



# Highland Baptist Church 2025 Reputation Assessment

*May 12, 2025*

# Brand

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*What Highland Baptist Church says about itself*

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# Rep·u·ta·tion

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*What others/members/influencers say about HBC*

# Reputation Assessment OBJECTIVES



- Solidify and validate **past and current perceptions** of HBC inside and outside HBC.
- Understanding HBC's congregation so that they can be better prepared to call upon a new pastor.
- Confirming HBC's mission and core values are relevant, resonating and aligning with congregation and public.
- Validating or disqualifying any existing presumptions.
- Recognizing any glaring vulnerabilities.
- Identifying the best channels of communications to reach HBC's target audience.
- Crystalizing HBC's messaging internally and externally.
- Unifying messages for HBC staff and committees to ensure everyone is "singing from the same song page."
- Advancing HBC's reputation forward.

The HBC reputation assessment is an examination of HBC's internal (e.g., staff, congregation, past members) and external (e.g., public, social media, other local Baptist churches) reputation.



- Internally, the reputation assessment evaluated HBC's internal audiences to identify any glaring vulnerabilities, gaps and challenges, as well as review recent HBC strategic planning details and congregational conversations.
- Externally, similarly, the reputation assessment evaluated HBC's current reputation outside the church to identify public perceptions of HBC and review any online/media or social media content that will help to understand HBC's image.

### HBC Assessment Tools



- **Reputation Surveys:** These surveys (e.g., online, “5 questions” from HBC leaders, one-on-one meetings) are structured surveys sent to various HBC audiences to gauge their perceptions of HBC. The questions usually address different factors, such as mission, vision and values, leadership, and staff and overall satisfaction.
- **Focus Groups.** These groups go into depths of the “why” respondents answered and validate or nullify assumptions.

#### Media and Social Media Analysis

- **Social Media Sentiment Analysis:** Using tools to analyze HBC’s social media mentions and comments on platforms like X, Facebook, Google, YouTube and Instagram.
- **Online Reviews:** Websites like Yelp, NextDoor and other platforms provide a large volume of direct feedback.

# Reputation Assessment By The Numbers



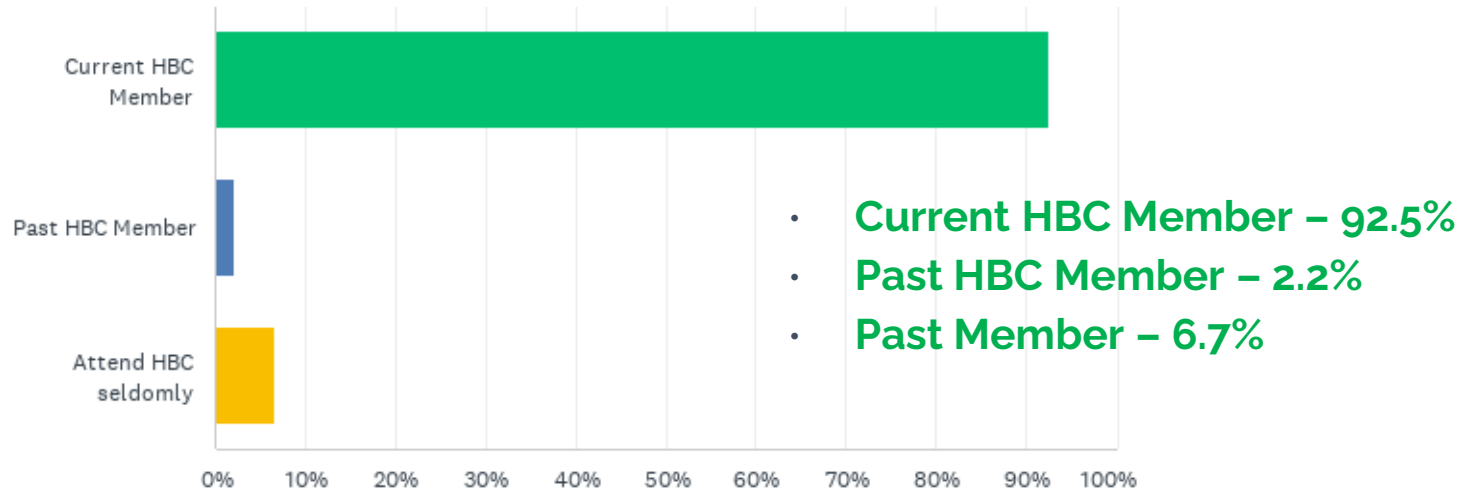
- **134 Respondents** - HBC Member Survey
- **15 Respondents** – Influencers Survey
- **2 Focus Groups** (April 22 & 23)
  - **10 Total Participants**

# Reputation Assessment HBC Member Survey



**134 Respondents** - HBC Member Survey

Q1 Are you a current or past member of Highland Baptist Church?





## Question #2: Rank Reputation of HBC

Q2 On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the highest score), how would you personally rate Highland Baptist Church's overall reputation?

8.6★  
average rating



### Question #3

Why did you give Highland Baptist Church that score for its overall reputation?

see well known community inclusive reputation among good reputation well known love However  
community knows many place political good open social justice inclusion hear  
active well score know groups reputation ministry Highland  
comments think values people activism church Overall  
community believe HBC Baptist welcoming viewed  
progressive regarded also follows members wonderful justice give  
among actions stand opinions S heard positive positive known community find don't  
think Highland circles

122 Responses  
12 Skipped

*"We are known as a compassionate, caring community that welcomes all."*

*"Depends on who you ask. The church is free of scandal and is faithful to its understanding of the gospel. Some would consider Highland on the extreme left socially and too solicitous of minority and anti-white perspectives."*

*"I have many friends, Christian and non-Christian, who respect and admire HBC. I've met a few persons who've said HBC is sinful, dangerous, including some who have distanced themselves from me when I guest preached in their church because I am active at HBC."*

# Question #3 SUMMARY

Why did you give Highland Baptist Church that score for its overall reputation?

### **"Strengths"**

#### **1. Inclusivity & Affirmation:**

HBC is widely known for being LGBTQ+ affirming and welcoming to all people, regardless of background. Many respondents highlight this as the church's core identity.

#### **2. Social Justice & Activism:**

The church has a strong reputation for advocacy, activism, and standing with marginalized communities. Its justice-focused work is often cited as unique and courageous.

#### **3. Progressive Theology:**

HBC is seen as a flagship for progressive Baptist identity in Louisville and beyond, attracting those disillusioned with traditional or conservative churches.

#### **4. Creative Worship & Strong Preaching:**

Respondents appreciate thoughtful sermons, engaging services, and a blend of tradition and innovation in liturgy.

#### **5. Positive Word-of-Mouth:**

Community members frequently report hearing good things about the church, especially within progressive and interfaith circles.

# Question #3 SUMMARY

Why did you give Highland Baptist Church that score for its overall reputation?

### Areas for HBC Growth

- **Perceived Political Leanings:**

A number of comments express concern that HBC can feel “too political,” particularly during worship, which may alienate some potential members.

- **Visibility & Outreach:**

Some feel that HBC is not as well-known outside its core progressive base. There's a call for more external communication and community presence.

- **Diversity Challenges:**

While HBC is inclusive in values, some respondents note a lack of racial and socioeconomic diversity in its congregation.

- **Internal Concerns:**

Issues such as leadership turnover, financial concerns, perceived exclusivity in decision-making, and diminished community profile since former leadership (e.g., Joe Phelps) were noted by several respondents.

- **Reputation Variability:**

Perceptions vary significantly based on the audience—progressives often praise HBC, while more conservative individuals may view it as “too liberal” or unorthodox

### Question #3 SUMMARY

Why did you give Highland Baptist Church that score for its overall reputation?

### Conclusion Answer #3

HBC is viewed as a **bold, compassionate, and justice-oriented faith community** with a distinctive progressive identity. While its reputation is largely positive among like-minded individuals, there are **opportunities to broaden its reach, improve transparency, increase diversity**, and carefully balance **political expression and spiritual focus**.

## Question #4

In your opinion, what are the THREE things that differentiate HBC from other churches in Louisville?

ministry gay music faith community folks Justice values Worship  
Open affirming Progressive accepting Inclusion diversity  
**Welcoming** Everyone **LGBTQ** leadership  
**Inclusive** church **Inclusiveness** welcoming affirming Affirming  
open Inclusivity others openness real Acceptance Women  
support progressive theology people Love reparations liturgical  
Progressive work **worship** liberal **community**  
Social justice **music** services children members **Welcoming**  
justice thoughtful Open program  
excellence Liturgical worship leadership children **Welcoming** liturgical  
people Many **worship** questions **music** love  
**church** focus **members** women **community**  
music program Staff issues progressive concern social justice thinking etc

127 Responses  
7 Skipped

*Thoughtful approach to the Bible."*

Importance of civil justice

"Open and welcoming of any person from any background.

Thinking, feeling and healing.

*Preachers love, not hate.*

Vibrant, liturgical worship

*We are a thinking church.*

Excellence in music, children's programming.

*Openness to questions, encouraging members to evolve personal theologies*

# Question #4 SUMMARY

In your opinion, what are the THREE things that differentiate HBC from other churches in Louisville?

**Three primary themes** that differentiate Highland Baptist Church (HBC) from other churches in Louisville are:

### 1. Radical Inclusivity and LGBTQ+ Affirmation

The most frequently cited distinction is HBC's open, affirming stance toward LGBTQ+ individuals and marginalized communities. Respondents repeatedly mentioned words like *inclusive*, *welcoming*, *affirming*, and *acceptance of all*, emphasizing that this inclusion is sincere and lived out in church life.

### 2. Commitment to Social and Racial Justice

Many highlighted HBC's active role in justice-related work, including racial equity, reparations, anti-racism, and public advocacy. This justice orientation includes direct community involvement, participation in protests, and ministries that serve vulnerable populations.

### 3. Progressive Theology and Worship Style

HBC is described as theologically progressive, open to questioning tradition, embracing liberal interpretations of scripture, and valuing thoughtful, liturgical worship. It stands out for blending traditional worship elements with a forward-thinking, justice-focused message.

## Question #5

In your words, how would you describe HBC to others?

help kind Baptist See truly welcoming feel way JESUS focused Baptist church folks  
feeling healing community individual caring follow accepting vibrant  
questions world everyone active  
thinking feeling healing us HBC challenges faith  
safe space people also welcoming grow church  
community faith progressive spiritual love thoughtful  
Highland liturgical place s community appreciate inclusive  
LIVED open diversity justice group worship issues healing community faith  
means GOD traditional worship GOD love love Jesus seek working

126 Responses  
8 Skipped

*Not anything like Southern Baptist. All are welcome, progressive. The sermons are like a Ted Talk.*

*A thinking, feeling, healing community of faith that welcomes all people and welcomes all questions.*

*HBC is a progressive Baptist church that is inclusive and offers a church setting where exploring both the gifts and challenges of religion is welcome.*

*Welcoming, accepting and led by thoughtful, committed pastors with strong academic backgrounds.*



## Question #5 SUMMARY

In your words, how would you describe HBC to others?

Summary of the responses describing

### Highland Baptist Church (HBC):

HBC is widely described as a **progressive, inclusive, and welcoming community of faith** that embraces diversity and encourages questioning. It affirms LGBTQ+ individuals, fosters justice, and provides a safe space for those who may have been hurt by other religious traditions.

Often described as “**thinking, feeling, healing,**” the church prioritizes **intellectual engagement, emotional support, and spiritual growth.**

# Question #5 SUMMARY

In your words, how would you describe HBC to others?

Key themes include:

- **Progressive theology** not aligned with traditional Southern Baptist views.
- **Radical inclusivity** regardless of gender, orientation, race, or background.
- A space that encourages **doubt, curiosity, and open dialogue** about faith.
- **Strong emphasis on justice, care for creation, and community support.**
- **Liturgical worship**, high-quality music, and **thoughtful, educated leadership.**
- A nurturing environment for **children and youth**, with programming for all ages.
- Ongoing efforts to **rebuild engagement and involvement** in church life.

### Question #6

What are values or characteristics you seek in a church?

Inclusive welcoming affirming members theological encourages fellowship open affirming diverse  
family life Ways affirming Bible study see women allowing FOCUS Jesus God Scripture  
good serve questions study feel social justice values many music one  
open look welcoming supportive church friendly  
community living love LGBTQ people ministry  
worship Good music service young adults place leadership teaching  
programs preaching congregation caring Accepting children justice Acceptance  
Takes look church words Progressive Liturgical strong commitment good preaching  
Offering Inclusivity progressive theology engaged God s equally

127 Responses  
7 Skipped

*Open to various views; theologically progressive, welcome and affirming to ALL.*

*Stimulating Bible study, caring community of believers, worship experience with few distractions and less attention to performance, prophetic quality of preaching.*

*Sound preaching, good musical program, engaging Bible study, and a community voice.*

*Inclusivity. Compassion. Committed to the bedrock of Baptist faith which is the priesthood of all believers and the separation of church and state. A place that is warm and welcoming and also challenges us to grow. A place with strong worship and music.*

# Question #6 SUMMARY

What are values or characteristics you seek in a church?

Based on the responses, the most frequently desired values and characteristics in a church fall into the following key categories:

### 1. Inclusivity and Welcoming Spirit

- Strong emphasis on being open and affirming to all, including LGBTQ+ individuals and diverse backgrounds.
- Non-judgmental and safe space for questions, doubts, and differing viewpoints.

### 2. Progressive Theology and Social Justice

- Desire for a church that is theologically progressive, justice-oriented, and actively engaged in anti-racism and community outreach.
- Open to diverse interpretations of scripture and not rigidly doctrinal.

### 3. Authentic Worship and Preaching

- Meaningful, reverent worship services—often with traditional or liturgical elements.
- High value placed on excellent preaching, scripture-based teaching, and thoughtful sermons that challenge and inspire.

## Question #6 SUMMARY

What are values or characteristics you seek in a church?

### 4. Strong Music Ministry

- Quality music programs, often preferring traditional or choral over contemporary styles.
- Worship through music is a central part of church life.

### 5. Community and Belonging

- A deep need for genuine relationships, small groups, and intergenerational connection.
- A place where members are known, supported, and can grow spiritually together.

### 6. Opportunities for Service and Engagement

- Desire for ways to serve both internally and externally, including missions, social outreach, and justice work.
- A church that lives out the teachings of Jesus in action, not just words.

### 7. Support for All Life Stages

- Strong programming for youth, children, young adults, and the elderly.
- Acknowledgment of varied life paths, including single adults, childless individuals, and nontraditional families.

### Question #7.1

Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC **NOW**?



127 Responses  
7 Skipped

*I want HBC to DO things, not just talk and think about them. Service projects, community action.*

*More support for Friday church and Wayside Mission*

*Include more people in decision making*

*It would be good to have a pastor. Don't take years to find someone to be our pastor.*

*Support for staff to help in interim to prevent burnout*

### Question #7.1

Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC **NOW?**

108 Responses  
26 Skipped

#### Leadership & Staffing

- Strong desire for **stable, dynamic, and pastoral leadership** (interim and permanent).
- Requests for **better administration and communication**, and support for staff to avoid burnout.
- Suggestions to **consolidate or restructure staff roles** for financial and functional efficiency.
- More **lay leadership and involvement**, reducing dependency on ministers.

#### Financial Stability

- Many called for **budget balancing, debt management, and financial sustainability**.
- Some proposed **staff reductions or reorganization** to help achieve this.

#### Worship & Music

- Mixed preferences: some want **more contemporary worship music**, others want **traditional hymns at faster tempos** or **occasional older hymns**.
- Requests to **improve sound quality, shorten early service**, and make **liturgical language more traditional** (e.g., the Lord's Prayer).

### Question #7.1

Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC **NOW?**

108 Responses  
26 Skipped

#### Community & Outreach

- Strong interest in **expanded local and global missions**, especially around **social justice**, homelessness, **racial and LGBTQ inclusion**, and **immigration**.
- Calls for **greater visibility** of existing outreach work and more **tangible action** over discussion.

#### Inclusivity & Diversity

- Emphasis on **increasing diversity in leadership and congregation** (race, gender, theology).
- Desire to ensure people outside the traditional conservative Baptist background feel welcome.
- Mixed views on political content in sermons—some want **less political alignment**, others want **more justice-centered focus** without partisanship.

#### Engagement & Involvement

- Need for **better paths to get involved**, especially for new or unsure members.
- Calls for more **organic community building**, young adult engagement, and **volunteer opportunities**.
- Ideas for better **ministry coordination** and use of member talents (e.g., creating a skills registry).



### Question #7.1

Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC **NOW**?

108 Responses  
26 Skipped

#### Education & Discipleship

- More **Bible study offerings**, **spiritual development classes**, and **mountaintop experiences**.
- Greater focus on **personal discipleship** beyond Sunday worship.

#### Facilities & Logistics

- Completion of **capital projects** (HVAC, etc.).
- Suggestions for **worship time changes**, better **classroom environments**, and **improved accessibility** (e.g., deaf interpretation).
- Advocacy for **sustainability** (reducing single-use items, investing in renewable energy).

## Question #7.2

Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC in the **FUTURE?**



127 Responses  
7 Skipped

*Stay the course.*

*Have the church more involved in topics that are important to the community vs. volunteer for other charities. Ex: use the church kitchen for cooking meals for the homeless shelters.*

*Increased membership.*

*Provide more educational programs for the community as well as church members.*

*Thoughtful and visioning leadership from the senior pastor we select - to provide more effective leadership, revitalize our ministries and care for each other and the community,*

### Question #7.2

Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC in the **FUTURE?**

108 Responses  
26 Skipped

#### 1. Community Engagement & Outreach (Most Frequently Mentioned)

- Strong desire for more **direct local involvement** (e.g., cooking for the homeless, food banks, clothing closets).
- Calls for **less focus on secular charity partnerships** and **more on mission-aligned service**.
- Encouragement to become a **beacon of hope**, with **greater visibility in social justice** efforts.

#### 2. Leadership & Staff Stability

- Many expressed a need for **long-term pastoral and staff stability**.
- Several want a **visionary, dynamic, and inclusive pastor**.
- Concerns about **staff turnover** and **leadership decision processes**.

#### 3. Diversity & Inclusion

- Numerous calls for **greater racial diversity**.
- Requests for **LGBTQ+ inclusion**, including **queer pulpit presence**.
- Emphasis on **inclusive partnerships** that align with the church's values.

## Question #7.2

Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC in the **FUTURE?**

108 Responses  
26 Skipped

### 4. Worship & Programs

- Desire for **more engaging and varied worship styles**, including **less rigid liturgy**.
- Interest in **innovative worship experiences** and **return of life groups**.
- Requests to **improve and diversify Sunday School and adult education**.
- Mixed views on **Communion frequency and format**.

### 5. Financial Health

- Repeated mentions of needing a **balanced budget**, **debt reduction**, and **stronger financial planning**.
- Interest in **establishing an endowment fund**.

### 6. Internal Structure & Operations

- Frustration with **bureaucracy and bylaws**, perceived to **overburden ministers** and **hinder progress**.
- Suggestions to **streamline decision-making** and include **new voices in leadership**.

## Question #7.2

Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC in the **FUTURE?**

108 Responses  
26 Skipped

### 7. Facilities & Logistics

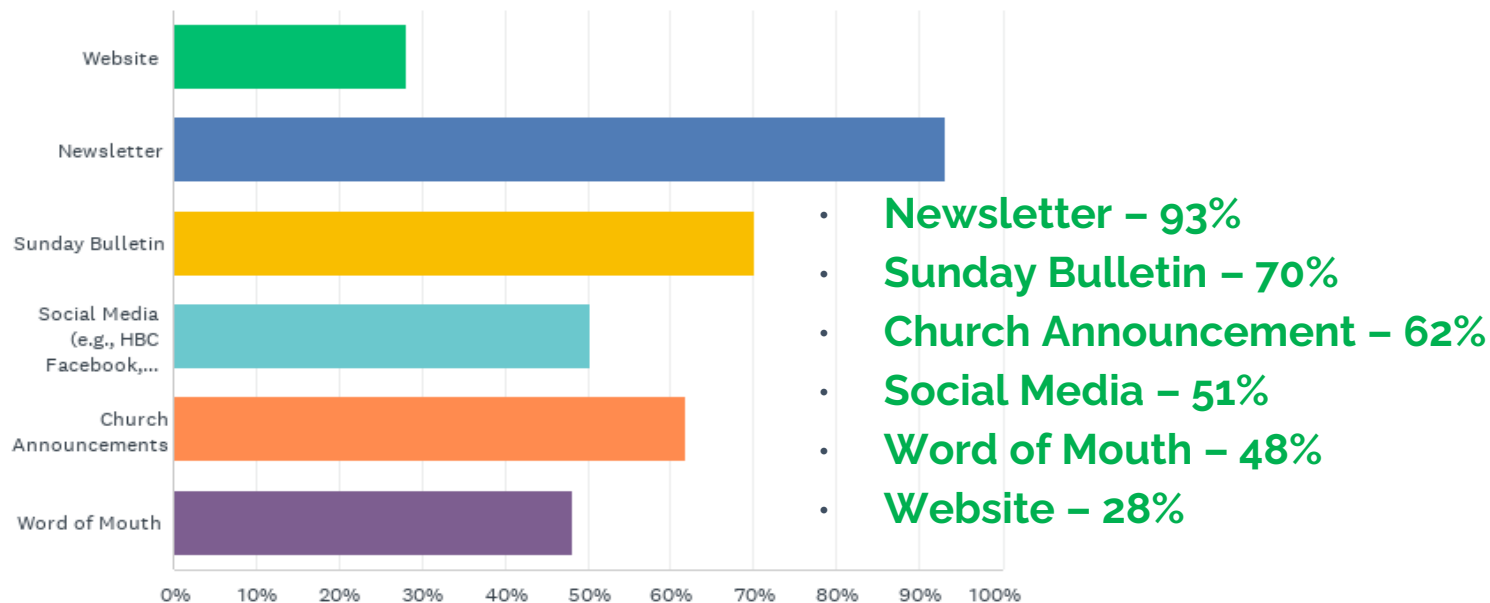
- Several requests for **more parking**.
- One mention of **building maintenance (HVAC)**.
- Attention to **cleanliness and physical appearance of the grounds**.

### 8. Congregational Growth & Connection

- Desire for **increased membership** and **new ways to foster community**.
- Suggestions to **better integrate age groups** and **enhance engagement across demographics**.

## Question #8

Q8 Where (i.e., what channel of communications) do you regularly capture information about HBC? \*Check all that apply.



# Reputation Assessment Influencers

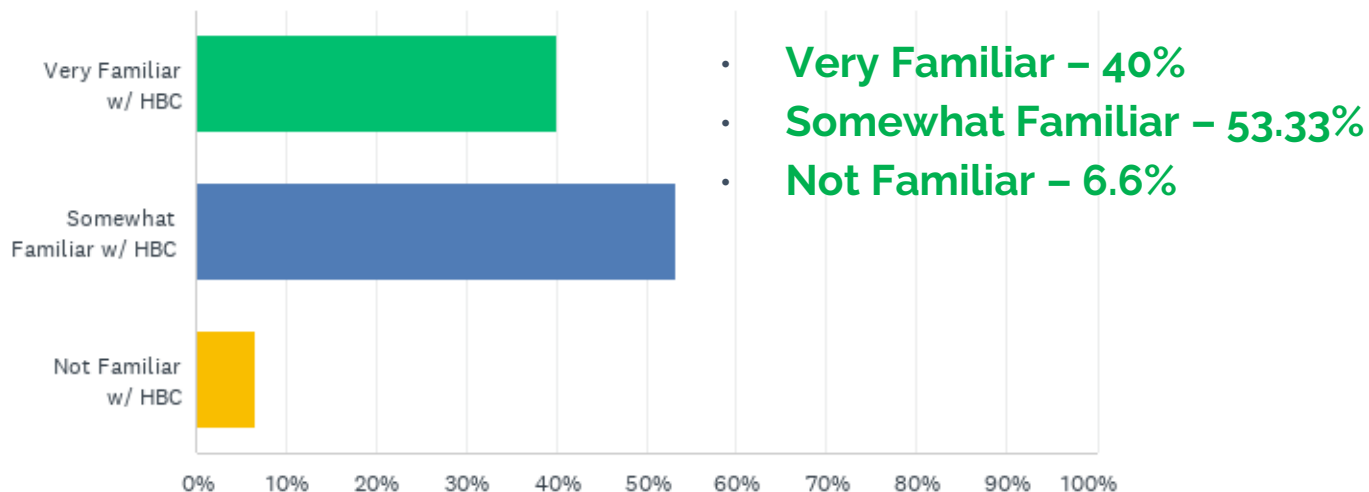
## 5 Questions

**15 Respondents** - HBC Reputation Survey



- Courier Journal
- CLOUT
- African American Pastors
- SURJ (Standing Up for Racial Justice)
- St. William Catholic Church
- Drag Daddy Productions
- La Casita
- KY Refugee Ministries
- Metro United Way
- Simmons College
- St. Stephens Church
- Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Justice
- Highland Community Ministries
- State Senator for Highlands
- Louisville Pride Foundation
- Wall Street United Methodist (Jeffersonville)
- Empower West
- Jeffersonville Ministerial Assoc.
- Greater Louisville Inc. (Chamber)
- Louisville Public Media
- Black lives Matter
- St. Matthews Ministry
- Vocal-KY
- Clifton Unitarian
- Louisville Councilman Ben Reno Weber

### Q1 How familiar are you with Highland Baptist Church (HBC) in Louisville?





## Question #2: Rank Reputation of HBC

Q2 Knowing what you know about HBC, on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the highest score), how would you personally rate Highland Baptist Church's overall reputation?

7.9★  
average rating



## Question #3

Why did you give Highland Baptist Church that score for its overall reputation?



*I think of it as a beacon of social justice in Louisville and believe it to be filled with kick-ass, courageous people of faith.*

*Highland has long been a champion for local progressive theology and on several matters has been ahead of the curve.*

*While there are many positives, the church's governance and transparency needs immediate attention. There is an ongoing and painful mismatch between stated values and both staff and organizational behaviors because of church polity; the church does not assure actual inclusion and equity although this is a stated value. Many do experience a sense of acceptance at HBC they did not find elsewhere.*

# Question #3 SUMMARY

Why did you give Highland Baptist Church that score for its overall reputation?



- **Social Justice and Progressivism** – Many respondents view the church as a *beacon for social justice*, known for its *progressive theology* and *community engagement*, often being described as *courageous* and *ahead of the curve*.
- **Community Presence and Longevity** – HBC is recognized for its *long-standing presence*, *steady influence*, and being a ***pillar in the Louisville community***, particularly the Highlands area.
- **Welcoming Spirit and Relationships** – The church is seen as *warm, friendly, and inclusive* by some, with a strong sense of *fellowship and outreach*.
- **Reputation for Integrity and Accountability** – Several responses mention the church's *consistency, integrity*, and efforts to be accountable in its practices.
- **Governance and Inclusion Challenges** – One respondent raised concerns about *governance transparency, inclusion*, and *alignment between values and internal practices*, noting a recent *decline in reputation post-COVID*.
- **Personal Connections** – A few responses were based on *positive impressions from friends or acquaintances* involved with the church.

## Question #4

In your opinion, what are the THREE things that differentiate HBC from other churches in Louisville?



*The welcoming atmosphere.*

*By sending this survey out it tells me you are a faith space open to input.*

*Stable and well-educated congregation.*

*Engaged Community*

*Quality children's and music programs and Sunday school / small groups .*

*LGBTQ inclusion.*

*Architecturally, Highland is without a peer in the city. While land-locked, Highland's Sanctuary and investments in their Children and Youth spaces communicate how you value families.*

# Question #4 SUMMARY

In your opinion, what are the THREE things that differentiate HBC from other churches in Louisville?



The three main things that differentiate HBC from other churches in Louisville, based on the responses, are:

- 1. Strong Commitment to Social Justice** – HBC is known for being early and vocal in social justice movements, with a visible progressive stance, including anti-fascism and reparations efforts.
- 2. Welcoming and Inclusive Community** – The church is widely seen as open, affirming, and inclusive of all people, with a warm, engaged congregation that values input and diversity.
- 3. Unique Worship and Programs** – HBC stands out with offerings like the innovative *Friday Church* service, high-quality music and children's programs, and a distinct "joyful" Baptist identity that sets it apart from more traditional or conservative churches.

## Question #5

In your words, how would you describe Highland Baptist Church to others?



*You wanna find a Baptist church that loves everyone? I've got the church for you!*

*As a comfortable place to worship that is respected truly of your comfort level and definition of worship,*

*HBC is a thoughtfully progressive faith community that honors the questions most educated people of faith are asking. HBC offers something for people of many ages and differing childhood faith experience while retaining the best of its Baptist heritage. It is still a "thinking feeling healing" community of faith. Hopefully HBC will return to being more invested in other groups in the community especially given the nations dangerous rightward turn.*

*Progressive, encouraging, affirming...just the kind of church you would want to be a part of. "Baptist at its best." An involved congregation. A church for the heart and the head. If my current church closed its doors, I would probably join HBC.*

# Question #5 SUMMARY

In your words, how would you describe Highland Baptist Church to others?



Highland Baptist Church is widely described as a ***progressive, welcoming, and affirming*** faith community that values inclusivity, diversity, and thoughtful engagement with faith. It is seen as both **intellectually** and **spiritually nurturing**—a **"thinking, feeling, healing"** congregation committed to soul freedom and religious liberty.

Many appreciate its **openness to social justice** and its embrace of both tradition and modern questions of faith. It is small enough to foster close relationships, yet large and active enough to make a meaningful impact. Several responses highlight its strong sense of community, its progressive theology, and its potential for growth under supportive leadership and thoughtful administration.

# Reputation Assessment Focus Group

**10 Participants** HBC Members



## Focus Group Questions

- Name
- How long have you been a part of HBC.
- What has been your overall experience as a member?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the highest score), how would you personally rate Highland Baptist Church's overall reputation?
- Why did you give Highland Baptist Church that score for its overall reputation?
- What are the THREE things that differentiate HBC from other churches in Louisville?
- How would you describe Highland Baptist Church to others?
- What are the values or characteristics you seek in a church (not just HBC)?
- Please share any changes you would like to see at HBC now and in the future.
- What is the most memorable experience you had at HBC that is a microcosm of how you associate the church's reputation.
- What Stood out to you most from today's focus group?



## Question #1, 2, 3 FOCUS GROUP

- Name
- How long have you been a part of HBC?
- What has been your overall experience as a member?

Andrea Sinclair  
16 years  
It's been a place of acceptance and accepting of difference

Vicki Runnion  
13 years  
Welcoming accepting of questions and disagreeing  
Thoughtful of processing things  
I love it.

Kim Clark  
7 years  
Inviting  
First place you've come that I've felt welcomed  
Not being scared to  
LGBTQ focus

Alison Schureck  
27 years  
Many Personal Milestones at HBC,  
Married, Ordained, Father's funeral,  
raised children

Carolyn King  
40+ years  
Many different experiences

Proctor  
75 years  
Good experience

Denne Walsh  
34 years  
It was a safe place for me  
It has changed a lot for me.  
"The preacher is not the church."

Robert Davis  
18 years  
Experience has been good.  
Patches that have note been so good.

Larry (and Debbie)  
10 years  
Impressions have been very good  
We have made the decision not to be too involved

Mark Down  
25 years  
Came here five years before  
"anyone caught me. I want community

# Focus Group

## SUMMARY

### HBC Strengths & Positives



#### Inclusivity & Acceptance

- Church is welcoming, affirming of LGBTQ+ community, accepting of differing opinions.
- Strong support for women pastors, seen as innovators in inclusion.
- Safe place to be oneself—"everyone is a child of God."

#### Worship & Community Life

- Formal yet beautiful services.
- Strong preaching and music, including meaningful experiences like baptisms and baby dedications.
- Deep emotional and spiritual moments: full congregational singing, moments of acceptance.
- People feel accepted even if they don't fully believe.

#### Mission & Identity

- Known for being progressive, thoughtful, and community-oriented.
- Described as a "thinking, feeling, healing" church.
- Recognized for dignity, human rights, and willingness to ask tough questions.
- Good local reputation—"not Southeast Christian," "intentional," "purposefully inclusive."

# Focus Group

## SUMMARY

### Concerns & Challenges



#### Leadership & Staffing

- Frequent turnover of pastors (3 in recent years); concern over impact on continuity and reputation.
- Pastors may be burdened with too much responsibility.
- Pastoral transitions can cause loss of momentum or identity shifts.

#### Youth & Engagement

- Disappointment with youth group engagement and outcomes.
- Desire for more inclusive programming across all ages and throughout the year (especially summers).

#### Participation & Volunteer Burden

- Perceived imbalance in volunteer engagement (80/20 rule).
- Same people take on too many roles; hard to step away once committed.
- Need to engage those less involved or previously burned out.

# Focus Group

## SUMMARY Concerns & Challenges



### Transparency & Process

- Church decisions can feel slow and procedural (“spinning wheels”).
- Need more transparency and better communication.
- Lack of clarity in how and why people leave—suggested need for “exit interviews.”

### Perceived Favoritism

- Welcoming experience not consistent for everyone.
- Examples like Meal Train show uneven attention; Deacons should be more attuned to member needs.

# Focus Group

## SUMMARY Suggested Changes



### Community Engagement

- Bring mission work beyond church walls—both locally and globally.
- Re-engage families who left during the pandemic.
- Expand outreach efforts led by church staff.

### Education & Formation

- More Bible study opportunities and theological education.
- Revisit and reframe Baptist history and mission.
- Need for discipleship and foundational teaching, especially for new and younger members.

### Culture & Rhythm

- Offer more flexible, informal worship (e.g., Friday night services, diverse music).
- Support new social initiatives like “Dinner Groups” and “Libation Theology.”

### Church Operations

- Revisit use of building for financial sustainability.
- Create a new pictorial directory.
- Strengthen long-term planning: “What will HBC look like in 20 years?”

THANK YOU!

ReputationUs.com