

BRAND PROPOSITION RIVERDALE BAPTIST CHURCH

Current Perception

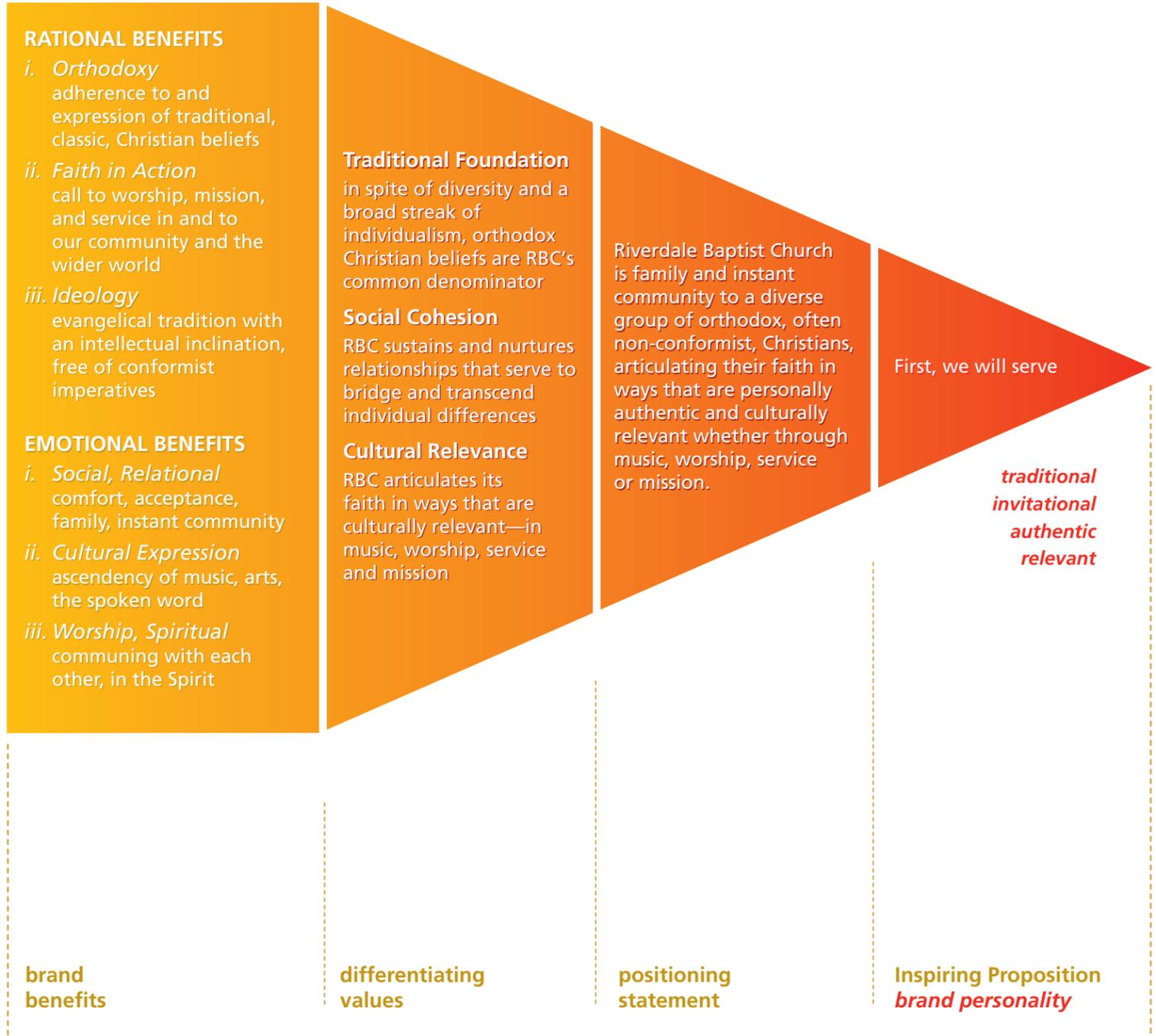
“Riverdale Baptist is a bit of a misnomer, isn’t it? It’s a Baptist church but there are hardly any Baptists in it, the hymnal is Mennonite, they accept members who have never been believer-baptized, and they engage with worldly culture to a degree that’s unusual for Baptists. You’ll find a lot of individualists and non-conformists here; in fact there are more adherents than members. If it’s not a Baptist church, what is it?”

While the worship service can have a lot of different elements, it’s not overly participatory—this is not a dancing, swaying, getting-merry-like-Christmas kind of congregation. They do like their preaching though, and they don’t want it too easy: it’s all about the exegesis.

Every Sunday, the music is from a different cultural era, from choral to hymns to orchestra to gospel to choruses to contemporary. While it can be pretty good, even outstanding, some people don’t like the hymns and others don’t like the choruses. What holds the whole thing together? One thing that is evident in worship is participation from young adults—often the same ones involved in short-term missions.

From a communications perspective, the church publishes a regular newsletter and has a dependable email chain. But they’re not far into the 21st century yet when it comes to having an active website, internet banking, social media or audio-visual equipment. The facility itself communicates something low-key and unpretentious, but there’s an unfinished look to the property, there are evident maintenance issues, and the foyer is rather off-putting with its weird mix of furnishings (some on edge), old carpet, strange coat hangers, tacky-tacky stuff on the wall and the odd pile of boxes.

Church polity seems to fluctuate over time, with on-again/off-again Elders, Deacons, Committees, youth groups and leaders. One constant seems to be the Congregational Care Group and the potluck dinner providers. Which may help to explain the friendly, happy people at RBC.”



Desired Perception

“When I go to Riverdale Baptist Church, I feel that I’m with my family. Like a family, they sustain me, make me feel accepted and wanted, and challenge me to give of myself.

I love that even the building is like a warm and inviting home with the new lobby, furnishings, that colourful fabric art and terrific sound system—it feels so far removed from the dark, hushed, polished-wax kind of church I went to as a kid, or the bare, drab fundamentalist church my wife grew up in.

I like that we’re aligned with the CBWC and have agreement on Biblical principals. But I also like that we’re not overly Baptist—nor overly anything else for that matter. I’m comfortable being myself here, even though I don’t hold everything in common with others. At RBC we believe that salvation is between the Holy Spirit and the individual. People who come here and want to impose change, won’t get very far.

The worship service is a real reflection of the things we value: music that is lively and culturally relevant (even if I don’t always “like it”), preaching that is both evangelical and intellectually engaging (and often accompanied by audio-visuals), adherents that mirror the community we live in and an experience of joy in each other’s presence and in the presence of Jesus Christ. And afterwards, warm conversation and a hot meal—that too is communion! Even when I’m travelling, I can keep up with what’s happening through the church’s twitter feed or download services from the website.

Church structures, leadership and programs evolve over time in response to emerging needs and changes in the congregational make-up. That kind of accommodation tells me that we are a church that is able and willing to engage with our congregants, our culture and our community, in acting on our faith and serving Jesus Christ in the church He has entrusted to our care. That’s important to me—so important that some day soon I’m going to volunteer to serve in the church...”

Riverdale Baptist Church Inspiring Proposition

What comes next is of primary importance

Before anything else, including:
cultural differences
denominational differences
faith orientations
non-conformities
individualists

It's not the only thing, just the first thing. As such, though, it may change everything...

If we start with this, the rest may even take care of itself

Inclusive pronoun:
you are in this as much as *I* am, as much as anyone else who may read this

First, we will serve

Pause to think for a bit on the importance of the preceding word and how it modifies what is coming next

Purposeful, intentional, committed, declarative.
Also used to express habitual behaviour

Open-ended...serve who or what?
each other

God
our community
the wider world
dinner

Action-oriented: doing something, not just thinking, believing or being something

Both a statement about the kind of people we are and a call to action

It's an attainable ambition for everyone, on any level

Honours the desire for service both within our church family and without

It's a reflection of the most fundamental activity of Christian community: serving a meal. This is a powerful image first given us by Jesus Christ as an example of service, as a mandate to remember him in a communion meal, and in his ultimate "serving" of his own life for us

First, we will serve is a reflection of Riverdale Baptist Church's values:

To serve one another, to serve God, is a *traditional* Christian belief,

Service is at the root of our *social cohesion*

Service is our context for *cultural relevance* (it's one way of knowing that we strive to impact culture, rather than have it impact us).