

**Name Change Discernment Team**  
**2023 Annual Meeting Report / January 21, 2024**

In the Spring of 2023, several of us began meeting to prayerfully consider changing ECC's name. You can read about this in the blog article published one year ago, entitled, "[What's In a Name?](#)"<sup>1</sup>

From the start, our goal was to be prayerful about this process, and we have been faithful to that intention. We agreed that we were not in a hurry, that we would seek the Holy Spirit's leading, and that we would hold our ideas openhandedly.

We have done all these things so far in the process, and we think we have done them well.

At one point in the process, one of our members made a comment that caught us all by surprise. We were discussing the Biblical Story that we had chosen as a congregation early on in the Vitality Pathway which we began in 2017. The story chosen by the committee at that time was Revelation 3.14-22:

"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation:

"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."

As we were reviewing this passage as a part of the process, a statement was made that the above passage was "no longer our story. We need a new story." We knew in the moment that this was true.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ecclife.net/whats-in-a-name>

At that point, we began to pray about a new story to better guide our process as the original story had done for us so well in the past. Each of us spent time in prayer and seeking to listen to the Holy Spirit, and then returned at a later date to share our thoughts.

Several passages emerged, and all of them spoke to us about the changes we have seen in ECC over the past few years. But none of them seemed the right fit. So, we continued to pray and listen and wait.

At our next meeting, early fall 2023, Margaret Martin shared the following with us about her own process in these things. It is best to let her say it in her own words.

For me, this process of discerning a new Biblical Story for our faith community has been really hard, like putting new wine into old wineskins as the Biblical passage goes. So, I took some time to figure out what was going on in my heart and why it was not resonating like it usually does when the Spirit is speaking to me.

I've experienced this malaise before as a designer. What has always worked for me has been to step back from the constraints provided for the project, consider what the desired outcome is, and then rethink everything. Regarding our Biblical story, as soon as I stepped back from trying to define our church with a story I got excited. So here is my best attempt to explain what I'm sensing.

It feels to me that a Biblical story is like a mooring line on a boat. Our initial story was appropriate because it told us where we were and helped us acknowledge who we were. That was HUGE. Now, discerning a Biblical story is like trying to tether ourselves to a story when we need to cast off and pick up a compass. If we are moving, a mooring line will just hinder our progress. I think that a single story would not be powerful enough for what God plans to do in and through this church, but a compass would help us chart a course toward a destination.

The passage that feels like a compass to me is Ephesians 3:14-21. I think if we claim this prayer as our compass, and live into it as Ephesians 4:1-16 talks about, we would move in the direction that Paul prays for the Ephesians. Can you imagine what God could do with our church as we focused our energy on grasping how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ; on knowing this love that surpasses knowledge; and being filled to the

measure of all the fullness of God. In addition, we would be rooted and established in love, not unlike those trees in Psalm 1, planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit in each season, their leaves never withering, prospering in all we do.

We all felt immediately that God had spoken. What we needed was not a new story, but a compass. We also agreed that the prayer of Ephesians 3.14-21 and the effects of such a prayer, laid out in Ephesians 4.1-16, were to be that compass.

Out of our prayer and discussion around the earlier passages as well as these from Ephesians, several themes have emerged. Over the past few years, God has been changing our identity. Several years ago we engaged in the Vitality process to move toward becoming a more healthy missional church. We are beginning to see the results of that process and our prayers. We are discovering that the challenges we've faced these past few years are being used by God to help us become the church he wants us to be.

- We are more unified than in the past.
- We are more transformed, and we continue to see spiritual transformation as a key part of our new identity.
- We are healthier as a congregation and better prepared to love one another well.
- We believe that the love of God we experience will enable us to better love our neighbors as well.

We have been sitting and praying with Ephesians 3 and 4, now, for several months. At our last meeting in early January 2024, we came to a place of recognizing that, while we feel we have learned quite a bit about who we are and where God wants to take us in the future—who God wants us to *become*—we do not yet sense that God has given us any specific direction concerning a name change. At the same time, we also sense that we are to bring you, the people of ECC, into this discernment process to pray over and reflect on this passage in Ephesians and on the process so far.

It is clear in our reading of Ephesians 4 that the Body of Christ, the Church, is important. God accomplishes his will in the world in and through us, and that includes this discernment over a possible name change. So, we want you—the Body of Christ that meets at ECC—to be a part of this process.

We invite you to take this report, the themes we have identified above, and (most importantly) Ephesians 3.14-21 and 4.1-16, and pray over them. Read, pray, reflect, and seek to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Along the way, if you think God has shown you something—if specific words or themes stand out to you—please contact one or all of us at the email addresses below. This can be something related to the Ephesians passages and how Paul’s prayer and his picture of the Church might serve as a “compass” for the name-change conversation, or in how a new name for ECC might connect with these passages.

Thank you for your willingness to read our report, for your prayer in these things, and for any insights you might share with us, going forward.

In Christ,

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