

Church Name Recommendation

Last year, the elders kept hearing of resistance from the community when church members tried to invite them to church. This resistance came down to our name: we were a *Baptist* church. In all reality, most of those people were probably guided by misconceptions about who Baptists are and what they believe. Nevertheless, it kept them from coming and hearing the gospel and seeing what Baptists really were all about it.

This set us thinking about how important the name ‘Baptist’ really was for our church. Are we a Baptist church? Yes! But is that what’s most important about us? No. Most important is that we know, and are accepted by, God through his Son, Jesus Christ. We are first and foremost *Christians*. Then, we asked ourselves if the name should be changed if it kept people from coming to hear about Christ.

Several weeks ago, after considering these questions, the elders recommended to the church that we change our name to better engage our community with the gospel. The church accepted that recommendation by vote at our January Members Meeting. After that meeting, the elders approved a re-naming team: Rachael Blaylock, Gene Keysor, Teri Skidmore, Denise Taglauer, Linda Yanna, and Pastor John Botkin. That team has been working to come up with a new name to recommend for the church’s approval.

This process of choosing a name involved taking suggestions, coming up with ideas, and evaluating all of these potential names to determine which would be best for our church. Here are the criteria the team used to think and pray through the names:

- The name should reflect that we are a Christian church.
- The name should not be one that is the same or too similar to other churches in our area.
- The name should reflect something of Christian belief.
- The name should reflect something of our church’s identity.
- The name should not be too long or too complex, making it too hard to understand or remember.

Based on these criteria, some names were eliminated quickly. The names were not inherently bad—they simply didn’t meet the criteria. Specifically, many of them were too close, or the same, as other churches in our area. Out of fifteen to twenty, six names made it to a short list of possible names. From that list, one name eventually stood out as the best choice.

Since this process proceeded more quickly than we imagined, we have the opportunity to consider the name that the team has chosen in time to use it in our Easter Outreach efforts. In order for this to happen, we will need to vote on the name next Sunday (March 21) in a special-called business meeting. If the church approves the name, we will be able to print up our outreach invitations to be handed out on March 26th and 27th.

So, after much prayer and consideration, the re-naming team and the elders are recommending the new name for our church be:

CROSSWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Here are some of the reasons that caused us to pick this name to recommend as our new church name:

- First, the name is unique to our area. The closest church that has the same name is in Grand Rapids.
- Second, the name is short enough that it's memorable for people and easily used for 'branding' (i.e. used in naming ministries in the church or creating designs for our website and outreach materials).
- Third, it already fits with church's website: livethecross.org.
- Along with this, it also fits our basic vision to a "cross-centered community."
- Fifth, we decided to change away from the name 'Bangor' for several reasons. One of which was that there is another Bangor Baptist Church in our State Convention, located in the city of Bangor, MI. Furthermore, newer people, or people from outside the Bay City area, are unfamiliar with 'Bangor Township.'
- Finally, and most importantly, it is a name that picks up several New Testament themes that are at the center of the gospel: the cross of Christ, sacrifice for sins, the way of salvation, Jesus being "the Way," the name of the early Christians, and more.
 - This is, we believe, the greatest strength of this name.
 - It shows that the very way of life is found in the cross of Christ.
 - Even in inviting people to visit our church, there is a 'built-in' potential for evangelism with this name.

In recommending this name today, we will offer some opportunities to ask questions about it this Wednesday and next Sunday morning. In the mean time, feel free to call or email the elders with any questions you may have. Then, on Sunday, March 21, the church will vote on whether or not to accept the name CROSSWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH. This vote will take place following the morning service.

Thanks for your prayers and considerations! Pray that God would use this decision to help us reach our city with the gospel for the glory of Christ!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor John

Pastor Joe

Pastor Richard