

# Venture Church Network: *a new name*

## Founding

The founding of the Conservative Baptist Association of America began out of questions of Biblical authority and the gospel. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, European enlightenment and German higher criticism infiltrated American seminaries questioning the miracles of the Bible and whether prophecies were written before or after the events they indicated. This eventually filtered down to American denominations, including the Northern Baptist churches, many who no longer affirmed the divinity of Jesus, his physical resurrection and other core historic doctrines of our faith.

By the 1940's, the NBC no longer required missionaries to hold to the core truths of our historic faith. However, there were many pastors and churches who were committed to the grammatical historic hermeneutic of the Bible as literal and to making sure that a clear good news of Jesus Christ was spread throughout the world. They wanted pastors and missionaries with the same love and conviction.

It was in this historical context, wrestling with these questions of faith, that in 1943, approximately 75 Christian leaders met in Chicago, Illinois to pray and seek a way forward. While on their knees in prayer, they took a history-making stand and started a mission agency called Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society (now WorldVenture). CBFMS, and later Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society (now Missions Door) were born to assist churches in training, sending, and supporting missionaries with an unwavering commitment to the authority of the Bible and the proclamation of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

These same churches that formed CBFMS/CBHMS, saw their denomination continue to move away from their historic biblical message. After three years of encouraging the denomination to return to its historic gospel roots, and at the risk of their church properties and personal pastoral pensions, in 1947, these churches moved away from their denomination and formed the Conservative Baptist Association of America.

## Name Change

After almost 75 years of ministry, we continue to embrace our historical heritage that took risks to move away from endangering the authority of the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ! At the same time, we have come to recognize that the language of our organizational name, “Conservative Baptist” is no longer serving our historic stance and network of churches well.

In 2019, the board and Regional Executive Directors (REDs) of Conservative Baptist Association made the decision to rebrand and change the name of our church network, including chaplaincy. This is due to the fact that the current name no longer connects with what it was originally intended to communicate. Over many years, churches and pastors have regularly communicated to us that “conservative” no longer communicates a theological position, but a ministry style as well as political and cultural position. Many churches do not communicate to their constituency their alignment with CBA due to the confusion of the name.

While we also value our Baptist heritage (priesthood of the believers, high value of Scripture, two ordinances, evangelism and missions, autonomy of the local church, religious freedom), the name “Baptist” is used by so many disparate groups, it no longer carries a clear meaning nor does the name have a solid reputation in many parts of our culture.

With a renewed movement by the REDs for a united identity across its 8 regions that make up approximately 1,000 churches and over 200 chaplains of CBA, we believed this is a good time to change our network’s name to something we have the opportunity to define and that reflects our focus. Enlisting broader voices, we looked for a name that would be consistent with our faith, our calling and with the broader CBA story.

After months of conversation and seeking the Lord in prayer, we were led to the name, “Venture Church Network.” We believe this name reflects the historical actions of our founders to take personal and corporate risk for the sake of the authority of Bible and the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It also reflects our renewed burden for the local church.

We recognize that a name change does not transform a network of churches. You can put lipstick on a pig, but it doesn't change the nature of the pig. Nor are we moving from our historic roots of the authority of Scripture and the centrality of the gospel. But this name change does allow us to create a context for moving toward taking some risky steps to better serve our churches and ultimately, the gospel.

One of the core definitions of “venture” is *advancing in the face of risk or danger*. As we renew our commitment to a national network, we believe many of our churches have been playing it safe and that the gospel has not advanced as it should. We also believe that we as a network of churches can do a better job in coming alongside of our pastors and churches...not to set agendas for the local church, but to simply curate the best in our network to help every church take the bold next steps that Jesus the Shepherd is leading them to take.

Like a ship that is built for dangers of the ocean and not the safety of the harbor, so that gospel message, while needing a safe harbor of biblical authority, is intended to be propagated throughout the world, no matter the risks. Today, we continue to embrace our ethos of taking risks for the sake of the gospel by our mission of *helping every church take bold next steps* to fulfill our vision of *advancing Gospel-centered transformational churches in every community we touch*.

## Our values

### Gospel Driven

... GOSPEL POWER THAT TRANSFORMS EVERY LIFE

*In the past, we moved away from a faithless gospel;  
Now we're moving toward a life-giving faith.*

We are committed to an expanding gospel movement through strengthening local church pastors and the churches they serve to boldly and strategically advance the gospel in their communities. Our conviction is every believer must be bold in engaging their culture with the good news of Jesus Christ, with a humility that we too need to be transformed, sustained, and renewed by that same gospel message. The gospel has to drive a lived-out faith that creates a culture of disciples loving God, and loving our neighbor, including caring for “the least of these.”

## Biblically Focused

### ... GRACE AND TRUTH THAT MEETS EVERY PLACE

*In the past we moved away from a disintegrating theology;  
Now we're moving toward an incarnational strategy.*

Our missional movement must be shaped by the grace and truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ—that Jesus came as the “Word made flesh” at a specific time and in a specific place. This truth applies to every place in our life, culture and world. We are committed and agree together to the core doctrines of Scripture as our final authority, calling us to a lived out faith. We acknowledge our theological foundation while we celebrate a variety of contextualized ministry forms that advance Christ’s mission.

## Disciple Making

### ... DISCIPLE-MAKING THAT EMPOWERS EVERY GENERATION

*In the past we moved away from a safe place to stagnate;  
Now we're moving toward a risky place to grow.*

Acts is the story of the gospel proclaimed, creating believers who are being shaped into the image of Jesus. These disciples are forming communities called ekklesias, with leaders and elders being raised to continue the movement of multiplication and strengthening of disciples and churches. This venture of believers and churches multiplied and empowered passionate leaders to advance a clear and biblically rooted gospel message with a tenacious contextualization. They advanced in the power of the Holy Spirit, despite context, risk, or danger. Our posture is to see the intentional raising up of next generation Christ-like disciples and leaders equipped to propagate the gospel for a never ending cycle of disciple-making.

## Relationally Committed

### ... FIERCE COOPERATION THAT ACCELERATES THE MISSION.

*In the past we moved away from meeting an historical obligation;  
Now we're moving toward choosing a synergistic partnership.*

Our conviction is that a healthy effective local church is essential for the gospel to flourish. While locally self-governing, the church and its leaders serve best in generous and cooperative interdependent relationships with other like-minded ministries and leaders. Together around the gospel. This provides space and freedom to risk, play, and dream in a secure environment of our relationships with one another and the Word. We believe the Biblical directive to spur one another on calls us to a "fierce cooperation" with each other in order to advance the mission of Jesus.