



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Opening Doors | Reaching People

Why is the church board proposing these initiatives?

With the Embracing God's Call initiative complete, the church board entered into a time of prayerful consideration and discussion. They sought God's direction for what He wanted to do next through the people and ministries of BHBC.

The board asked the following questions: "How can we open our doors to reach and disciple people toward becoming whole hearted followers of Jesus Christ? What obstacles are preventing people from engaging the ministries of BHBC – especially families? What are we hearing from our congregation and staff as they attempt to reach their family, friends and neighbors? What are we hearing from those who are new to BHBC?"

As the board asked these questions, what they heard fell into the three categories: How is BHBC known, how do we express what we believe to our culture and how do families experience BHBC. These categories then developed into the proposals the board has brought to the congregation. Those proposals are: change the name of our church by dropping 'Baptist' from our name, update our doctrinal statement by adding a contemporary expression in the form of a biblical story, and change how families experience our church by enhancing our home-base facility through reconfiguring and updating portions to make it more functional and friendly.

Below are some commonly asked questions about those proposals.

Proposal: Name Change

Were other names considered in addition to Blythefield Hills Church, particularly 'Bible' or 'Community' in place of Baptist?

A great deal of thought went into the recommendation of Blythefield Hills Church. Our first consideration was Blythefield Hills Community Church. Research showed 416 Bible churches in the greater Grand Rapids area and 168 Community Churches. We consulted two marketing firms, one of which recommended that we use a geographical name like Blythefield Church. The geographical reference fit our biblical thinking since early churches were often known by location: the church at Cenchrea, the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church at Smyrna. Because Blythefield Christian Reformed Church is just down the street, we made the decision to propose Blythefield Hills Church. In addition to geography, the name 'Blythefield Hills' maintains a strong connection to our historical name. And, many already refer to us simply as Blythefield Hills.

The name Blythefield Hills Church also preserves our name recognition in the community. Through the past several decades the people of BHBC have worked hard to grow meaningful, redemptive relationships among friends and neighbors. BHBC has fostered healthy relationships with local

community leaders. Our church has a reputation for benevolence, compassion, service and quality programs. We have cooperated with regional churches with the goal of having a spiritual impact upon students in our local school districts. We have gained a respected foothold in our community – even with the perceptions that come with a denominational connection.

So, for the reasons given above we recommend the name Blythefield Hills Church.

If we drop ‘Baptist’ from our name, won’t we miss people looking for a Baptist Church?

We recognize the Baptist distinction is known for sound biblical doctrine and strong evangelistic efforts. We want this to always be true of our church – no matter our name. As we listened and talked as a board we discovered that most of our visitors and new regular attenders come by invitation, reputation or web research. We pray that invitation and reputation will always be characteristics of our church culture. In regard to technical searches, we have embedded in our website specific tags and key words that will cause our church to be part of the results when people conduct web-based searches for a Baptist church in our area.

Proposal: Update to our Doctrinal Statement

Why are we proposing to expand/revise our doctrinal confession statement?

Younger culture is largely oriented to a way of thinking that is story-based. For the last 31-years, BHBC has emphasized the biblical narrative – from Genesis to Revelation – in the form of five majors. This story form makes what we believe more memorable. It also fits the gospel into an historic, biblical context. The proposed updated confession will serve as a more relevant, understandable witnessing tool. It can also be used as a solid catechism for adults and children. For those who prefer the systematic nature of our historic confession statement, it will remain available to them.

Why are we changing the constitution along with the doctrinal statement of our church?

Our constitution states the formal name of our church. Therefore, to be correct in our documentation we must revise the constitution if we change the name of the church.

How will we maintain the biblical foundation of our church if we change our name to Blythefield Hills Church?

The leadership and congregation of Blythefield Hills Baptist Church stand firmly on the Word of God. Some things are non-negotiable. We call these majors (i.e. Creation, the Fall, Redemption, the Church, the New Heaven and Earth). We remain committed to the non-negotiable tenets and convictions in our historic confession of faith. That is one reason for keeping our original doctrinal confession statement as the solid under-pinning of our updated confession. Practices, methods and modes must change with cultural dynamics so the unchanging word of God is presented in an understandable and life changing way. Still, the Word of God remains unchanged and unchanging.

Proposal: Facility Enhancements

How will reconfiguration and enhancement the facility assist us with reaching people?

To have a long term impact with our mission of “Always Making Disciples” we must strive to be a healthy, vibrant, effective local church. A solid home-base is necessary for continued reach into the local, regional and global mission field.

We have recognized for years that our location in the heart of the Rockford school district means we are part of a family oriented community. So, we set a priority on families. We seek to develop strong, helpful ministries to children, youth and parents. We do this in light of our community demographics and because we must pass on the truth of Scripture to the next generation.

Portions of our current facility were designed for ministry on a much smaller scale. God has blessed. More families are coming to BHBC. Some modest reconfiguring and updating will bring greater effectiveness to our efforts to minister to families. The proposed reconfigurations will help families experience our facility in ways that reflect our vision to grow households centered on Jesus Christ.

How will any reconfigurations and updates be prioritized? Will there be phases?

The overall project will be divided into phases. The phases will be prioritized by evaluating the greatest impact in relation to the funds available.

What is the funding plan?

We are asking the congregation to approve the use of our current building fund, and future money designated to that fund, for any building and grounds reconfigurations, finishes and updates. We are not planning to take on any debt. We expect these improvements to take 4-7 years. Some phases may be subdivided to accomplish what we can as we are able. For instance, one phase includes reconfiguring the space under the current student center at an estimated overall cost of \$776,000. This will likely be broken into manageable parts, like removing interior walls first and then changing hallways and room locations/sizes as funds are available.

We have made every effort to build contingency into the overall proposal to cover potential cost changes over the estimated 4-7 years. Further, volunteer labor – which the people of BHBC have historically offered with great enthusiasm – will result in a significant cost savings.

How will this impact our support of regional and global missions and ministries?

As mentioned above, our plan is to use the building fund for these improvements and only initiate phases as funds are available. Our general operating budget remains separate from the building fund. Our vision is to have facilities that enable a strong, biblically focused, culturally aware ministry to our local community. A solid home-base will bolster our local, regional and global evangelism and discipleship efforts. It will also assist our ability to develop healthy partnership and significantly grow our support of missional activities long term.

We are a mission's minded church. Over the last three years, BHBC has directed nearly two-million budgeted dollars (\$659,000 per year) toward efforts that bring the love of Christ and the good news of salvation to people in our community, and around the world. Again, we want to continue to be a healthy, strong, mission-oriented church with a long-term vision for significant impact locally, regionally and globally for Jesus Christ.

General Questions

What about the GARBC? Will we remain active members, or leave the association?

We plan to remain associated with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) in a similar manner as we have for the last 31 years. This means people will find our church when they do a web search for GARBC churches.

What will it cost to rebrand ourselves with a new name?

If we choose to change our church name, the changes to our incorporation documents are simple and straight forward. The cost will be minimal. Also, in anticipation of a name change we are maintaining a limited supply of stationary, envelopes, etc. with our current church name. Changes to our logo and graphics on our website with the new name will be quick with little effort. The small cost of the changes to our legal documents and communication modes and materials can be absorbed within the current approved budget. Additional cost for signage will be part of the facility enhancement phases.