrate to cloud storage.

CineSys, the church's technology vendor, recommended Backblaze right off the bat. The fact that Backblaze had worked for other houses of worship helped First Baptist Dallas finalize their decision: "We wanted something that other organizations had already had success with," says Johnson. "CineSys recommended Backblaze with confidence, saying 'Once you do this, you're going to be happy.'"

After some internal evaluation, the church determined that there was no advantage to sinking even more investment into an expanded on-premises storage system. Not only was cloud storage a more affordable option, but it would also save the church from the long term expense of having to install, maintain, and replace a whole new set of servers with a limited lifespan.

"We saw great value in having Backblaze as our cloud storage," Reed says. "We knew all our footage was safe, even if something happened here on campus. It was a natural call for us at that point." "Then you get the bonus of security," adds Johnson.



“ **CineSys recommended Backblaze with confidence, saying ‘Once you do this, you’re going to be happy.’**

James Johnson, Chief Video Engineer, First Baptist Dallas



A Ten-Channel Workflow Takes Sermons From the Sanctuary to the Cloud

Since implementing Backblaze, First Baptist Dallas has backed up recordings from all new sermons directly into their Backblaze B2 bucket. The production team captures a “dirty feed” from the live stream of each service, which includes lower thirds, captions, call-outs, and a mix of all cameras. In addition they also capture clean isolated feeds from each of eight cameras (ISOs). Ingesting all those channels allows the church’s video editors to condense each sermon while respecting its intentions, using smooth transitions instead of jarring jump cuts.

The First Baptist Dallas production team uses Softron, a multi-channel video ingest solution, to feed two channels to each of the five Mac computers connected via fiber to the church’s main server. The team chooses which of the two Sunday services they want to broadcast, and then they upload the raw capture from a local QNAP NAS server into Backblaze using Axle.ai as their

media asset management system. They use Rclone to interface Backblaze B2 and Axle.ai, so they just have to click “add to archive” in the Axle.ai interface to complete the upload to Backblaze.

The process of digitizing that packed server room was already underway before they started moving to the cloud, so First Baptist Dallas’ migration of their older footage has also been seamless. Hemmeline handpicks clean footage and ISO files to back up based on their relevance to the Pathway to Victory program, which regularly re-airs older sermons. He has been working backward chronologically to upload those mission critical files to Backblaze, and at the time of writing has backed up more than 10 years of archival footage.

Content Is Easily Accessible & Primed for Growth

One of the most important successes of First Baptist Dallas' implementation was how easy the entire process has been. "It has gone so smoothly that we haven't had any issues," says Reed. Backblaze has also solved data accessibility issues that arise from the way the church uses LTO tape to back up non-elected master footage. They still keep archives older than 10 years as well as Final Cut Pro and Adobe Premiere project archives on LTO, as they're working their way backward to upload that footage to the cloud archive. "If I'm running an LTO archive job and I can't simultaneously pull something off LTO tape for our editors, I can pull the files out of Backblaze for the editors instead," Hemmeline explains.

First Baptist Dallas also recently transitioned from pay-as-you-go storage to capacity-based pricing with Backblaze B2 Reserve. This was a major benefit for Reed and his team, since they now handle payments in set dollar amounts invoiced

on an annual basis instead of charged monthly to a credit card based on usage. B2 Reserve's free egress and transfer were also a consideration, since in the past the church had been leaning on LTO tape backups to avoid download fees each time they wanted to work with archival footage.

"If somebody needs the clean feed from last Sunday in Apple ProRes LT, they can just go to Backblaze and download it right there," Hemmeline says. Keeping pace with all of the church's ministries requires the production team to sustain a set rhythm without interruption, and Backblaze facilitates that continuity.

In 2024, the church plans to upgrade their production quality to 4K. They expect that transition to once again quadruple every Sunday's file load, but they're no longer under threat of running out of physical storage space. "We've been around for 150 years and we plan to be around for a lot longer," Steve says. "But once we get into a groove, we stick with it until we see something is really going to change the way we do things." For First Baptist Dallas, Backblaze has proven itself worthy of the transition to a new way.

About Backblaze

The Backblaze B2 Storage Cloud is purpose-built for ease. It offers always-hot, S3 compatible object storage that supports your workflows via third-party software integrations, APIs, CLI, and web UI. And it's priced for easy affordability at rates a fraction of other cloud providers. Businesses in more than 175 countries use the platform to host content, build and run applications, manage media, back up and archive data, and protect and recover from ransomware.

backblaze.com