

Relaunching a 150 Year Old Institution for a New Generation

Organization

Sanctuary Church

Location

Birmingham, MI

Industry

Church, Religious,
Non-Profit

Website

[Sanctuary-
Church.com](http://Sanctuary-Church.com)

Project Team

Kem Meyer and
Company with
EmeryAgency

We've all heard stories about people who made a decision to start something big. People who had the courage to jump into the middle of a need and start something new. But rarely do we witness a group of people say, "We need to restart this." Because, more often than not, when a mission mutates over time into a monument to the past, it doesn't recover.

It remains almost invisible in plain sight...for decades.

Unless there's a group of people with the nerve to do something about it.

■ Golden history and hard reality

This is a story of a downtown church outside of Detroit. For over a century it was known as First Baptist Church of Birmingham, Michigan. A vibrant light set in a beautiful gothic structure, it had impacted generations of families with mercy and care. But, now, they were at a crossroad facing a difficult truth. They were known more for their architecture than their purpose. A beautiful building was not the legacy they hoped to leave to the next generation.

Our past was rich and in technicolor. But our present felt faded and weary. And that didn't represent the hope of the Gospel to us. We were tired and we were concerned. Without bold and audacious decisions, there would be no future for FBC Birmingham. We had to answer some difficult questions. Did we want to continue as a church? Or did we want to throw in the towel? When we made the decision to not quit, we knew this would mean a total restart. But we had no idea how to even begin.

■ From gasping to survive to a dream to thrive

Big dreams require hard work and new thinking. Everyone took a deep breath and began a strategic planning process to reintroduce themselves to a community now unaware that they existed or cared. **With fresh brand rationale and a communication toolkit from Kem & John, the pastor and church leadership took inventory, outlined a compelling identity pact, and prepared a rollout plan to shepherd the congregation through the change turbulence ahead.**

It became clear that holding tightly to things from the past was weighing down the church from rising to the challenge of the future. *Change is hard. Dying is harder.*

The intangibles of their history...values like courageous action and bold faith... were key to reviving the mission, not furnishings, memorabilia, structure, or language associated with an aging generation. Embracing this belief gave the church the freedom to tackle real hurdles holding them back from making sincere first impressions with the people they were hoping to reach.

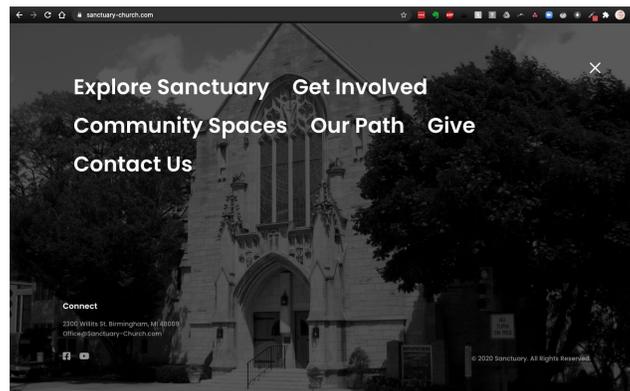
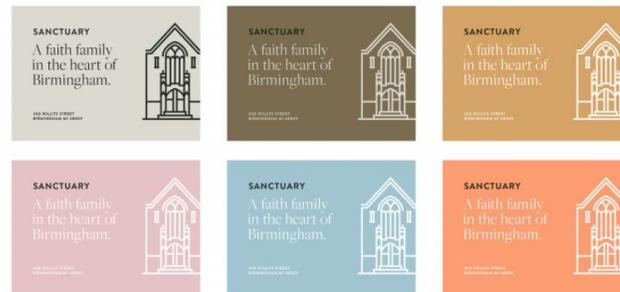
The very first impression that had to change was the name.

Real progress pivoted on one line of questions: What does our name say about us? What does it say about what we believe and how we feel about people who are important to us? Everyone agreed that the name First Baptist Church did not communicate the answers to those questions clearly. But the name Sanctuary did.

Sanctuary is a Christian congregation committed to being good neighbors to all we encounter. We recognize all people have wounds to be healed, gifts to offer, questions to ask, and stories to share. We are a community of people who choose love over judgement and hostility. We are committed to listen, care, welcome, and challenge regardless of affiliation, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, finances, or ability.

A new name and a new start

With unified messaging, visuals, a new logo, and website, Sanctuary relaunched with the same clarity that had impacted their community eras ago. A new identity rallied an aging congregation to face the challenge of change with optimism and emboldened them to embrace what is to come rather than hold onto what used to be.





**If you are ready to rebrand or relaunch a tired organization
and are looking for help with a path forward
for buy-in and growth, let's talk.**

Our team sets aside free blocks of 30 minute calls each week
to listen and share some next step ideas "on the house."

[Schedule a Call](#)