

FAITH MATTERS

WHAT'S IN A NAME PART TWO

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WHAT'S IN A NAME

by **DION GARRETT** *Senior Pastor* PART TWO

I had just ordered my lunch at one of those walk-up places and was waiting to hear my name called. I was hungry, maybe even *hangry*, so when they called my name, I walked up to the window with intensity to grab my food. As I took hold of my meal and turned to head back to my seat, a middle-aged white guy with a hint of a southern accent said to me, “Your name is Dion? That’s my name too!” But there was something about the way he said it that made me feel like he wasn’t being sincere, that he was messing with me, only I didn’t get the joke. Or it might have been the fact that I don’t meet many other people named “Dion” and when I do, they usually aren’t middle-aged Caucasian southern males. At any rate, I was hungry, confused, and not amused. I tried to smile (I think I probably glared) and then turned and walked away back to my table.

Fast forward several weeks later to a night at a local place with Jocelyn and some friends. During our conversation, my ears kept picking up a name that sounded exactly like my own. Thinking that unlikely, and also since no one was waving me down, I chalked it up to mishearing. Suddenly, one of my group stopped our conversation, looked over in the direction of another table, and said, “Wait a minute, someone over there is named Dion!” Confident of my uniqueness in this part of the world, I expressed my doubt. She was not convinced.

“Hey, Dion!” she yelled in the direction of the other table.

Suddenly everyone at the table, including my middle-aged Caucasian southern friend was looking at us.

It turned into a hilarious encounter. I got a chance to apologize for my weirdness the last time we ran into each other. I found out that he is from the same part of northeast Alabama that my dad’s family hails from. I even found out that he has a son named *Garrett*. Yes, of the two men in their house, one is named *Dion* and the other *Garrett*. I still wonder if maybe he was messing with me but I guess it’s just oddly coincidental. Somewhere up the line, we might even be related.

Names! When you know someone well, their name counts for little. In fact, what you know of the person informs and shapes their name. But when you don’t know someone well, when you have very little to go on, a name speaks volumes about who that person might be.

Starting over two years ago, we began an intentional, disciplined effort to understand how people in our community see us and how our name fits into the bigger picture of our reputation and identity.

I’ve come to the conclusion, and many have joined me, that our name is a barrier. It perpetuates ongoing misunderstandings about who we are and we need to do a better job *informing* the community of who we are and what they can find here.

Name Creation & Community Input

Since February we started a process of generating names that might fit our brand house (see *Brand House Illustration at stjstl.net/brandprocess*) and better communicate who we are. The list grew to over 200 names, back down to a few dozen, back up to over 60, back down to 20, back up to 70 with the addition of numerous names offered by you, the congregation, until we finally settled on 9 names. These names were chosen because they (1) are compatible with our brand house (2) are relatively original and distinctive, not easily confused with other churches or institutions and (3) cleared preliminary trademark and legal work. We surveyed 200 non-church-going households in our community, to better understand what each communicated to them (our mission field). We came away with four strong possibilities:

Pathfinder

The Current

The LifePost

(The) Mosaic House

Congregational Input

We then turned to you, the congregation, asking for your input on the shorter list, and boy did we get input! Over 900 surveys were completed. We learned a lot. One of the things we discovered is that our congregation and our community are aligned on the two strongest names:

Pathfinder and The LifePost

Note: we opted not to test using the word "church" for redundancy, but "church" will almost certainly be included in our final name.

Now, if you're someone who feels underwhelmed or even confused by these names, let me insist that these are really great names! They are thoughtful, rich with biblical imagery, and communicate more clearly who we are. Also take a look at what others saw.

PATHFINDER

Pathfinder was our top rated name in the community.

- 83% of respondents say **Pathfinder** fit the description of our church.

- The connection between **Pathfinder** and the brand promise is strong at all segments but was the strongest among younger adults (ages 25-34).
- More so than any other name, **Pathfinder** conveys a church that "encourages people to take the next steps on their journey." Almost double (82%) the next highest name (The LifePost, 46%).
- Pathfinder is the top name respondents associated with "thought-provoking messages about real life," "inspires my connection to people and God," "doing good in the community" and "is a church for people like me." On that last note, 51% of people who have never gone to church regularly (the unchurched group) said **Pathfinder** conveyed, "a church for people like me."
- 7 out of 10 rated the name Pathfinder as likeable, the highest testing name.

But what people envisioned when they heard *Pathfinder Church* was really exciting:

*"With Pathfinder, it sounds like the goal of the church is to **welcome everyone** in the community. It sounds like a place that will **welcome everyone without judgment**. If I was going to go to a religious place, I would **want to be in a space like that**."*

*"It seems **hopeful and makes me interested**."*

*"Pathfinder makes me feel welcome. It makes me feel like **everyone has their own path** and are **welcome to be with others on their journey**."*

*"Everyone is walking on a path of life, so the **Pathfinder may connect people** looking for answers."*

*"The church sounds like it is developed to **help people in all stages of their relationship with God**, and **find their path with him**. I find the name welcoming and all-encompassing of their mission. I can easily guess what the church is about from the name."*

*"We all have a path to find which would help bring people in. The **name seems non-denominational... like the name of a church I would attend**."*

For me, Pathfinder gives a nod to our own congregation's heritage as trailblazers in faith and life. This area was settled by people who came way out to the outskirts of St. Louis County to make a life. For decades our church has blazed new trails in mission. Finally, *Pathfinder* reminds me of the many biblical references to God's presence on our *paths*, and especially to God himself, THE original Pathfinder.

Show me your ways, LORD,
teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.
—Psalm 25:4-5

You make your saving help my shield;
your help has made me great.
You **provide a broad path** for my feet,
so that my ankles do not give way.
—2 Samuel 22:36-37

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your **paths** straight.
—Proverbs 3:5-6

Pathfinder tested well in our congregation too, tying for the top spot. Here are some of the positives our own church family saw in the name.

*“There’s **purpose** to this name. **It’s not sedentary, it’s forward momentum.**”*

*“This matches the description best. It signifies that **everyone is welcome** and that our church **helps them follow a path to find God.**”*

*“Relates to the **journey** that we are on in life. Seems **warm and inviting.**”*

*“The different paths we take in life, like do we turn left or right, towards him or away – I can see a **vision of a shepherd helping us find our way through the dark on the path.**”*

*“Denotes that we are all on a **pathway**, maybe at different directions and speed, **finding ways to grow in Him. We all are pathfinders.**”*

*“I like that it subtly communicates a biblical message about **Jesus being ‘the way’ but in modern terms.** It seems helpful, like we want to **personalize faith** for people to **help them discover their path.**”*

THE LIFEPOST

When it came to **The LifePost**, our community found their second favorite name.

- 55% of respondents rated The LifePost as likeable, the second highest rated in terms of likability.
- 67% of survey respondents felt that **The LifePost** fit our brand description.
- **The LifePost** came in second place in each of the following categories: “Encourages people to continually take next steps,” “Inspires my connection to other people and God,” “Creates an informal atmosphere,” and “Cares about being involved and doing good.”
- **The LifePost** was a tie with Pathfinder for most likeable in the congregational survey, and performed better than Pathfinder with the younger group (under age 45) and with women.

I love what people in the community thought of when they were asked about the meaning of **The LifePost**:

*“I like that it **doesn’t sound too religious.** A post is something sturdy, so it matches the idea of a **church being a place you can count on and without judgment.**”*

*“I like the name LifePost because church is a **gathering place to discuss life issues** among people who share similar beliefs.”*

*“It sounds like a lighthouse, providing a **beacon of light to help people** through.”*

*“It caters to people wanting to place themselves in society. Like explorers unsure of where they are headed, this gives a **feeling of safety and comfort.**”*

*“The LifePost could represent a **starting point for a life journey.** It could represent an **anchor point**, thinking of post as a literal trunk or structure to anchor something, **but also moving freely**, think of tree branches or a flag in the wind. The **imagery associated with the name could be very powerful.**”*

For me, a **LifePost** reminds me of The Tree of Life in Scripture, wooden, solid, a place where life is found, dispensed. It even brings to mind the Cross, sometimes referred to as a post or a pole. It also references a more recent chapter in St. John history with an homage to **Outpost**, a series of smaller multi-sites we attempted in the early 2000s. Scripturally, I think of:

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the **tree of life**, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

—Revelation 22:1-2

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a **pole**." —Galatians 3:13*

I also like how you can insert a comma between the words "life" and "post" and suddenly be talking about life *after* something...the abundant life we have *after* (post) Jesus, eternal life *after* (post) death.

When thinking about **The LifePost**, other members of our church family said:

*"It sounds like a **safe and welcoming place** to be."*

*"This is a **solid place to anchor my life around**."*

*"I like that it is **unique**. It feels like light post, and has strong potential for metaphor and imagery. It also makes us sound **like a dispenser of life**... a place you come to **for direction or to get recharged**, but with the work is actually **OUT THERE**."*

*"I like that it **symbolizes a place that means more than just Sunday worship** to people."*

*"The more I look at this name the more I like it. It sounds like a place to go for all stages of life and faith, a **place to stop and rest**, and be **spiritually fed**."*

*"I like this because **life makes me think of Jesus** where it says in the Bible Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. **Post makes me think of something stable** and grounded. The post is also where someone can go for **safety**."*

*"**Our church is the post that holds us up in life, very appropriate for why we are coming together**."*

THE CURRENT & MOSAIC HOUSE

While there were positives with both of these names, they did not test as well in the congregation or the community. People who liked **The Current** tended to like that it implied change, adaptability, resisting the

status quo, and also forward progress (like the current of a river). Of course, rivers are strong symbols for life in the Bible too.

(The) **Mosaic House** mostly communicated diversity, everyone being welcomed, and the idea of different pieces coming together to make something beautiful (Romans 12).

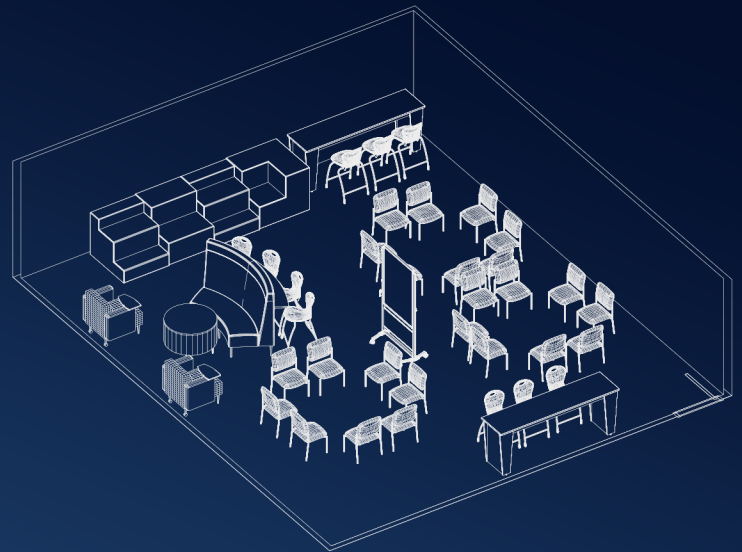
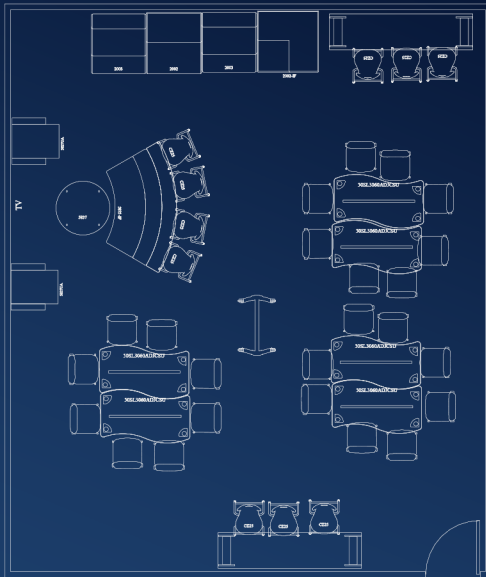
What's Next?

We want to provide time for everyone to sit with these naming concepts, to be open and pray. After some more time we'll schedule a congregational meeting to vote on a final name decision. Between now and then, please know I will be sharing more information with you, asking for your input, listening, and praying ceaselessly. I hope you join me in the process!

I've come to grips with the fact that there are no perfect names, but there are *better* names. Names that don't create so many misconceptions for people who don't know us yet. There is no doubt that our name keeps out people who might otherwise come in. I've heard stories from people who are now a part of our church family who drove by for years because they weren't interested in who they thought we were. We have an opportunity to do something that really costs us very little, but will allow people to discover that what they've been searching for is right here, under their nose all along, hidden in plain sight.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." —Matthew 13:45

To stay updated on our process and to gain access to key articles, videos, or PowerPoints go to stjstl.net/brandprocess.



STJ **LEAD** SCHOOL

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

St. John School has officially launched our new educational platform known as STJ LEAD School for students in Grades 3–5 for the 2018–2019 school year. While it is still early in the school year, STJ LEAD School is displaying evidence of producing a transformational impact, not only for STJ but also in the field of education. As we continue to focus on our mission of “equipping students to serve Christ in a changing world” through LEAD, St. John School is committing to relevant change by updating current classroom spaces, curriculum, and instructional practice. The new STJ LEAD School is focused on furthering students with essential life skills within an environment that fosters academic skills that includes projects, collaboration, and personalized learning.

Walking into the learning environment at STJ LEAD School feels different than most classrooms. Our learning studios are spaces where students can create, learn at their own pace, and choose their learning space. It is clearly a retraining of expectations within the school environment. Most people are used to

practices found in more traditional settings where students arrive each day and expect to be told what, when, where, and how to accomplish their work and activities. However, STJ LEAD is changing this paradigm and placing these types of decisions back on the students. Incredibly, we can already begin to see the positive impact that STJ LEAD School is making on students learning. Within the first weeks of school, students highlighted three aspects of the program.

Flexible seating provides students an opportunity to choose various places within the room to sit. This includes comfortable seating like beanbag chairs, couches and cushioned chairs. One student said that she “liked that she was not cramped in a desk all day.”

Students interact within a collaborative environment. The students appreciated that “they did not have to wait all class with their hands up to share their comments or ideas.” Instead, they are provided a challenge or topic and released into collaborative groups to discuss. The information that they



brainstorm is then posted and shared with the rest of the class.

Student feel like their voice matters. Student comments are sought after and heard in this environment and their opinions make a difference. One fifth grade student said “I think it is cool that even though the teachers are in charge, we get to share in the responsibilities.”

STJ LEAD is clearly leading the way in educational practice. Additionally, practices that are found at STJ LEAD are common practices that can be found in the rest of STJ School. All classrooms at STJ School have embraced some form of flexible seating. Our entire program is making strides in honoring all students’ unique abilities and gifts with elements of personalizing learning. In addition, student feedback is becoming the norm as we embrace student achievement, learning and growth. STJ School and LEAD School continue to uphold our mission and core values of Spiritual Development, Academic Excellence, Leadership, and Learning Environment. Now with the addition of STJ LEAD School, we have redesigned how we achieve these foundational principles by approaching education in a transformative way that clearly aligns with the mission of our overall organization.

If you would like to learn more about STJ School or STJ LEAD School, please contact our office at 636.779.2325 or learn more at stjstl.net/school or stjstl.net/stjleadsschool.



Come Inside. Welcome Home.

by **CHRIS TOOMEY** *LIFEjourney Director*

Have you ever watched HGTV's Property Brothers (you know, the two brothers who help families find a home and then renovate it for them)? I love the moment when the renovation is complete and they give the family their first tour of the home! It is so enjoyable to see the family overwhelmed with joy and so grateful. At the conclusion of each episode, the brothers look at the family and say, "Welcome home."

I have to admit, similar feelings of overwhelming joy and extreme gratitude overtook me with the completion and unveiling of NEXT Phase 2. On the weekend of August 18-19, the doors officially opened to the renovated spaces in our Commons and Children's Ministry hallways. Watching hundreds of people fill the rooms, gather around food and drink, and engage in conversation made me so grateful for the generosity of our church. I am inspired at how our people understand the value and importance of investing in community!

At first glance, it's easy to think of Phase 2 simply as a renovation project. But, in reality, this project was so much more! It was ALL about creating a welcoming "front door" to our church with clear wayfinding, creating a space to build community, and creating safe/secure areas for our children. In short, this project will help us more effectively show care, love, and hospitality to every person who walks inside.

You have heard us vision cast the Phase 2 goals, but here is some photo evidence to back it up:

1. Provide clear visual cues directing our guests to the main entry areas for the Sanctuary, The Commons, and our Children's Ministry area.



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

3. 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.

4. Protect our most vulnerable by limiting access to our Children's Ministry spaces to only parents and children during drop-off and pick-up. Enhanced security will allow parents to worship with a sense of peace.

So, thank you for being generous! We have a responsibility and an opportunity to utilize these incredible spaces to both build community with each other, and to reach the community outside our walls. I pray that this not only excites us, but it also fills us full with renewed joy and gratitude...

WELCOME HOME!





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