

**The Elders' Decision
Regarding the Creation of A Non-Profit Organization
For "The Heights", An Outreach Ministry of RBBC
(written by Pastor Carey Olson, elder)**

On May, 17, 2009, a proposal for the creation of a separate 501(c)3 to facilitate the RBBC outreach ministry of "The Heights" was presented to the Rocky family. The Purpose of The Heights is to "function as an outreach organization that serves the youth and their families who live in our community. Our mission is to disciple, encourage and support families through Christ's love and biblical principles." "The Heights" seeks to provide spiritual instruction through God's Word and academic tutoring to help meet school goals for children. Congregational feedback to the proposal was invited in the form of a poll, and 79 response forms were received. The responses were as follows:

A—Prayed and believe it is God's will	32
B—Prayed, no direction, will joyfully submit to God's God's direction to our elders	25
C—Not prayed, will joyfully submit to God's Direction to our elders	15
D—Prayed, do not believe it is God's will for RBBC at this time	7

The Elders' Decision

Having followed up with RBBC members who expressed disagreement with the proposal and/or communicated concerns and questions with us; and having received counsel and processed research regarding the ramifications of establishing a separate 501c3 ministry; and having sought the Lord in much prayer, **the elders have gladly approved the creation of the 501(c)3 called "The Heights"**, with these instructions: that a Volunteer Pre-Kindergarten program not be pursued because such a program would involve government funding. Further "The Heights" is not to accept from any individual or entity support (funding, volunteers, etc.) that imposes restrictions against Christian evangelism, spiritual instruction, and disciple-making as described in the ministry's purpose statement. In addition, the elders require quarterly updates from "The Heights" Board of Directors. (Note: In keeping with legal requirements, the financial books of "The Heights" will be open for inspection to members of RBBC and the public.)

Concerns Considered

- **VPK, government funding, restrictive control:** This is the concern most frequently expressed in our polling: we recognize that including the possibility of a VPK in the ministry proposal was almost certainly premature. The elders' decision statement responds with the prohibition of establishing a VPK and/or

accepting any support (government or otherwise) that imposes restrictions on fulfilling the biblical mission of “The Heights”.

- **Readiness of our church to take this step:** Is RBBC ready to commit to and support the ministries of “The Heights”? Are we moving too fast? Do we have sufficient experience? Here are three reasons why we believe we are ready: 1. The desire to establish ongoing local outreach for Christ has been growing for many years in our church, and strategic, structured, continuous outreach has been happening and growing over the last several years through Mission OK, God of This City, God Now Student Weekend, 08-09 school year tutoring on our church campus, and the recently begun, ongoing ESL and Spanish-speaking ABF; 2. Fruit is being produced as a result of “The Heights” work; 3. Volunteer participation by RBBC adults, college students, and older youth is increasing, including those with educational backgrounds and others with administrative skills required for this ministry. Also, some volunteer staff members who are already involved in this ministry have sought out ways to be more educated and equipped by contacting similar ministries (Cottage Cove in Nashville, TN and JCrib in Jackson, TN), studying programs here in Florida, and researching the needs of area schools and their students.
- **Do we need to create a “separate arm”? Why not keep these outreach ministries within the immediate RBBC structure?** We could continue to reach out without establishing the 501(c)3, true. However, creating this new non-profit entity provides for expanded opportunities in terms of people (qualified and screened volunteers from our community) and financial and real resources. For example, many corporations and businesses are permitted to sponsor and support religious community organizations (like “the Heights”) with grants or real goods (such as computers), but are restricted to give such gifts to churches. Functioning as a separate ministry, “The Heights” will be available to more people and financial resources, and have the potential to impact more children and families for Jesus Christ.
- **Unresolved issues in the church:** These issues probably relate to residue remaining after the conflict over theology that erupted two years ago, and to questions about the foci of our church.

Regarding these issues, the subject of doctrinal commitments of our elders and of our church will be addressed in the upcoming Nine Marks of A Healthy Church sermon series. Nine Marks will also provide for a time to sharpen our foci as a church. What are our priorities as we pursue glad obedience to Jesus Christ through Worship, Watchcare, and Witness?

Local churches all have “unresolved issues” at any given time. But this should not deter us from rallying to reach our “Jerusalem” with Christ’s great gospel. “The Heights” has been and will continue to be one rallying point for gospel outreach.

Why the Affirmative Determination?

- God led us to this step, He is at work, and He is providing in beautiful ways for this ministry!
- Establishing “The Heights” in this way is a good “next step” in strategic outreach into our community, outreach that began through “neighborhood drive-through prayer times” and short-term mission trips to Arlington TX, and is growing to this day.
- The separate 501(c)3 status of “The Heights” provides for expanded opportunities-- people and financial resources—to reach out with Christ’s love and gospel.
- We have excellent model ministries who are willing to provide guidance as we progress. For example: Cottage Cove, in Nashville, TN.
- We have a wonderful, trustworthy group of RBBC members on “The Heights” Board of Directors: Jim Cole, Pat Speegle, Sarah Fuller, Karen Pendergrass, and Pastor Carey Olson.

How you may respond

- Praise and thank the Lord! The love of Jesus Christ and His gospel is being shared in our community, in a strategic way, among all kinds of people.
- Be inspired to witness for Jesus Christ in your personal life.
- Pray for the ministry, volunteers, children, and families.
- Give faithfully to the Lord through the conduit of RBBC. God is at work and we are thankful!
- As you are led, give to The Heights in an over-and-above way!
- Consider getting involved as a volunteer with “The Heights”.