

## **BHBC - Forward Together Discovery Project**

On May 19, 2019 in the morning service and at the annual business meeting Matt shared with our members that we will begin the process of discovering a new name for our church. Below are a few answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

### ***Didn't we vote on rebranding our church in 2012? What has changed in the last eight years that causes us to consider this again?***

Over the last eight years we have transitioned to a new Lead Pastor, we have two new campuses and we have expanded our ministry outreach through our Reach, Race and Refugee initiatives. As a church, we have displayed high trust in each other as we have gone through these changes. There have been very high percentage approvals for all of the items that have come to the congregation to vote on before and after the rebranding vote of 2012. There is tremendous support from the congregation around each of our ministries and initiatives. As a church we have learned to accept change and be confident that our core beliefs will remain.

### ***What about the GARBC will we remain in it or leave it?***

We will remain in the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. We have been in conversations with representatives of the Michigan Association of Regular Baptist Churches and have learned that the GARBC and MARBC support excluding the word "Baptist" from the name of churches. Below is a statement from the MARBC Executive Ministry Director:

*I want to share with you my summary perspective of the GARBC and MARBC as it pertains to the use of the title "Baptist" in the church's publicly used name. Our association embraces the doctrinal commitment that has identified the movement since its inception. The Blythefield Hills Baptist Church articles of faith clearly declare an allegiance to that doctrine and an alignment with both the national and state association's doctrinal distinctives. The church chose at its founding in 1952 to embrace the doctrinal statement of the Grand Rapids Association of Regular Baptist Churches. This statement is also the doctrinal foundation used to form the Michigan Association of Regular Baptist Churches and is parallel to that of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. The "Blythefield Hills Baptist Church Statement of Beliefs" affirmed in May 2017 is a wonderful articulation of the former doctrinal statement. The subsequent statements which address key social and cultural issues from a biblical perspective are both doctrinally accurate and spiritually sensitive. We commend the church for its clear declaration of its doctrinal convictions.*

*We as an association appreciate and embrace our Baptist heritage. The proper noun "Baptist" identifies a clearly defined identity when used in its doctrinal and historical context. It is still the desire of our association that our partnering churches identify themselves as committed to Baptist doctrine and polity as declared in our association articles of faith and official documents. Our greatest concern for churches in our association is that they clearly declare and reflect these values in their teaching and practice. Many contexts will allow a church to implement or continue the use of the word "Baptist" as a part of a church's public title. Other situations may cause some local Baptist churches to choose a different way to publicly identify themselves to their community. Both the GARBC and MARBC recognize these cases and have developed a policy to help clarify and identify those sister churches who embrace our association doctrine and purposes while choosing to use a public title that excludes the use of the word "Baptist." - MARBC Executive Ministry Director*

Below is a link to an article from the GARBC addressing this conversation:  
[www.baptistbulletin.org/the-baptist-bulletin-magazine/a-properly-constituted-and-functioning-baptist-church-but-what-to-call-it/](http://www.baptistbulletin.org/the-baptist-bulletin-magazine/a-properly-constituted-and-functioning-baptist-church-but-what-to-call-it/)

***What has led the board to proposing a name change?***

As you know we strive to be a church that is not risk adverse and since becoming one church with three campuses, the board has been prayerfully considering the implications of being a multisite church. Our name Blythefield Hills Baptist Church, is a name that is based on a geographical location. With new campuses in Northview and Ensley, the board feels led to discover a new name that will represent the mission and culture of BHBC without being attached to a specific geographical location. We feel led to bring this change, as we have recent ministry initiatives, to expand our outreach potential and effectiveness to the greatest extent possible.

***What is the reputation of the name Blythefield Hills Baptist Church in the community?***

Through the past several decades BHBC has developed a strong positive reputation within the community. Our people have pursued helpful relationships and involvements in the lives of other people. We have a healthy appropriate relationship with local community leaders. We have a reputation for benevolence and compassion. We are known for having quality programs. We have cooperated closely with, even leading a movement with, other churches to have a healthy impact upon students in our local school districts.

The name Blythefield Hills Baptist Church has a good reputation in our community. Under this name God has used the people of His church to further His kingdom. We are not looking to change our name for any other reason than God leading the board to take this step.

***If the word “Baptist” is no longer in our name, will we miss some people?***

We are comprised of people who have come to our church because we have “Baptist” in our name. Some people have come to our church in spite of having “Baptist” in our name. We know that we all choose to attend this church, serve in this church, invite others to this church, worship God in this church, etc, all with the word “Baptist” in our name.

We know that “Baptist” does attract people to our church. We also know that the word “Baptist” keeps people from our church. We believe that by keeping the doctrine of the church in place, which we have had from the beginning, gives us the ability to change our name and still attract people who are looking for a “Baptist” church.

***Does a decision to drop “Baptist” from our name risk weakening the biblical foundation of our church?***

Throughout the discussion as a board, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to our doctrine and Biblical foundation, no matter what the name of our church becomes. Our leadership and our congregation stand firmly on the Word of God, majoring on the majors and minoring on the minors. The majors are non-negotiable. We all must continue to study our deeply held doctrinal convictions. We remain committed to the non-negotiable and convictions written in our confession of faith. Practices, methods and modes of communication must change with the times to be able to bring the unchanging Word of God in an understandable and life changing way to an ever changing culture, but the Word of God remains unchanged and unchanging.

***What is the timeframe for this process?***

Beginning in June 2019 we have had three teams of people meeting to begin the process. The focus of these teams has been on all of the elements involved in a name change. This includes but is not limited to understanding legalities involved, what is the difference between a doing business as (DBA) and a complete name change, what are the pros and cons to a name change, what could a new name be for BHBC, and how would we communicate this change to our communities. The members of teams are comprised of members, deacons and pastors.

The teams will report their findings to an Advisory Counsel once a month. This rhythm will continue throughout the church fiscal year of June 2019-May 2020. The Advisory Counsel is comprised of deacons and pastors.

We will be holding four Town Hall meetings during this process. At these meetings members and attenders of our church are invited to learn about where the teams are at in the process, what has been discovered and what the next steps are in the process. We will be sending out quarterly emails summarizing what was shared at the Town Hall meetings in print and links to audio from the meetings.

Thank you for partnering with us in prayer as we move forward together.