

What's In A Name Congregational Feedback 10/08/2023

On May 18th, our Mayflower Council commissioned the *What's in a Name?* Committee. They were charged to address the following question that speaks to the mission and vision of the church:

As we begin the next century, does the name Mayflower Community Congregational United Church of Christ continue to reflect our identity, mission, and vision as a church?

The *What's in a Name?* Committee offered six listening sessions last spring and summer. These deeply engaging discussions were about our name and the symbols we use to convey who we are and who we want to become.

Feedback from these sessions was reviewed and culled into the following 5 reasons we should change the name of the church and 5 reasons why we should not change the name of the church.

Reasons we should change the name of the church:

1. Changing the name provides us with an opportunity to deal with the legacy of the Mayflower name and Mayflower symbolism that is problematic: it causes trauma for community members most negatively impacted by colonialism and Manifest Destiny
2. Changing the name provides us with an opportunity to reaffirm that as a Christian church, our duties are clear: to love God with our whole heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves; we must consider the spiritual cost of keeping our name
3. Changing the name provides opportunities to create anew and/or reaffirm our mission and vision for the next 100 years; this in turn will attract future members who are dedicated to the same beliefs
4. Changing our name provides an opportunity to continue to show leadership within the greater UCC and act as a witness for how all UCC churches could address these issues
5. Changing the church name should clarify our Denominational affiliation by deleting "Congregational" and retaining only "United Church of Christ".

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Reasons we should not change the name of the church:

1. Changing the name feels like turning away from what generations of Mayflower members have built together; Part of the Mayflower history/story is inspirational: it's about religious freedom, a brave voyage, a brave community, etc.
2. Changing the name could give us all the false impression that we have "solved" our concerns about racism/othering; we have not "earned" the right to change the name until we do this work
3. Changing the name could cause some members to leave the congregation because they have deep generational ties to this place and its name; this would be traumatic as we value and love all of our members
4. Changing the name raises concerns about losing the name recognition that we have built locally and nationally; this name recognition represents the deep commitment we have made to social justice reform over many decades
5. Changing the name raises concerns about a variety of practical considerations; the logistics of name changes are time consuming and expensive; there may be other financial repercussions as well

These reasons were shared with congregational groups on October 8th and will be reviewed at the Congregational meeting on November 5th. At this meeting, we will also present updates on the six actions charged to the committee by Council, as well as our planned next steps. We invite everyone to join the *What's in a Name?* Committee on January 14th and February 25th to continue our discernment journey.