

FAITH MATTERS

WHAT'S IN A
NAME

VOLUME 12 • ISSUE 2

Faith Matters is published four times per year by St. John Church.
February, May, August, November
15800 Manchester Road Ellisville, MO, 63011-2208

WHAT'S IN A NAME

by **DION GARRETT** *Senior Pastor*

“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet”
William Shakespeare

Fifteen years ago I began to understand, like never before, the power behind a name. Jocelyn was newly pregnant with our first child and long before we knew whether it would be a boy or a girl, we had already gone out to the bookstore and picked up a baby name book. For the next several months we poured over names in the book and there seemed to be no consensus in sight.

“Charles?”

“Whoa, that sounds too stuffy. What about Asher?”

“Asher? Is that a Mormon name?”

These conversations went on and on. The pressure was real. This wasn’t just a name, but this would become part of our child’s identity, an important part of their first impression to the rest of the world. We couldn’t come to an agreement. Thankfully God was knitting together a girl (so we could scrap our volatile list of boy names), and we ended up picking a name neither of us had ever heard of.

Through our last two years of research, both of what’s going on

in the broader Church in America and also of what unchurched people in our community are saying, I’ve been faced with a hard reality: St. John is a church that so many unchurched people are looking for, but few people know that. Standing in the way of more people discovering a life-giving relationship with Jesus is baggage from previous church experiences, cultural attitudes toward Christianity as a whole, and closer to home, our name.

When respondents in our research from two summers ago heard about who our church is—our values and our personality—they were intrigued. One person even said, *“If that’s really who this church is, I’d be very interested in checking it out.”* But our name gave them pause. These are actual quotes from real people in the focus groups.

“You automatically think it’s Catholic.”

“Not having been raised Catholic, every saint is the same to me.”

“When I hear St. John Church, it sounds formal. I wouldn’t associate it with the casual setting that I’m looking for.”

“I would change the name. St. John sounds too old. It’s old school...If you’re trying to be modern and more progressive, why go to such an old name?”

As I heard these comments, my stomach dropped. I have a strong sense of loyalty in me, especially when it comes to names. Having struggled to love my own name for the first 20 years of my life, I learned to proudly own it despite people's comments, jokes, and odd reactions. But this was different. This wasn't about pride or heritage, in the focus group room were people for whom a name, our name, was a significant barrier to them knowing the real Jesus.

As I've prayed and searched the scriptures for over two years on these issues, two things have become clear to me. The first is that God sees names as much more "flexible" than I do. There are countless examples in the Scriptures of God giving someone a new name for a new season.

Abram → Abraham

Sarai → Sarah

Jacob → Israel

Simon → Peter

...to name only a few. There is also a strong precedent in our own history of previous generations wrestling with this. At its founding, St. John was once named, *Evangelische Lutherische Eintrachts Gemeinde* and yet when we became an English speaking church, a church for everybody and not just German immigrants, our faith-ancestors decided to embrace a new name for the new season. As we are now firmly living in a "Post-Christian" America, I've come to the conclusion that it's time for us to do the same. Not only that, I've begun to rethink church names as things that don't need to stand forever, but only to suit the purposes of the time or season they're ministering in.

The second thing that has become clear to me is although I feel strongly inclined to preserve and protect heritage and legacy, God doesn't seem to have the same concern. If preservation of heritage were a priority for God then Jesus would've never uttered the seditious words of John 4.

²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, **a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.** ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the

Jews. ²³ **Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.** ²⁴ *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."*

If heritage preservation were a strong concern for God, we would still be making daily sacrifices in a temple, speaking Hebrew, and making pilgrimages to Jerusalem. It's mind-boggling to me that Israel's rich, God-given heritage was obliterated by the end of the 1st century, *by God's own mandate!* **God's concern** instead is to **bring LIFE to a dying world at all costs**, even the cost of his Son. So while I feel inclined to preserve history, legacy, and heritage, God's primary inclination is to preserve *people*, for eternity. God is always willing to sacrifice heritage for the sake of his mission to *people*.

So if you haven't heard by now, on the weekend of March 18, I announced our intention to actively explore a name change for our church. An announcement that has been met with a full range of emotions, including some grief and concern and also a lot of support. For some, this is a bold, exciting move that is bound to help us better fulfill our mission. For others, this comes with a sense of loss of 140 years of continuity. I understand it all. More, I *feel* it all.

William Shakespeare once remarked "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." To Shakespeare, I'd ask, "Yes, a rose by any other name would still smell sweet, but if called by another name would you blindly take the risk and smell it?" I am excited to give our community a name that better describes the sweetness they'll encounter when they take a step into our church.

I know there are a lot of questions about how we will move forward together, so make sure you read all the FAQ questions on the next couple of pages in this issue. This is an exciting time for us to help elevate our reputation and standing in our community, to help more people come into the LIFE of Jesus. But for that to happen, we have to keep moving *together*.

Church Branding & Naming

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Revised May 14, 2018

As announced the weekend of March 18, we are actively exploring a name change for our church. As we embark on this journey, we know there may be questions about the rationale, process, and more. This FAQ is designed to answer a few of those questions and point you to additional resources that will help you understand and (hopefully!) support our journey and outreach to the community. Keep reading to learn more – and please connect with us if you have additional questions or comments.

Why are we changing our name?

Simply put, our name doesn't represent who we are, which is, in secular terms, our brand. In focus groups we conducted with unchurched and dechurched people in the community, participants expressed interest in a church that sounded like who we are and what we offer. But they didn't think a church named St. John – which most participants assumed was Catholic – fit how we describe ourselves. After wrestling with this disconnect for, literally, years, it became clear that our name is an obstacle to people's understanding and interest, so we need to change that – just as God did as He often changed people's names to fit the season they were in. Like Jacob ("he grasps at the heel") who had his name changed to Israel ("he struggles with God") because God had bigger things in store for him. Or Abraham ("father of many") who was once called Abram ("exalted father") before God promised to give him a son and make him the father of many nations.

Is the name change the first step toward more drastic changes? I don't want to change who we are!

Neither do we! The core of who we are is NOT changing, and the name change is not a setup for a bunch of additional changes. A new name just allows people from the outside to see us as we truly are in the inside. The good news is, we know we are already the kind of church that unchurched and de-churched people are interested in. We'll finally have a name that helps them recognize who we are.

How do you describe our brand?

We are intent on bringing together imperfect people (like us!) who are in pursuit of a whole life. As I explained during our recent sermon series, Standouts, (if you missed it, check it out at stjstl.net), our brand is built on four pillars:

- **Unconditional acceptance**
- **True-to-life approach**
- **Inspiring connections**
- **God-directed journey**

We are often described as being a church that is in-touch, open-hearted, and a little trailblazing. We are always faith-filled and center our mission on offering thought-provoking messages and programs.

What will our new name be? (C'mon, I know you have one picked!)

We don't! Our new name is a work in progress. The answer is not predetermined and locked up in a super-secret vault waiting to be revealed. We're leaning on our staff, members of the congregation (thank you, Brand Advisory Team), outside professionals, and Divine inspiration to breathe into in a deliberate, thoughtful process that allows us to arrive at the best name. We're intent on walking a balance: While we want a name that reflects our brand and that our congregation feels good about, we also want a name that resonates with the people in our community, so they understand what we offer and are encouraged and comfortable to walk through our doors.

How will we pick a new name?

Carefully. To inform and validate the name ideas of many staff, church families, and professionals, we are relying on community research. We will compile a slate of names that reflects our brand and has been properly vetted to assure availability (legally, URLs, etc.). Then, we will

test the slate via quantitative and qualitative research from people who live in our nearby ZIP codes. From there, we plan to compile a short list of names and ask you, our St. John family, to vote on your favorite. To be clear, the decision to change our name was based on objective feedback coupled with prayer and soul-searching, and we will choose our name the same way.

How can I weigh in on the new name?

We want – and need – your input on our new name. Everyone will have an opportunity to weigh in on their favorite name this summer. That said, if you have strong opinions or feelings about the name change (either positive or negative) please don't wait to share your thoughts. We want to hear from you sooner than later! See the many communication options below.

How will we be sure to pick a new name that stands the test of time?

We know that in choosing a name, there are current trends and fads – just compare the most popular kids' names today with those from 20 years ago! We want to find a name that so clearly embodies who we are that it lasts through the back-and-forth in church naming trends. But we also recognize that in 30 years, our world will likely look different, as will our church. There is wisdom in choosing a name that speaks well of who we are today and to our present season, without saddling ourselves with the burden of trying to pick a name that's timeless.

When will the new name be announced?

Later this year. We plan to do an internal launch in conjunction with the climactic conclusion of NEXT. The timing is perfect considering Phase 1 and Phase 2 improvements will be completed, giving us an updated Sanctuary, a more secure and inviting children's ministry, and a new "front door" to our church to welcome people into a warm gathering space in our commons. Phase 3 will still be in the planning phase allowing us to incorporate our new name and brand identity into what people will see from the outside. It will be followed by an external launch in early 2019, in conjunction with Phase 3 (the outdoor improvements). There should be quite a buzz!

How does a name change affect our association with The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)?

It doesn't. We are a self-governing, autonomous congregation and our relationship with the LCMS is voluntary. The synod is an "advisory body," does not hold legislative or coercive powers, and affirms our right to self-governance as long as we live according to the Scriptures. We will notify them of our new name and remain a member of the LCMS church family. Most importantly, we are not moving away from our theology, which is based on LCMS doctrine. We remain a Biblically conservative, culturally relevant church, which is reflected in our brand and new name.

How does a new name fit with St. John School? Will the school have a new name, too?

That is an important question – so important that it's too soon to say what that relationship looks like. We are committed to making a thoughtful decision on how to best sync the brands of the school and church, at the right time and with the right information.

Where can I go with questions or for more information?

You have a good start by reading this FAQ to the end! In addition, you can do the following:

- » Visit stjstl.net/brandprocess where you can watch Pastor Dion's Facebook Live Brand Town Hall from May 15.
- » Watch the *Standouts sermon series*.
- » Ask a *Brand Advisory Team member for more info*.
- » Email Pastor Dion at srpastor@stjstl.net

We are committed to keeping you involved and updated on the church naming process. Please pray for our leadership's wisdom during this important time and weigh in with your questions and ideas. This is an exciting time for our church!

SCHOOL OF THE arts

by **LAURA COOK** *School of the Arts Director*

Have you noticed the growing number of students who consistently serve in worship on the weekends? Often, these musicians are current or previous School of the Arts students. By having a music school right here on our campus, we are able to teach and grow students while giving them opportunities to apply what they are learning in a worship setting. This is what sets us apart from other music schools in our area!

If you were to stop by one of our music studios during a School of the Arts session, you would see students actively engaged in learning from professional instructors, hear music from all genres being explored, and feel at home in our warm and inviting studio spaces. In these spaces and alongside the caring, talented instructors, students begin learning. They are then quickly encouraged to start sharing their talents with others. The opportunities to share and lead are abundant here as you will see in the following students:

Will...a 6th grader who has been taking drum lessons for a year. He is already a drummer for chapel band at St. John School as well as our middle school student ministry CORE band.

Nate...a high school sophomore who is learning drums, piano AND guitar. He plays in CORE band, the high school ministry Summit band, and the School of the Arts jam sessions.

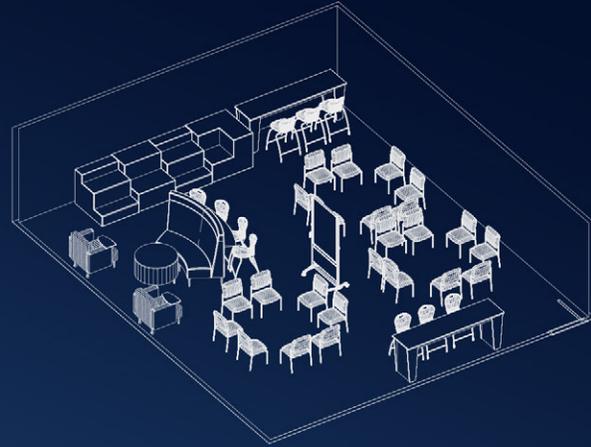
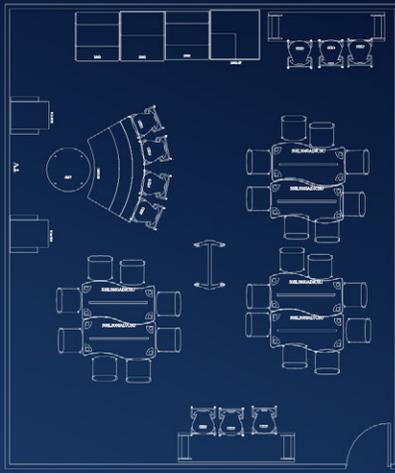
Kyla...a 7th grader who is taking piano lessons and has begun to lead in CORE band and weekend worship on the keyboard.

Nick...an 8th grader who takes drum lessons and has played in CORE band, St. John chapel band, and the School of the Arts jam sessions.

Katie...an 8th grader who has taken guitar, voice and piano and plays in CORE band, chapel band, weekend worship and fulfilled her dream of playing in Sounds of Christmas!

The talent and leadership of these students is inspiring! If you are interested in enrolling or learning more about School of the Arts, please visit stjstl.net/schoolofthearts.





STJ **LEAD** SCHOOL

by **SCOTT OSBOURN** *St. John School Principal*

St. John School continues to be a leader in the educational community. When considering our role to provide an outstanding program for families, it is important that we excel in our development of students who are strong in their faith and prepared for success in a changing world. As an example, our teaching staff works diligently to ensure best instructional practices are utilized everyday that empower students on their learning journey.

Education and instructional approaches continue to evolve as more data becomes available regarding best practices. We are excited to be part of an organization that eagerly examines these practices with the freedom to implement the interest of students at the forefront. Our current mission and vision statements along with our commitment towards our core values have boldly led us to live out these expectations. Additionally, we recognize our obligation to develop programming and platforms that honor each student's unique gifts, learner attributes, and approach to education. These pillars have inspired the creation and launch of a new educational platform known as STJ LEAD School.

STJ LEAD School has been developed as an educational opportunity for students that follows a different platform than most schools. STJ LEAD will be a personalized learning environment set around individualized pacing of content standards and project-based learning. Students enrolled in this program will have the opportunity to move through content at their own pace while creating projects that connect to their learning in meaningful ways. Students who enroll will be empowered to set learning goals, daily schedules, and control their various aspects of their program. In addition, students will have opportunities to develop skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration that will allow future success.

As we have considered these important skills, there is evidence that students are not building these skills in school. In fact, St. Louis business leaders assessed job applicants who were

entering the workforce and found that 55% indicated a lack of communication skills, 51% indicated a lack of problem-solving skills, 50% indicated a lack of collaboration skills, and 42% indicated a lack of creativity. As a result, STJ Administrators began to consider other educational models and schools who are prioritizing these important skills. As we have considered educational models, we not only understand that critical decision-making is valuable for students, but also that each person approaches the world through a unique lens. For example, each child has a unique learner profile, social-emotional approach, as well as personality types and academic strengths. As a result, we suggest that students' learning experiences should be as unique as the learner.

Throughout our learnings and suggestions this year, we have been led to develop STJ LEAD School. Along with developing philosophy and continuous learning, part of this process included visiting various schools locally and throughout the country who are implementing this type of educational platform with much success. As we have assessed these programs, we recognize that not only does taking this step set us apart in the education community, but it also provides students with opportunities to build essential lifelong skills.

STJ School continues to value Spiritual Development, Academic Excellence, Leadership, and Learning Environment. We are committed to these standards as we equip and empower students for success in a changing world. While STJ LEAD School is a new program for STJ School, it holds true to the ideals that set us apart. We are excited to launch this opportunity in a one-classroom model for the 2018–2019 school year with hopes to expand in 2019–2020. If you would like to learn more about STJ School or STJ LEAD School or would like to schedule a tour, please contact our school office at 636.779.2325. As we finish up another school year and excitedly look ahead to the next, we ask for your continued prayers and support for our ministry as we foster faith development and lead the way in education.



SHAPING THE FUTURE

by **DAVID JAMESON** *Community Engagement Director*

Our missional journey in Cambodia can best be summed up in two words. The Gospel. What do I mean by that? Time and time again, in what seemed like a hopeless situation, God came through for us and made a way.

We were partnered with LCMS World Mission when we first began our work in Cambodia, and our plans were shattered when they suddenly backed out of all mission work in Cambodia. That seemed hopeless, until God made a way for us to continue the mission alone! We were planning to start what would have been called the Angel Dormitory, where underprivileged parents could choose to send their kids in order for them to receive nutritious meals, education, and love 24 hours a day. Right before we bought the building for the dormitory, the government passed a law that made it illegal for foreign organizations to house children overnight. That made our dormitory plan impossible. God redeemed that situation by showing us a better way, which involved supplementing the public school system with additional education, a nutritious lunch, and an incredibly wide reach within the community. We now call that model Stronghold Cambodia. God has demonstrated over and over that, no matter what the evil one tries in Cambodia, He will show the way forward!

It seems God is lining up another opportunity for us to trust him and to watch Him work his wonders. If you haven't yet heard it from the Stronghold Cambodia Executive Director, Jesse, then you'll be hearing it from me. We recently received word that Stronghold Cambodia is being asked to vacate the building they are currently renting by July 31 due to tremendous increases in rent prices in their town, Sihanoukville. While this wasn't welcome news, it also wasn't a complete shock. Jesse and the

rest of the Stronghold team have watched as foreign investors, primarily Chinese, have been purchasing property for three to five times the market value. As this began to happen more and more, the team began to realize that it was only a matter of time until the increases caused them to lose the building that they are renting. With this realization, they put their nose to the grindstone and started putting together contingency plans for exactly this type of scenario.

While Jesse and the missionaries don't have all of the details ironed out, they do have short-term and long-term plans that they are working through right now. That team, comprised of paid staff and volunteer missionaries, is more united and motivated than ever to see the work of the Gospel spread in Cambodia! Even so, I want to ask you, St. John Church, to flood them with your prayers and support! Because as you know, with uncertainty comes doubt, with doubt comes frustration, and with frustration the evil one can easily gain a foothold. Your continued prayer and support will do so much for them and will keep their spirits high.

If there is anything that I've learned from the history of Stronghold Cambodia, it is that God comes through every single time. I am utterly convinced that He will do so again this time. I cannot wait to see how God reveals Himself to the team over in Cambodia, and how he uses this transition to advance His Kingdom! We may not see it immediately, but it will happen, and we will look back on this and be thankful for what he does. Remember Jesse, Naomi, Tim and Diane Esala, Terry and Christy Cooper, Ashley, and Maria in your prayers this month, and be assured that God is holding them tightly in his loving arms.

Taking Our Campus to the Next Level

by **CHRIS TOOMEY** *LIFEjourney Director*

It is hard to believe all of the incredible things that God has accomplished at our church through *NEXT*. Literally on a daily basis, our staff and volunteers are “pursuing people like never before” and “mobilizing the next generation of world changers!” The stories of impact and life change as a result of these efforts have brought inspiration and hope for our future.

Another important part of our *NEXT* initiative is “taking our campus to the next level.” We set out to do this in three phases, with very clear objectives AND a commitment to NOT take on more debt in the process. As of May 2018, we have completed Phase 1 and are currently in the demolition/construction stage of Phase 2 RIGHT NOW, with plans to finish in August! It is incredible to consider both what has already been accomplished and what is on the horizon...

Phase 1 (September 2017-December 2017)

Update the interior of our Sanctuary so the environment compliments the worship experience by improving the sound system and modernizing our space, while maintaining an air of the sacred.

Phase 2 (May 2018-August 2018)

Renovate The Commons to foster a greater sense of community. Stopping to share a cup of coffee, spending time in prayer with one another and simply sharing life together are essential values of our DNA at St. John. New guests will experience community at St. John as soon as they step into our buildings.

Create an engaging and welcoming entrance to Children’s Ministry from The Commons, distinguishing it as the key entry point to Children’s Ministry and establishing a sense of excitement for our youngest as they begin their LIFEjourney.

Protect our most vulnerable by limiting access to our Children’s Ministry spaces to only parents and children and creating a single drop-off and pick-up for Nursery-aged children. Enhanced security will allow parents to worship with a sense of peace and to grow in their LIFEjourney.

Phase 3 (2019)

Beautify our exterior campus by designing inviting green spaces with outdoor areas for gathering and by providing clear visual cues directing our guests to the main entry areas for the Sanctuary, The Commons, and our Children’s Ministry area.

These changes are going to give our campus an entirely new look and feel, making it so much more inviting for guests. But, since we are not taking on debt to accomplish all of this it is critical that we continue to give financially so that all of *NEXT* can become a reality. Currently, we have fallen behind where we need to be to make Phase 3 happen. June 30 is our fiscal year-end and we need to make up some ground on our goal to keep our vision on track. So I would encourage you to pray about how God wants you to support the life-changing work that He is doing here each and every week. By supporting this church financially, you are investing in something that truly matters.



MedResources

TOTAL HEALTHCARE SUPPLY

- Orthotics • Lift Chairs • Scooters
- Wheelchairs • Oxygen
- Hospital Beds • Diabetic Supplies
- Bathroom Safety
- Ambulatory Aids • Sleep Therapy - CPAP

Board Certified Orthotist
Physical & Respiratory Therapists,
Nurses & Licensed Dietitian on Staff

Accepting Major
Insurances & Medicare

www.medresources.com



Chesterfield, MO 63017

Home Office: 636.733.7200

Retail Store: 636.530.4500

Alton, IL 62002

618.466.5632

MANCHESTER EYE CARE

A MEMBER OF *VISION SOURCE*

*Comprehensive Eye Care
for the Entire Family*

Benjamin T. Secoy, O.D.
St. John Member

14552 MANCHESTER ROAD



636.227.8700 | MANCHESTEREYECARE.COM



THE *Kristi & JT*
MONSCH | TEAM

www.themonscheinteam.com

636.537.8288

BERKSHIRE | Alliance,
HATHAWAY | Real Estate®
HomeServices

Kristi ~ Member Since 1999

When you see *how much* we KNOW, you know *how much* we CARE!

- Consistently Ranked Among Top 5 Agents in Greater St. Louis
- #1 Agents at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Alliance Real Estate
- More than \$1 Billion in Sales

* ©2017 BHH Affiliates, LLC. An independently owned and operated franchise of BHH Affiliates, LLC. Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices and the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices symbol are registered service marks of HomeServices of America Inc.® Equal Housing Opportunity.



GERSHMAN MORTGAGE

*Apply Online at www.GarrettKnox.com

Garrett W. Knox
VP Mortgage Lending
NMLS #221438

Direct 314.575.7167
Email gknox@gershman.com
eFax 314.455.7788
16253 Swingley Ridge Rd., Suite 375
Chesterfield, MO 63017



*This is for informational purposes only and not an offer to lend or extend credit. Gershman Mortgage, NMLS # 138063.



Petro-Mart

Convenience Stores

14181 Manchester Road
2401 Hwy 109
15670 Manchester Road

Follow Us



stjstl.net

Hey Thrivent Members, Help our campus look great for free!

Thrivent Action Teams enable Thrivent members to apply for grants of \$250 to make a difference in your community. That's cash to help you Live the Six!

Applying for grants is incredibly easy. Some St. John members have even banded together to use grant money to adopt one of our landscaping beds.

For more information about how easy it is to obtain an action grant, go to thrivent.com/making-a-difference/living-generously/thrivent-action-teams.

To find out how to adopt a landscaping bed or about other facility related projects at St. John, simply contact Steve Heep at spheep@stjstl.net.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 12
Ballwin, MO

15800 MANCHESTER RD.
ELLISVILLE, MO 63011
636.394.4100
STJSTL.NET

AT THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH AND LIFE
ST. JOHN

