

**How Do We Reach an Ever Changing Culture With a Never Changing Gospel?**

# How Do We Reach an Ever Changing Culture With a Never Changing Gospel?

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Advent 2018 / Faith / Hebrews 11:1

## **Introduction**

**1. A Story — In 1968 Harwood Rd was the northern most boundary of Bedford.** A little gravel road ran north from Harwood Rd, a gravel road that would soon be paved and called Brown Trail. It led to the doorstep of a new subdivision called Harwood Terrace.

**2. A group of Christians at Bellevue Baptist Church** had a theological difference of opinion with other believers at the church and rather than foster disunity in their present church, decided to found a new one next door to the Harwood Terrace subdivision. **Since most people in Bedford knew of this new subdivision and it's location the new church chose the name Harwood Terrace Baptist Church.**

3. The next 50 years were marked by great highs and lows. God led many to faith in Jesus Christ both in Bedford and around the world through the ministry of the church.

4. **A lot has changed in 50 years. In 1968 the average Cost of new house \$14,950.00...Average Income per year \$7,850.00...Average Monthly Rent \$130.00...Gas per Gallon 34 cents...Average Cost of a new car \$2,822.00 ...Movie Ticket\$1.50. Churches sang hymns, played organs, everyone wore suits...it was the culturally accepted thing that you went to church and were looked down upon if you didn't.**

5. **America had little religious identity outside of Christendom. Most children knew the stories of the Bible even if they didn't go to church. We were only a few years removed from prayer in public school. Abortion was illegal as was same sex marriage. The culture and times were much much different than today.**

6. **Into this cultural setting the little group of people who founded Harwood embarked on a mission, a vision from God, to love God and lead others to Him...starting with Bedford, Texas.**

7. **Now we fast forward 50 years. We are in one of the most diverse cities in the United States. Trinity High School is *the most diverse* in the**

**United States. There is a mosque a block from where I stand to preach this morning. Prayer hasn't been in school for 55 years. People no longer wear suits to church, organ music is scarce, hymns have been joined with all types of praise and worship music with which we adore and worship God.**

**8. Most kids in Bedford couldn't tell you who Noah, Samson, Peter or Jesus were. To be in church or not be in church really doesn't matter nor does it affect your reputation. Abortion has been legal for over 40 years and same sex marriage for 3.**

**9. Into this cultural context we still meet at 3420 Brown Trail. We still embark upon our mission, a vision from God, to love God and lead others to Him.**

**10. The leaves us with a question...a very obvious and tough question....How do we reach an ever changing culture with a never changing Gospel? How do we engage 21st century men and women with a timeless message?**

**11. Today there are only three living members of the group who founded Harwood Terrace Baptist church 50 years ago. All of the rest of that original group are in heaven today.No longer do they identify by the name Harwood Terrace Baptist Church. They are simply known as the children of God...Christians...part of the Church of Jesus Christ. They cheer us on so**

**that we might continue, in our time, what they did in their own...Love God and lead others to Him.**

**12. So how do we do it? How do we, in our time, Love God and lead others to Him?** One thing we have to know from the “get go” is that we won’t do it by reaching into the past. There was only one “burning bush,” one man “swallowed by a fish,” and one “Noah.” God is always moving forward and doing things new in each generation. **To be a part of what God is doing in our own generation we must have faith for our future.**

**13. Too often people fail to have faith for their future because they are stuck longing for their past.** Longing for the glory days: methods, music and sights of a day gone by.

**14. Too many are pleading with God for a return to what they have seen, heard and learned in the past while God is looking for a people who will have faith for what He wants them to see, hear and learn in the future.**

**15.** Churches often fail at this...we like what we have seen, heard, learned and done. But God never wants us to live in the past...He wants us to enjoy, remember and give thanks for the past but He does not want us to live there.

**16. God wants us to live by faith and have a story of our own...a witness to encourage and bless future generations.**

**17. Faith is scary...it always creates a crisis**

moment where you will either believe, trust and step out into the unknown or run back to what is a seemingly safe and sure deal.

18. The irony is this...if we cease living by faith we eventually find ourselves on our own... separated from God's power, plans and provision...a very insecure kind of place in which we find the very opposite of the things we thought we would find by our safe choices.

19. There is only one safe place...only one secure footing...only one guaranteed blessing in our future...a life of faith in God.

20. **So this morning I present a challenge to our little church...a challenge to give thanks and celebrate the faith and triumphs of those who came before us while having faith for a future they desperately want us to have. A future in which we love God and lead others to Him in the 21st century.**

## Foundations

1. We have to get first things first. We must choose to love God both individually and together as a Body. Love happens in relationship. So **we want to encourage one another to a deeper relationship with God in 2019.**

2. **We will pursue a deeper relationship with God in 2019 by...**

3. **Reading the Bible Together**

**4. First — Every person in the church will be placed in a Bible reading group consisting of 9 people.** The leader of each group will invite you to join him through an app on your smartphone or computer called Youversion. We will read the New Testament through as a church family via this app twice in 2019.

5. We will keep one another accountable in our reading, discuss what we have read each day, meet with these groups as small groups regularly and learn to love God and His word more with each passing day.

#### **6. Praying Together**

**7. Second — We will begin a year long prayer meeting on January 1st.** We will have sign up sheets available for the rest of the month beginning today at the connect center. You may sign up for a 15 minute slot to pray. We will pray for one another, ourselves and God's work here at Harwood. The prayer meeting will go from 5am to noon each day for 365 days.

8. Each day you will receive an email from staff with current prayer requests for that day.

**9. Third — We will regularly fast and pray as a church to seek a closer relationship with God in 2019.** These will be regularly called fasts.

## **Three Columns of the Building**

### **1. Worship**

2. Worship is going to be a little different from now on.

**Our heart for worship is that we might come together to engage and encounter God through authentic, intimate worship.** We do this through prayer, singing, preaching of the word and response. (Describe worship here)

### **3. Discipleship**

4. We have already mentioned our corporate Bible study through Youversion, we have of course Sunday School and we will also begin a program of one on one discipleship. The goal is that each person in this church will always have someone they are discipling one on one...meeting with them weekly in order to do so. **Our heart for discipleship is that each member of Harwood would grow in his or her relationship with Christ and lead someone to do the same**

### **5. Mission**

6. **Our heart for missions to share Jesus Christ with every man, woman and child of the world beginning with Bedford Texas.** We will do this through a strategy locally, nationally and internationally.

## **The Roof Under Which We Operate**

1. There are two obvious things that we have to address as we move forward into God's calling on us in the 21st century...

2. **First — The building in which we operate has many challenges. We need to research the**

**structural issues of each of our five buildings and consider whether or not we keep these buildings and continuing to use 3420 Brown Trail as our base from which to do ministry.** If these buildings are going to become a money pit then we need to consider our options.

**3. Illustration — Piers not poured deep enough in our newest building and the pulling of walls away from the roof that is happening. Issues with our roofing...Gym, air conditioning, parking lot, etc.**

**4. If we do stay at this location then we are certainly going to need a much bigger remodel than we have undertaken so far.** We need to seek God for how we might pay for such a remodel...a remodel which would include both interior and exterior of our buildings. **A remodel which would make our building a testimony of good stewardship and great worth.**

**5. I am asking the Building and Grounds and Finance Teams to recommend whether or not the church remains at this location and if so how to finance the complete remodel of our facilities inside and out.** I am asking these recommendations to be made to the church in early Spring of 2019.

**6. Second — We have to consider if keeping our name Harwood Terrace Baptist Church is a help or hinderance to our mission.**

**7. A mentioned earlier Harwood Terrace was a**



**subdivision built near us 50 years ago. At that time it was a great geographical point of reference when describing where our church was located.** Today many of the people who live in Harwood Terrace subdivision itself couldn't tell you that they do so. We no longer identify ourselves and our homes by subdivision.

**8. Baptist was a great moniker in the day when people made decisions on what church to attend based on denomination however today people no longer do so. In 1968 the word Baptist was associated with missions, evangelism, Billy Graham and pot lucks. Today it is more often identified with politics, fighting and prohibitions against dancing**

**9. Thom Ranier, Baptist researcher did a poll on his twitter account asking, "What do you think of when you hear the word Baptist." His responses were: Legalism, Potluck, Immersion, John the Baptist, Traditional, Bible, Outdated, Southern, Boring, Conservative, Sound theologically, Fundamentalism, Hymns, Suits and ties, Missions**

**10. Often times people will prejudge us by the term Baptist while having no clue what our theology really is. If we tell someone we go to a Baptist church they think they know what our church is like, what it believes and its methodology all by the name Baptist. If you were to say you go to a community church they would ask what the**

**church was like, how it worships and what it believes...it opens up a conversation.**

**11. Many of our sister churches have dropped Baptist from their name while maintaining their Baptist theology and heritage in order to eliminate the obstacles that the word Baptist sometimes bring with it.**

**12. 121 Community Church, The Village and Watermark are all Southern Baptist churches just like us. They left Baptist off their marquee and it has eliminated many of the obstacles, prejudices and judgements that would have prevented many of their current members from ever walking into their doors.**

**13. The Village --The name of the corporation is Highland Village First Baptist Church.**

**However, as a means of eliminating obstacles that prevent people from exploring the claims of Christ through a local church, Highland Village First Baptist Church operates publicly under the name "The Village Church." This in no way separates us from our Baptist heritage but enables us to be more effective for the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**14. First Baptist Colleyville is now known as First Colleyville...Fielder Road Baptist Church is now known as Fielder Church. First Baptist Eules has more recently been known as First Eules and is soon to change its name to Cross City Church.**

**15. I am asking the deacons to research the issue of our name and how it relates to our mission and bring a recommendation to the church in the early Spring of 2019.**

## **Conclusion**

**1. “Only one life t’will soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.”**

2. Ultimately, our legacy is what we do with Christ during the time we live on this earth. All of those who have worshipped with us and have gone on to be with the Lord would plead with us this morning to have faith for a future...faith to do big things...God size things...to Love God well and lead others to do the same.

3. If we fail to have such faith then we will die.

4. Hebrews 11:1

**Hebrews 11:1 NASB95**

Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

**5. Sure of what we hope for** — There is a surety when God calls us to something. When He gives the vision we can be sure of the result. We may not understand how we are going to get there but in Christ we know when He says it is so, it is so, even when it is not so, because He has said it is so.

**6. Certain of what we do not see** — We cannot depend upon what we see or what we have known...we have to depend upon God and what He has shown us in our hearts by faith. Our eyes cannot yet see it but our hearts do and our faith shows us what He has placed

there.

**7. It is time for us to have fun again...to dream... believe big, trust big and expect great things.** It is time that we love God with great passion, love each other well and love the lost world around us too.

**8. It is time to fast, pray, seek the face of God and trust that He wants to make us part of something bigger than we have ever imagined.**

9. It is time to become something new in order to be a new witness for Christ in a world desperate for the Gospel our forefathers and mothers preached for the last 50 years.

10. I have no doubt in mind that I can speak for all of those who have gone before us...those surrounding us as a cloud of witnesses in heaven, urging us onward in the mission of our life...Run the race with faith and be a part of what God is doing in your own generation as we did in our own.