

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Thank you for your personal investment in this unique conversation. This document seeks to answer some of the foundational questions surrounding the proposed partnership between Gospel Community Rivermont and College Hill Baptist Church. We have submitted this process to the guidance of the Holy Spirit along with the cumulative wisdom from those who have navigated these waters before (as described in the books Better Together and MultiChurch).

At this point, we are faced with three options on how to proceed.

- 1. Plant an independent church at the Historic College Hill Baptist Church location following our [church planting](#) process.*
- 2. Help facilitate a connection between College Hill and another gospel-centered church, and thereby end our journey with the congregation (see “Models” section below).*
- 3. Merge with College Hill through a Rebirth merger and develop a second Gospel Community Church location.*

As you begin reading, you will find that this document addresses many questions related to the third option, as it is the most complex and has the greatest implications for our current church family.

However, no final decision has been made between these three options, and the details that follow are to the best of our current knowledge and may change in the future. We appreciate your flexibility and prayer as we seek to discern God’s will.

As more specific details emerge, this document may be updated to reflect those details. This document is intended to be thorough, but not necessarily “all encompassing;” any and all additional questions can be asked in personal meetings or during corporate Q&A meetings.

Thank you for praying with us as we commit this opportunity to the Lord.

-GCR Leadership Team and College Hill Committee

GLOSSARY: KEY TERMS DEFINED

Gospel Community Church (GCC) - The legal umbrella organization that provides centralized oversight of all current and future Gospel Community locations (including Rivermont and the potential College Hill.)



Gospel Community Rivermont (GCR) - Our local, informal “doing business as” name for all ministry and business related to the Rivermont campus of GCC.

Gospel Community College Hill (GCCH) - The potential “doing business as” name for all ministry and business related to the College Hill campus of GCC in the event of this Rebirth merger.

Centralized/Central - Shared resources, personnel, and programming used in service to all GCC locations.

Localized/Local - Resources, personnel, and programming specific to one location of the church, like GCR or GCCH.

Contextualized/Context/Contextual - ministry design and operational decisions based on the context, culture, needs, and people in each individual (local) church and neighborhood.

THE STORY OF THIS REBIRTH

1. What are we talking about? What is this?

We are prayerfully pursuing the uniting of two congregations, Gospel Community Rivermont (GCR) and College Hill Baptist Church (CHBC). The specific type of partnership that we are talking about is a Rebirth, in which a struggling or declining church gets a second life by being restarted under a healthy, vibrant, and typically larger church.¹ In this scenario, CHBC would be the joining church and GCR would be the lead church. The role of the leading church is to serve by providing the “primary culture that will continue”² as well as to work humbly to preserve the godly legacy of the joining church (CHBC).

The joining church is then reborn into the family, life, ministry, and culture of the leading church. As the joining church, CHBC recognizes its need for a healthy Rebirth in order to see its historic mission and vision carried out for future generations. As the leading church, GCR is adopting the congregation, history, as well as the real and financial assets of CHBC and will continue to establish the primary missional culture and vision.

During any transition, you can always expect some pain but the pain of doing nothing is greater than the pain of the changes that may come with a Rebirth.³

2. How did this opportunity come about?

¹ *Better Together*, p. 22.

² *Better Together*, p. 5.

³ For more information on the elements of a Rebirth, see Appendix A (Adapted from *Better Together*, pp. 22-29).



GCR was first introduced to CHBC in 2009. At that time, GCR was a new church plant looking to lease a Sunday morning location. In the last ten years, GCR approached CHBC a number of times regarding a ministry partnership but the Lord had not opened that door until the beginning of 2018.

After GCR successfully partnered with Rivermont Avenue Baptist Church, in January of 2018, CHBC reinitiated a partnership conversation with GCR. In its present state, it is difficult for the congregation of CHBC to sustain the ministry and operations of the church much longer.

At the same time, 1301 Rivermont is not large enough to sustain the growth of the GCR congregation. Rather than building a larger facility, GCR is interested in actively multiplying the congregation throughout our city.

In order to discern the viability of a potential partnership, both churches agreed to a two-phase approach. In Phase 1, GCR would temporarily take over the worship services and pastoral duties of CHBC. In Phase 2, GCR and CHBC would seriously investigate the viability of the uniting and prayerfully make a decision about moving forward.

3. Why are we considering a Rebirth?

GCR is considering this partnership with CHBC at Christ's prompting. During the process of joining forces with RABC, GCR knew that they would quickly outgrow the RABC facility. GCR has been praying for Jesus to open doors for gospel multiplication. They did not know when, or where, this would happen, but God clearly presented the opportunity to connect with CHBC. This potential partnership allows GCR to welcome a new group of seasoned saints and expand the work of the gospel in Lynchburg.

CHBC has come to realize that unless they do something drastic, they are in danger of having to sell their facilities, or worse, close their doors. It has become clear to CHBC that this partnership is an opportunity to continue the legacy of gospel proclamation on Floyd St and beyond. Being reborn into the culture and ministry of the GCR family will allow the saints at CHBC to reinvest themselves, and their resources, into the next generation.

In short, we believe that our communities could be served better, the Kingdom of God may be advanced in a greater capacity, and our two churches could be better together as a result of this partnership. If this were not true, neither church would consider this rebirth.

4. What are the benefits of this partnership?

The benefits of this partnership are primarily rooted in Kingdom impact and stewardship of resources. Together, our church families can potentially better serve our congregations and the community around us. Our congregations stand to mutually benefit from healthy, multi-generational diversification and shared resources.

In addition, CHBC gets the opportunity for a reinvigorated future and GCR is able to resolve the limitations of their current facility by multiplying the congregation. The investment into CHBC over the decades can be maximized rather than come to an end with the historic congregation and building given new life and utilized to its full potential.



MODELS

1. Will we use video venues or live preaching/worship?

Our conviction is that the gospel and the local church bring about flourishing when contextualized in a local community. As such, from the beginning, preaching and worship would be localized, not broadcast over video. We feel the Lord has led us to consider more local church based models, rather than video venues.

2. Will the sermon series be the same in both congregations?

We intend to share a preaching calendar at both congregations for the foreseeable future. There may be times when each congregation needs to address some location-specific issues, and as such we would allow space for these kinds of necessary departures from the shared preaching calendar, under the oversight of the Elders.

3. What is the difference between planting and multi-site?

Church planting is the commissioning of leaders and people to start a new work in a new place with a unique vision to function *independently* of the sending/supporting church(es). A multi-site or multi-church approach envisions shared vision, culture, and resources which would foster and *inter-dependent* church community.

MINISTRY

1. What is the perception of CHBC in the community?

College Hill Baptist Church is over 140 years old. This church's story in this community is significant, and the Lord has certainly moved in their midst. In this last season of transition, the church's dedication to be a gospel-light in their community has not waned. Though the resources and energy to carry out their mission has diminished over time, the church has used every means available to them to stay a faithful presence. They are hoping to experience a renaissance, of sorts, in their ministry life and missional presence in the community through this potential Rebirth Merger.

2. What ministries will continue at CHBC?

Both churches are currently, actively involved in serving, both inside and outside the church. There is some overlap with outreach partners (like Interfaith and Meals on Wheels). The ministry programming of both churches will likely be integrated and focused on the mission of the church and the needs moving forward. The leadership team of the new congregation will work with the leadership of GCR to recalibrate ministries, eliminate ministries which no longer accomplish their intended purpose, and initiate new ministries which may be necessary to serve the church and community better.

The committees of CHBC will be carefully considered and transitioned into teams, based on the commitment of the members and need for ongoing ministry.



3. What Ministries will overlap?

Building on the question above, we will prayerfully identify the core ministry design and corresponding programs/strategies for GCCH leading up to the launch date. Sunday worship gatherings (preaching, music, and other service elements), KidCity ministry programming, Gospel Communities, and some hospitality ministries would be examples of core ministries which would exist, contextualized, by the time of the official launch date. Our congregations would share a preaching calendar, though preaching will be local and contextualized. From time to time, other Sunday worship elements may be the same, other times they may differ.

4. What about other churches in CH neighborhood?

There are other churches, both old and new, in the College Hill community which GCR has had a developing relationship over the years. There are others, mostly historic churches, with whom we have little to no relationship. Members of our pastoral team have connected with some of the newer and older churches alike in the community and have sought to be a source of encouragement to them in this season. Should the Lord lead us to multiply our church on College Hill and move forward with this Rebirth merger, we would actively seek partnership with other local churches, as is our general practice currently at GCC. Should the Lord lead us away from this Rebirth merger, we would prayerfully consider pursuing other churches in the community to connect with College Hill Baptist Church as they discern their next steps.

As described earlier in the FAQ, it is important to note the 10-year storied relationship between Gospel Community Church and College Hill Baptist Church. Throughout this decade, the evidence of the Lord's providential and supernatural work has brought about a unique stewardship for GCR. We believe we must be faithful to see this relationship through until the end, whatever that may look like.

LEADERSHIP/STAFFING

1. When will you add pastoral staff to CHBC?

Our plan would be to officially dedicate a Campus Pastor at some point after the Rebirth merger became official. We would hire additional support staff as the need arose and as resources to meet the need became available. Administrative support would come from a central operations team, and ministry support will come from local volunteer ministry leaders.

2. How will this affect staff and lay leadership at GCR?

There will be an initial overlap in ministry and administrative function during the pre-launch phase. As GCCH gains infrastructure and momentum leading up to the time of the official launch, more of these functions will become the responsibilities of the local leadership teams. GCR will more than likely commission some of its lay leaders to serve at GCCH, and the need to continue to multiply leaders in both locations will be ongoing as we stay faithful to the mission of making disciples (Matt 28:18-20)

3. What will the leadership model look like?

This is an area that we are actively praying over and attempting to discern the wisest path forward. We do not have a final decision regarding this question; the models under consideration vary in implications, however,



there are some consistencies among them. In the event of the Rebirth merger, it is likely our structure would include local elders, staff and ministry volunteers, some expression of a central operations team, and a central leadership board comprised of Elders and possibly non-Elders, ***all with shared resources and a shared vision.***

All GCC congregations would remain Elder-led, and with strong staff oversight of the day-to-day operations.

4. How can we support the leadership at GCR/CH?

This season is one of intense prayer and discernment. Not every opportunity that comes our way needs to be acted upon. Our hope in this process is to discern a sense of calling, one way or another, from the Lord as we seek to steward this relationship between our two churches for the glory of God. For those who have experience or connections with those in the realm of church multiplication, insights are welcomed. Stay informed, humble, and flexible throughout the process. Should this ministry partnership continue and our church multiply, there will come a time when GCR begins to contribute substantial time, energy, resources, and people to this multiplication effort. Please prayerfully consider how the Lord might have a role for you in this process, should the time come.

5. Have GCR staff already been committed to GCCH?

At this point, the current point leadership serving at CHBC is our Outreach Minister, Tyler Cash. He has been the primary ministry liaison between our two congregations. He is under assessment by our Elders at this time to see if there is a mutual sense that the Lord is calling he and his family to serve in some way as a Campus Pastor, or a similar role, at CHBC should our congregations merge.

PROCESS

1. Who decides from CHBC?

College Hill Baptist Church is a congregationally-led church. Because of this it requires a majority vote in order to ratify any changes to their church structure, or make any legal changes to their organizational structure. A decision has been made in favor (93%) of a Rebirth by way of a congregational vote on 2/13/2019.

2. Who decides from GCR?

The vision, values, and by-laws of Gospel Community Church - Rivermont are lead by a two-part elder team.

Guiding elders make up the Board of Directors and are fully responsible to the state for Gospel Community's incorporation. Shepherding Elders exist to assist and advise the guiding elders on the pursuit of vision and mission and to ensure accountability measures are in place.

Both guiding and shepherding elders are responsible to love and care for the body as well as to be committed to the prayer and teaching of the word of God as defined in scripture. In addition to the Elder team, Gospel Community Rivermont is functionally led by a management team that is responsible for carrying out the mission and vision of the church. GCR will seek a unanimous vote of all three of these teams in order to move forward in the process of this merger.



3. How does the donation of assets work? Which assets should be donated?

If both College Hill Baptist Church and Gospel Community Church agree to Rebirth merger, CHBC will donate their assets to GCC by way of legal transfer. At this point all facilities, assets, and finances will begin to be legally managed by GCC.

4. How will the decision be made?

The affirmative congregational vote by CHBC now allows GCR leadership (Guiding and Shepherding Elders and Management Team) to consider the opportunity to move forward by way of intense prayer, an evaluation of Holy Spirit movement, direction from God, and financial and organizational feasibility. Once that evaluation has taken place, a vote will be cast by all members of these groups. If a vote is unanimous to pursue a Rebirth merger with CHBC, the legal process will commence. If the vote is no, additional options (independent church plant, an asset handoff to another local church or ministry, or the BGAV) will be considered.

5. What will happen if the vote for this Rebirth doesn't go through?

The Elders at GCC and the College Hill Committee (which has been guiding this process for CHBC) will reassess the opportunity and determine the exact next steps. GCC will likely continue to pursue additional opportunities for gospel multiplication in central VA. CHBC would need to determine how to move forward.

FINANCES

1. Does CHBC have any debt, and will we need to borrow money in order for this merger? What about the debt of GCR from the first merger?

College Hill Baptist Church has no current debt. It is possible that GCC will require a loan in order to make necessary improvements at GCCH, and to cover the legal costs of the merger, but our preference would be to raise all necessary costs up front. Regardless of this process, GCC will work to eliminate the debt from the first merger aggressively within the next three to four years.

2. What will this Rebirth cost? Can we afford it?

The legal costs for a donation of organizational assets and disillusionment cost somewhere between \$7,000-\$13,000. In addition, the first 12-16 months of transition as a new church family can cost upwards of \$275k-\$325k. Although these are general figures, they are not without precedent. As such, many similar facilities, legal and operational needs exist with CHBC as they did in GCR's initial merger process and have helped us to form these general estimates. Specific estimates and real costs will be obtained before a final decision by GCR is made.

In addition to the on-the-ground, practical costs, the vision for what we believe the Lord may be leading us into with College Hill will require us to raise funds to cover both the initial facility and equipment costs, as well as a portion of the operational cost of the first two years of the new congregation. For both of these expenses, we would seek the Lord as a church family as we prayerfully raise funds above the regular giving of both congregations.



3. Is it worth it to invest money in buildings like this?

There may be a new efficiency when it comes to creating gospel outposts that provide options outside of costly new builds, or warehouse renovations. That efficiency is spending money on refreshing buildings like the former RABC and current CHBC to build on top of a previous foundation of ministry and literally restructuring a tool to work for its intended purpose yet again.

Buildings that are over 100 years old can be both an asset, and thus an investment, or they can be a liability. Ultimately, in the kingdom of God, buildings are tools to be used for His glory and not worshiped. In this case we are assessing The Historic College Hill Baptist Church facility as a potential asset in the same way that we did the historic Rivermont Avenue Baptist Church facility. All of the assessment involved in this process will lead us to an answer of whether an investment in this particular building will be worth it to the glory of God.

4. Will all operations run under one budget? Will all giving be direction to one pool?

If a decision is made to move forward together as one church with multiple congregations it is likely that each congregation will have separate operational budgets, while other portions will be centralized. This will allow our congregations to take advantage of operational efficiencies while also allowing for appropriate and important budget tracking. Regardless, all donations will likely be made out to Gospel Community Church and budget needs will be assessed on a quarterly basis by the Gospel Community Church Finance team, and ratified annually. This would likely require representation from each congregation on the finance team moving forward.

FACILITIES

1. The feasibility/viability of the building itself?

CHBC was built in 1897, with other portions added many decades later. The facility is assessed at just under 1.4 million dollars by the City of Lynchburg, but is likely assessed at a much greater value for insurance purposes. The building has many beautiful and functional aspects while it also has a few vital needs for repairs and small renovations to maintain that functionality. As-is this facility could continue to be nursed along without a great deal of investment, but it would significantly hinder the ministry potential of the new congregation. Based on initial building studies, the facility itself is a viable resource for the kind of ministry GCC hopes to see flourish in the College Hill community. One additional factor that impacts the feasibility of inhabiting this building is that there are multiple endowments that could accompany the building.

2. Building maintenance, what needs to be done for the building to be ready?

The list of current needs that have been assessed include a roof replacement on the educational wing of the building, additional bathroom installations, upgraded electrical in many portions of the building, sanctuary audio and visual upgrades, HVAC repairs or replacements ,and access control installations.

3. Who owns the building where CHBC meets?

The building, along with all other assets, is owned, debt free, by CHBC, Inc. and in the even of a Rebirth merger, would be donated by CHBC, Inc. to GCC, Inc. before the formal, legal dissolution of CHBC, Inc.



CONGREGATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

1. How do we build a core team from GCR?

Should the Elders and Management Team of GCR decide the Lord is leading our two churches into a Rebirth merger, it is likely that the local leadership deployed to lead GCCH would begin building a core team of leaders around the ministry design of the new local congregation. Working together with the local leadership of GCR, the local leadership of GCCH would hold interest gatherings for local GCR members/attendees to prayerfully discern a call to be a part of supporting this new local congregation and to make GCCH their church home. The Lord may call people from all over Greater Lynchburg to join in. We would encourage those who live/work near College Hill to prayerfully consider making GCCH their new church home, and the place in which they serve by using their gifts, worship, and grow in community, and to invest deeply in the College Hill neighborhood.

2. Can you serve and attend at both locations?

During these early phases of prayerful exploration, many have decided to serve/attend both congregations. Initially, there may be a role for some GCR members/attendees to continue attending/belonging to GCR but serve as a support to the newly forming GCCH, and eventually return back to GCR as their church home. It would not be encouraged to attend/serve at both locations ongoing, though it may be the calling of some attendees/members in the beginning.

3. How can the congregation being praying throughout this process?

Pray for clear direction from the Lord among our Elder and Management teams. Pray for unity of heart and soul among our two congregations, no matter the outcome. Pray that the Lord moves in a way that is undeniable in our day, among our two congregations, for the sake of His name for future generations. Pray that this process would enhance, not distract, from our mission to glorify God by making disciples who love God, grow in community, and reach out with the love of Christ.

RISK ASSESSMENT

1. What are the greatest risks?

The greatest risks of a potential church Rebirth merger with CHBC are associated with the toll that it might take on each congregation and its leadership in the event that it proves to no longer be a fruitful venture. A process like this requires a significant investment of prayer, commitment and energy. If our congregations are not prepared for this type of investment, and are not led by the Holy Spirit, it is entirely possible that this will tax us beyond what the Lord has asked of us and could set both of our congregations back in our ministries.

There is also a financial risk involved as it will require a level of commitment from both congregations to pursue an agreed upon mission from God with unity. There is a possibility that we invest time and money into this



gospel-multiplication effort, and in the end not see a return on that financial investment if the campus proves to be unviable and we transition it into an alternative arrangement.

TIMELINE

1. If CH votes yes, what is the timeline for a merge?

On Wednesday, February 13th, CHBC voted in the affirmative to pursue a Rebirth merger with GCC (93% in favor). After a time of prayer, discussion, and discernment, the GCC Elders and Management team plan to arrive at a decision to either affirm or deny this opportunity for a Rebirth merger by March 31st, 2019. Should the decision be in the affirmative, then our desired launch date would be around or before January 2020.

