

WHAT SHOULD THE NEW NAME OF OUR CHURCH BE?

1. For practical and legal reasons, we need to come to an agreement for a new name for our church during the April 2, 2023, Administrative Council meeting. Perhaps you have already given the naming process some deep and prayerful thought and have already asked the Lord what would be pleasing to Him?
2. Do names really matter? The biblical concept of naming is rooted in the ancient world's understanding that a name expressed essence. For instance, to know the name of a person was to know that person's total character and nature. Additionally, names would sometimes be changed at divine or on human initiative, revealing a transformation in character or destiny, for instance:
 - Genesis 17:5, 15, "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations." "God also said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.'" (NIV)
 - Genesis 32:28, "Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.'" (NIV)
 - Matthew 16:17-18, "Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'" (NIV)
3. What advice do professional 'church' naming organizations provide? The following comments are a summation of their main tips: Put the term 'Church' in your name. Tread carefully with Greek or Latin words in your church name. Do not use acronyms. Keep it short. Consider the power of imagery. In some cases, consider dropping or exchanging 'Church'. Consider what you will gain or lose by putting your denomination's name in the church name (such as United) or saving it for a secondary descriptive tag. Consider the names of churches in your area to avoid duplication and confusion. Include your area code to quickly tell people where you are located (i.e., FMC931). Make sure your spouse is on board with the name. Make it easily memorable. Pray for the Lord's guidance (see #1).
4. Has our church ever been named anything other than Manchester First United Methodist Church? Yes, our name has changed across its history. From 1812-1815 as part of the Elk River Circuit it was Methodist Episcopal Church (M.E.C.) when meetings were held near Old Stone Fort. From 1815-1845 meeting in a log church building our name continued to be M.E.C. Then from 1845-1939 our name changed to Methodist Episcopal Church South. In 1939 through a series of church unifications our name changed to Manchester Methodist Church, likely adding the 'First' no later than 1949. Then in 1969 we united with the United Methodist Church and became Manchester First United Methodist Church until the present. While we have always been a 'church' the name Methodist has been the one constant descriptive in our name.
5. What now? Please pray for the Lord to impress upon us and to bring us to one accord on a name pleasing to Him that will simply and eloquently express the essence of who we are and what the Lord is calling us to become. Then submit your suggested name and rationale for the name to the church office via email manchesterfumc@gmail.com or by calling the office at (931) 728-4624 in preparation for the April 2, Administrative Council meeting and Townhall. Thank you for your cooperation.