

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH RENAMING THE CONGREGATION

MAINTAINING OUR DOCTRINAL IDENTITY

Looking at the name *Sojourners Fellowship*, it could be assumed that we are becoming “non-denominational” or abandoning our heritage as a baptist church. This is not the case at all.

The term *baptist* denotes a specific doctrinal identity - specifically, baptists were identified by their commitment to the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, the autonomy of the local church, and to the identification with Christ through baptism by immersion. We will continue to embrace that doctrinal identity.

Our current cultural context does not put much weight upon doctrinal statements in the names of a church. Most people we are reaching do not particularly care what type of church we are because they know we are first and foremost identified with Christ. But we felt it was necessary to make some kind of identification with our doctrinal heritage. How could we strike the balance between our context and our commitment to Biblical truth.

We felt that this identification would be best made by continuing our affiliation with the Conservative Baptist Association. Our affiliation with the CBA gives those concerned about doctrinal identity a reference point without placing unnecessary barriers before those who Christ has positioned us to reach.



GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sojourn in this land, and I will
be with you, and will bless you.
- Genesis 26:3

THE VISION

Creating environments where people encounter Jesus and journey together.



SOJOURNERS

In reviewing our vision, the elders realized that what we do as a *church* really is the journey together. Our worship, our ministry - these things are just stops on the journey. And a *sojourn* is a stop somewhere, often for a long period of time, on the way to somewhere else.

What's more, as we looked through the Scriptures, we were repeatedly confronted with this idea that God's people are journeying through this life. This imagery pervades Scripture - from Adam and Eve journeying from Eden to Abraham's travels to the Exodus to those who have 'come to Mount Zion' in Hebrews. And in every context, our journeys on the earth are as 'sojourners.'



FELLOWSHIP

There were over 200 submissions for names over the past six months! Going through them gave the elders a sense for the heart of our congregation.

Our heart really beats for relationships - with one another but also with other churches. We wanted a name that reflected the intimacy of the relationships that exist both in our congregation but also to the 'Greater Church' - the work of Christ across the world.

We considered several relational terms but settled on *fellowship* because it best reflects the deep intimacy of the Greek words *koinonia* (community) and *ekklesia* (assembly or 'church') used by the New Testament writers to speak of the individual assemblies and their relationships to each other.

[They] confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth...But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he has prepared for them a city. -Hebrews 11:13, 16

