

**CANADIAN  
BAPTISTS**  
of Ontario  
and Quebec

# WHAT NOW NOW WHAT



3 TOOLS TO REVIEW WHAT  
HAPPENED IN 2020  
USING OUR BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES



# NOW WHAT? WHAT NOW?

## NOW WHAT?

The year 2020 started as an opportunity to cast a “20/20” vision. Instead, a worldwide pandemic brought restrictions that have blurred that vision and forced churches to ask, “Now what?!” Through the power of the Holy Spirit, churches have resiliently adapted and gotten back to the basics of ministry.

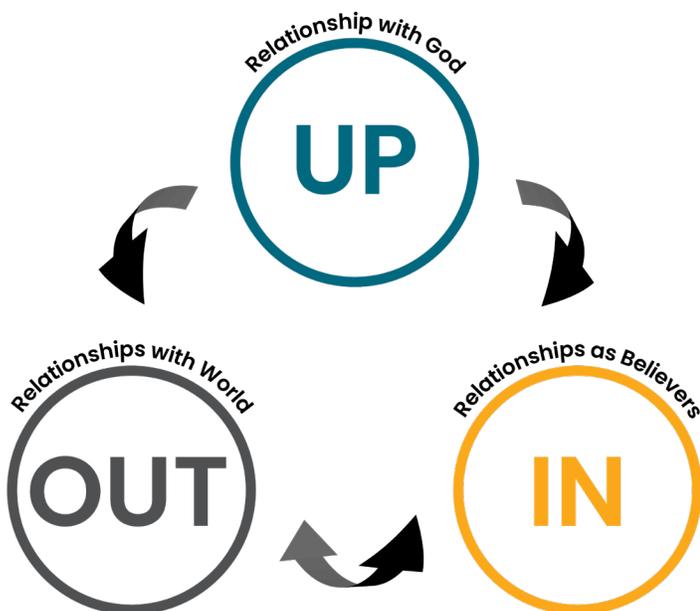
God did not abandon the church. Christ’s promise was the same, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). And so, the question shifts from an exasperated “now what?” to a curious and open “what now?”

**What does God now have for your congregation?**

## WHAT NOW?

When emotions are high, conversations are complicated and the stakes are significant. We are motivated to seek God, “What now, Lord?”

There is a helpful tool that can help your congregation frame this question, and it just might surprise you: Baptist Distinctives. Historically, Baptists have used Baptist Distinctives to help us define our relationship with God (UP), our relationships as believers (IN) and our relationship with the world (OUT).



As you re-imagine ministry, you are navigating hybrid models of online and face-to-face ministry. Your worship services are different. The call to build disciples of Jesus invites you to explore creative solutions. Evangelism, mission and community engagement requires listening well to emerging opportunities in your community.

Organizational issues have also been amplified. Decreased giving has caused new financial realities. Energy levels are depleted, and resource margins are thin. You wonder if you have the leadership capacity and credibility to lead through this next season. Can tensions and differences be put aside for the sake of the Gospel?

Our Baptist Distinctives provide a framework that can help guide your leadership and congregation at a time like this as you ask, “What now?”

The “gift” of COVID-19 is that it has disrupted everything; if we allow it, God may use this disruption to renew us.

The Baptist Distinctives can be used in three ways:

1. As a simple reflective tool to help you get honest with God and each other
2. You can use it to pray with direction
3. It can be used as a discernment tool

Using this tool does not guarantee numeric growth or a perfectly healthy congregation, but it may provide a template for robust conversation, prayer and discernment. Consider this your chance to make the “Great Disruption of 2020” something more than an opportunity to get our services online. We need to ask, “What now, God?”

Each of the three tools has instructions for how you can use this with your leadership team or congregation.

May the Great Disruption be your invitation for your congregation to grow in its dependence on God (UP), deepen your commitments to each other (IN), and re-energize your mission and evangelism (OUT).

# BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

1

## **JESUS IS LORD**

We believe that Jesus Christ, being eternally God, only begotten Son and the visible expression of the invisible God, effectively procured salvation for all creation through his death, burial and resurrection.

2

## **THE WORD OF GOD IS THE AUTHORITATIVE RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE**

We believe that God communicates his will through the inspired Word of God.

3

## **THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS**

The Bible affirms the value of each person as having been created in the image of God, and also declares each person morally responsible for his/her own nature and behaviour.

4

## **A BELIEVERS' CHURCH**

We believe that Jesus Christ chooses to form his church by bringing together believers for the purpose of being a community of believers that worship the living God, while forming disciples of Jesus that are committed to God's mission.

5

## **AUTONOMY & ASSOCIATION**

We believe governance is our responsibility and follows the principles of the priesthood of all believers, the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scriptures, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that we associate and need the wisdom, direction and correction of other believers and congregations.

6

## **MISSION & EVANGELISM**

We have a story to tell that is mandated by our Lord in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19–20.

7

## **FREEDOM & EQUALITY**

Emerging from our convictions about the priesthood of all believer, we affirm that in Jesus Christ all people are equal and that each one is free to be in relationship with God and to express a faith that is not coerced. We believe that there must be a separation between the church and civil governments.

# TOOL #1



## BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES: AWARENESS QUESTIONS

Instructions:

The UP/IN/OUT framework can be used as a reflective exercise to unpack your congregation's experience of COVID-19. It can also provide a simple framework for talking about "What now, Lord?"

### UP

Q1

As a congregation, what have we learned and experienced about God in 2020?

Q2

What might God have for us in this area now?

### IN

Q3

What have we learned and experienced about ourselves as a congregation in 2020?

Q4

What might God have for us in this area now?

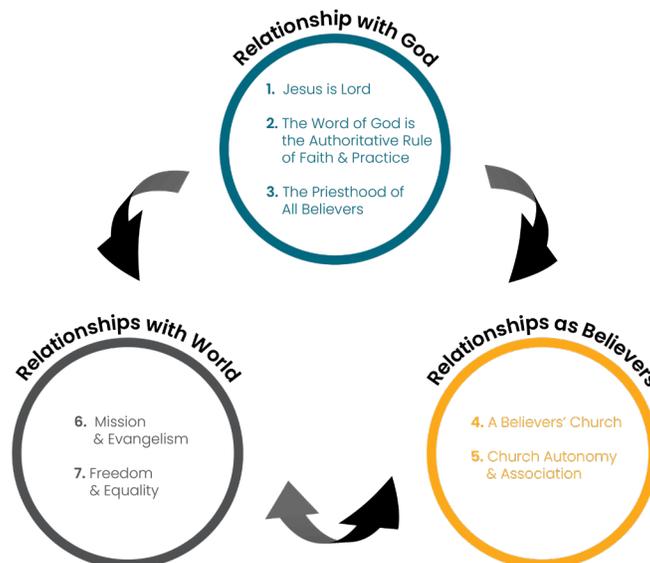
### OUT

Q3

What have we learned about our impact in our community in 2020?

Q4

What might God have for us in this area now?





## TOOL #2

### BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES: PRAYING WITH DIRECTION

Instructions:

You can use the Baptist Distinctives as a framework to pray with direction. You can offer seven different prayer prompts.

#### PRAYING UP: OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

##### 1. Prayers declaring Jesus is Lord

Thanksgiving | Promise | Surrender

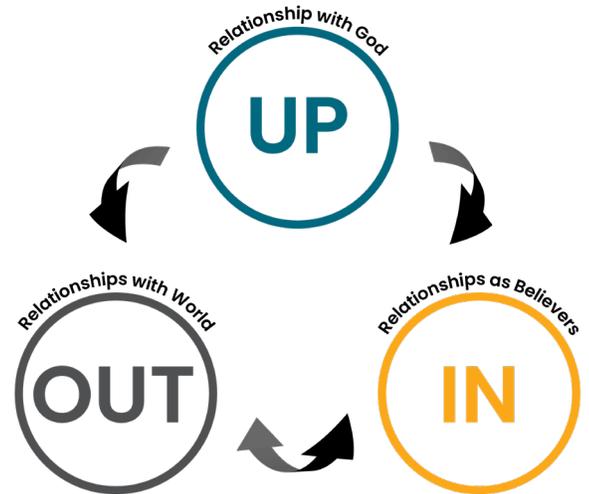
##### 2. Praying from Scripture

Verses of God's faithfulness, hope, commitment

##### 3. Praying for all believers

That our congregants, leaders and pastors would:

- Seek first the Kingdom of God
- Use our gifts to glorify God and serve others



#### PRAYING IN: OUR RELATIONSHIPS AS BELIEVERS

##### 4. Praying for our congregation

That together, as a congregation, we will:

- Be united as a community in Christ
- Honour God in our worship
- Faithfully form disciples of Christ
- Bear witness to God's kingdom

##### 5. Praying responsibility and our family of churches

That our autonomous church leaders will:

- Reflect on God's purposes and promises
- Direct us as a congregation towards Christ
- Protect us through due diligence, sound governance and accountability (autonomy)
- Join in fellowship and mission with other CBOQ congregations (association)

#### PRAYING OUT: OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WORLD

##### 6. Praying Mission and Evangelism

- That we would faithfully bear witness to the saving hope of Christ
- That our friends and family would come to know the saving grace of Jesus
- For our missionaries – locally & globally

##### 7. Praying for freedom and healing in Christ

- That the sick | hurting | oppressed | lonely would find freedom & healing in Christ
- That God would bring justice and healing to injustices in our community, province, country and world

## BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES: DISCERNMENT TOOL

Historically, Baptists have used these seven identity markers to help prayerfully discern challenges and opportunities. They provide a set of values and questions that can be used to guide churches in making small decisions and also in raising larger issues. There are four considerations when discerning “What now?”

### 1. One question at a time

- Crisis usually raises a constellation of issues. Part of clarifying next steps is to name one issue at a time. What is the one question you need to discern? (Write in one sentence)
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- You may need to develop a “someday / maybe list” where you can “park” important but not pertinent issues.

### 2. Clarify what has already been stated

Some situations require discernment while other situations require responding to what God has already stated in Scripture and/or what the congregation has previously stated.

- Clarify what God has stated by studying Scripture.
- Clarify what our congregation has already stated on a situation
  - Look to your constitution / by-laws
  - Look to your policies or procedures
  - Review your vision, mission or values
- Clarify what governments & charitable law have already stated

### 3. Lay aside assumptions, ambiguities, and distractions

- Confessing Jesus is Lord means that, “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). It is also an acknowledgment that we see things imperfectly (1 Cor. 13:12).
- Part of seeking God is distinguishing between good intentions and God’s intentions.
- Part of discernment is surrendering our personal hopes, ideas, fears, and anxieties to God and seeking what God has for us – even amid uncertainty.
- We pray, “Not my will, but yours be done.”

### 4. Desired outcomes: What you are discerning towards?

Part of discernment is clarifying what needs to be accomplished.

- **Option 1: A Decision**
  - Do we need to come to a decision?
  - Do we need a **decisive determination** that offers **complete clarity** on the direction our congregation will take?
  - Some beliefs and practices are essential for all adhere to
  - There are some ways of gathering as a community of believers that non-negotiable.
- **Option 2: Marked Parameters**
  - Sometimes we set out **marked parameters** that create boundaries but also allow for **competing priorities** to exist in a healthy tension.
  - This allows for unique voices, contributions, an array of spiritual gifts to be used to the glory of God and for the service of others.
- **Option 3: Dialogue but No Decision**
  - Is this a situation that does not need a decision?
  - There are some situations where a congregation may choose not to make a decision.
  - A “non-decision” is still a decision that may continue to cause **confusion** and **consequences**. Sometimes even a “non-decision” requires communicating that with the congregation or the parties involved.



UP

## OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

### 1. JESUS IS LORD

We believe that Jesus Christ, being eternally God, only begotten Son and the visible expression of the invisible God, effectively procured salvation for all creation through his death, burial and resurrection.

Our response through prayer:

- We affirm again that Jesus is Lord of this situation and our lives
  - We offer prayers of gratitude

- We will seek to be indifferent to our desires and wishes in this situation
  - We offer prayers of indifference “Not my will but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42)
- We commit to seeking God’s direction in this situation and our lives
  - We offer prayers for faith, wisdom and obedience

### 2. THE WORD OF GOD IS THE AUTHORITATIVE RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

We believe that God communicates his will through the inspired Word of God.

Our response through study:

- What relevant verses or passages of Scripture guide this discussion?
  - List, read, study relevant passages of scripture that provide direction in this area.
- What are the clear principles, mandates, or parameters that

are identified in Scripture that could influence our decision?

- List these as clear decision-making criteria for your team
- What questions does this situation bring up that are not clearly defined in Scripture?
  - List the questions that scripture does not directly answer

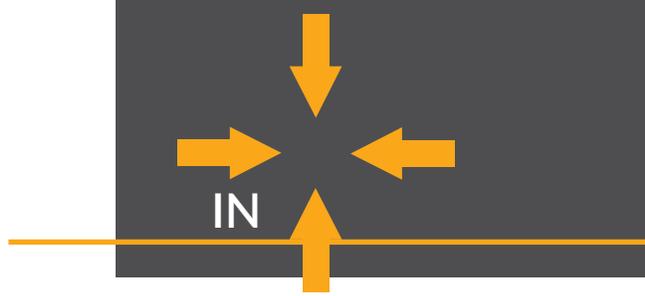
### 3. THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

The Bible affirms the value of each person as having been created in the image of God, and also declares each person morally responsible for his/her own nature and behaviour.

Our response through people:

- How does this situation help us form people as disciples of Jesus?
  - Disciples of Jesus are both invited and challenged to go deeper in their faith and obedience. How does this situation keep us focused on our primary task of building disciples of Jesus?

- Depending on the situation there are a few useful questions:
  - Who will be involved and what spiritual gifts, attitudes, and talents are required?
  - What will be the cost on people’s time, energy, and talents?
  - How will this help us form and disciple people in the way of Jesus?



## OUR RELATIONSHIPS AS BELIEVERS

### 4. A BELIEVERS' CHURCH

We believe that Jesus Christ chooses to form his church by bringing together believers for the purpose of being a community of believers that worship the living God, while forming disciples of Jesus that are committed to God's mission.

Our response in shepherding our congregation:

- How does this help us or hinder us from living out our congregation's mandate or vision?

- What has our congregation already stated about situations like this?
  - Review governing documents, policies, and practices
- How has the church navigated situations like this in the past?
  - If there has been a spectrum of responses, what are some key items on that spectrum?

### 5. AUTONOMY & ASSOCIATION

We believe governance is our responsibility and follows the principles of the priesthood of all believers, the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scriptures, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that we associate and need the wisdom, direction and correction of other believers and congregations.

Our response to direct and protect our congregation:

- What is our responsibility as an autonomous not-for-profit Canadian charity?
  - **Due Diligence Considerations**
    - » Have we reviewed all required federal, provincial, or municipal regulations?
    - » Have we reviewed all charitable law requirements?
    - » Have we reviewed our constitution / by-laws?

- **Transparency**  
What level of transparency is required in our decision making?
- **Accountability**  
Who is accountable to whom in this situation?
- **Communication**  
How do we need to communicate this situation? To whom? What format(s)?
- How have other Baptist congregations responded to similar situations?
  - Who could we call upon from another Baptist congregation(s) for prayer, wisdom, direction, or support in this situation or effort?



## OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WORLD

### 6. MISSION & EVANGELISM

We have a story to tell that is mandated by our Lord in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19–20.

Our response as people of the Great Commission:

- How does this situation help us fulfill our mandate of being a “great commission congregation”?
- Does this situation call us to respond in preaching or proclaiming God’s truth?
- Does this situation call us to respond with demonstrating God’s love?

### 7. FREEDOM & EQUALITY

Emerging from our convictions about the priesthood of all believer, we affirm that in Jesus Christ all people are equal and that each one is free to be in relationship with God and to express a faith that is not coerced. We believe that there must be a separation between the church and civil governments.

Our response to helping people experience freedom in Christ:

- How does this situation affirm that in Jesus Christ all people are equal?
- How does this promote people taking responsibility in seeking a relationship with God?
- Does this situation invite people to experience freedom in Christ or is it coercive, alienating, or denigrating to all people?
- Could this situation promote an individualism or isolationism that is antithetical to the Gospel?





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