

“What Does The Mayflower Name Mean To You?”

A Readers’ Theatre presentation

a collection of stories & comments

*submitted by members & friends of the congregation (ages 10 - 99)
as part of Mayflower’s “What’s In A Name” process*

Sunday, March 17, 2024

8:30 AM & 11:00 AM

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* **Included in the original reading.** + the writer submitted a second story not included in the original reading but included in this script.

OPENING REMARKS:

Good Morning!

My name is Mary Keepers and I'm the hunter, gatherer of your stories; as well as the weaver, sculptor of the piece you're about to hear!

Of the 14 Readers' Theatre presentations I've been privileged to work on here at Mayflower, this one has been the most challenging and humbling so I'm exceedingly grateful to Rev. Sarah, the WIAN committee and, especially, the writers for their trust and support!

I received almost 50 stories, the majority of which are included in this reading. (See note below) Stories were edited for time and clarity only...always staying true to the intent and the voice of the writer!

I'd also like to thank my fellow Readers for taking on this important task. Since this is all about names...we have a Gary, a Sheri, a Carey (as in Renee) and a Mary! Please know, none of us are on the WIAN Committee and none of us submitted stories so we are all completely neutral and unbiased in this reading. Plus, all stories are presented anonymously. The 3 other readers don't even know who wrote them!

WE ARE MERELY THE MESSENGERS!

I suspect you will hear things that you completely *agree* with. You will hear things you completely *disagree* with. But, hopefully, you'll also hear things that make you go "*Hmmmm, I never thought of it that way!*"

As I wove these stories together one common *thread* stood out to me...we/you ALL OF US LOVE THIS CHURCH, THIS COMMUNITY!

So, take a deep breath...and listen closely for those *threads* with open minds and open hearts! And now.... ***"What Does The Mayflower Name Mean to YOU?"***

(NOTE: ALL submissions are included in this transcript!)

Name Not a Factor - Male *

When we were ready to leave our former church; we asked a minister friend to help with our search for a new church that was involved in Social Justice issues and had more cultural diversity. He went through the entire TWIN CITIES directory and could not find a church that might fit our criteria. He then said that Mayflower UCC might be the answer if we didn't mind changing Denominations.

We came to visit and almost immediately knew we had found our new Home. The *name* Mayflower was not a factor in attracting us! It was the people, the Mission Statement of inclusion and the commitment to social justice that convinced us to become members and we're more sure than ever we made the right decision after 16 years of membership & friendships.

Heart and Soul - Female *

I am a middle-class, white woman. I made a commitment to learn about my white privilege after the murder of George Floyd. I read, watched documentaries, and listened to podcasts. I continue to learn. I am grateful for the caring process used in the exploration of the Mayflower name, including this opportunity to be heard and to hear the honest, heartfelt, stories of others!

My heart... and soul...are connected to Mayflower! I think "*Mayflower*" when I think of the Befriender ministry - a lay pastoral ministry for over 30 years. I think "*Mayflower*" when I remember the prayer shawl, cards, phone calls and visits from *my* Befriender when I had cancer. It is my *Soul* that is filled with memories of the many caring Mayflower "saints" that have touched my life...especially when my father died.

Hmmm, change the name? My heart *and* soul would ask us not to! Let's find ways to recognize the land this church is built on was Dakota land...to continue to be a justice-seeking church as advocates and allies. Let us be proud of our history and its name, Mayflower, knowing that we understand it differently than our church founders whose decision led to a 99 year reputation of leadership and recognition. We CAN honor them, *and the name*, in new ways.

First Impression - Female*

Over 20 years ago, long before becoming a member, my first impression of the name "Mayflower" for a church was that it must be a narrowly focused and insular church. Why would a church choose a name representing a small piece of American history? Why is American history even a factor in naming a church? Are they *all* descendants of the pilgrims who arrived on the Mayflower? The Pilgrims were Puritans.... hmmm... SO, they must be VERY conservative!

If only I knew then what I know now. It seems funny—and a little sad—that I stayed away just because of the name!

Voyage of Courage - Female *

As a member of a small set of people who are “*cradle UCC’ers*”, I have an immediate response to the name “Mayflower”. It brings up our shared history of the Congregational Church and its beginnings in this country. Responding to efforts to erase them from the English religious landscape, a small group of believers decided to leave, to emigrate to a new country. They were searching for a place to practice religious freedom – a concept that became part of the founding principles of the United States.

I am proud of my heritage that includes the amazing courage of those first settlers who came on the Mayflower. What fortitude! What clarity of vision! What a staggering faith!

That said, even though the Pilgrims were much less bothersome to the indigenous peoples than the Puritans who followed, the name Mayflower now evokes racist attitudes and the belief that this country was “open” to takeover by white Europeans.

It hurts to have this name besmirched, to realize how much it is part of the harmful story of the beginnings of this country. However, with most any story about human beings, there is always the danger of ascribing absolutely clean values, which is never, ever the case.

Appropriate Name - Male *

The Pilgrims, brave and trusting, set out on a journey in their small wooden ship the Mayflower to an unknown land. It was their *Church* and carried them across very real stormy seas. Their Trust and faith held them together and they made a "Compact" to be a Community. They were outcasts for forming their own congregations in their homes and not paying a tax to the Church of England. They knew the vicious world they were leaving. But they had the strength and humility *not* to make outcasts of the people of their new world.

They found a cache of food that sustained them. How could they not believe it was a gift from God? Their respect for the Native people was real and genuine and they survived with their help. How could they not regard them as God given messengers?

Cromwell's Puritans, who captured the English Government, came to these shores two generations later. They brought with them their own kind of monarchy and contempt for native people. The *Puritans* made *outcasts* of the native people.

The Pilgrims remain a symbol to me of trust and faith, bravery and humility, and respect for others. In an imperfect world, they are a parable of a Christian Journey. The Mayflower was their ship *and their church*. I feel the NAME of that small wooden ship is profoundly appropriate for *our* Church!

Wilma Lawrence Joined - Female *

I joined Mayflower in 1992. In my group was Wilma Lawrence, a registered Anishinabe. She commented how difficult it was for her to join a church named "Mayflower" on the 500th anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas. She believed in Mayflower's mission, so she held her nose and joined with me.

***Note:** This writer also included the following. However, it was not included in the original reading.*

When I joined, I was a bit concerned about the use of "Congregational" in the name. I was raised in a very UCC church. It was formed by the merger of two former Congregational Christian churches, First Congregational and First Christian, and a former Evangelical and Reformed mission church. Occasional issues were worked out but in general, it lived up to its name: Community UCC. When I was in grad school in Pennsylvania I volunteered to help with childcare at the conference annual meeting. 25 years after the formation of the UCC, there was still squabbling over "congregational", "Christian", "Evangelical" and "Reformed". One church was suggesting that the Conference Minister be called a Bishop. Members of another were counting the number of times that the word "congregational" was used, feeling that it was discounting their history. As a result, I believe that our name should not include any of the four strands that joined together to form the UCC.

Gratitude For Congregation will Remain - Female *

Initially, I found my way to Mayflower to attend the PFLAG support groups when my son came out as gay in 9th grade! My first experience at Mayflower was one of warmth and inclusion, hence an early appreciation and association with the name.

Perhaps most profound...in my greatest time of need...Mayflower was the home of my son's funeral providing the solace and ceremony that we needed. As our time at Mayflower has evolved, I have developed tremendous gratitude for being part of this community. While the changing of our name may better reflect our values within and with the greater community, my sincere gratitude for our congregation and pastoral leadership will remain.

Blind Spot - Male

My wife and I became members of Mayflower over a decade ago. Mayflower shared our progressive values and it is an important source of community for us. I never gave much thought to the name or what it meant to me or what it might mean to others. However, recently, I've become aware of my "blind spot" with the name and understand how colonization and other terms that don't reflect our values are associated with the name Mayflower and may be offensive to others.

We Can Continue as Mayflower Church - Female *

I have loved the *name Mayflower* since I came here over 40 years ago! It honors those pilgrims who came in search of religious and personal freedom.

As a church Mayflower has a strong reputation as a leader in our community, in our conference, in our state legislature, and in our nation. Abandoning our name will weaken this church's image as a leader in causes we have fought for and changes we have accomplished.

To me the name Mayflower symbolizes the journey of religious freedom, leading bold action in the struggle against oppression. That's what our forebears did, what we do here now, and what we can continue to do - as *Mayflower Church*.

Remove “Community Congregational” - Male *

Like so many others in the USA, I am a proud (albeit not as proud as I once was!) descendent of the Mayflower colonialists. I wasn't attracted to our church because of its name, however, even though I still find it problematic, I appreciate those who argue on both sides of the question of whether or not to change it.

I *am* clear that the 'Community Congregational' part should be replaced by 'United Church of Christ'. When the United Church of Christ was founded in 1957, we retained the 'Congregational' part of our name and parenthesized 'United Church of Christ' as kind of an afterthought. So our name reads Mayflower Community Congregational Church (UCC).

By contrast, nearly all of the Evangelical and Reformed churches adopted 'United Church of Christ' as part of their name. For example, Faith Evangelical and Reformed Church became Faith United Church of Christ. I'm sorry that Mayflower didn't change its name when Faith Church joined with Mayflower Church.

Now is past time for us to fully join and declare our pride that we are part of the United Church of Christ!

The Church that Rocked - Female *

My first Mayflower experience was attending a Mediation Skills Training event in Illinois for Church Leaders in 2006. I chaired the Peace & Justice team at another church at the time, but never forgot Mayflower as a "*church that rocked*" and brought the outside world into their sacred space.

Years later, after moving to Minneapolis, my husband and I were looking for a church. I thought of Mayflower. We came. We saw. We joined. We love Mayflower, the Jesus Path community, the place of many moving parts! Its name may change, but what it stands for remains the same.

A Quote submitted by a male member from a female UCC clergy from a different state.

The quote below was sent to a Mayflower member from a Native American UCC clergy person he knows who lives in another state. The quote provides a helpful, succinct perspective.

"From a Native perspective, our use of terms from Congregational history such as Mayflower, Plymouth, Pilgrim, is a disconnect when those congregations seek to denounce the Doctrine of Discovery or otherwise repair relations or ally with Native groups. That being said, in my own life, I'm the sixth generation since the Cherokee Trail of Tears on my mom's side, and go back to the pilgrims and the founding of First Congregational of Norwich, CT in 1625 on my dad's side so like many things in life, it's complicated."

Consider Old Timers Opinions - Female *

There are so many reasons NOT to rename Mayflower. First of all, many of my generation have lived with this name for years. For me, it's been since I joined in 1971.

We are known throughout the conference, and in Minnesota, as Mayflower Church...a name that resonates with social justice, equality, inclusion.

Mayflower supports Isaiah, Meals on Wheels, Beacon, among many other causes. Why should we spend the time and money to change the name when the money could be better spent on these charitable organizations?

Let's *celebrate* "what's in a name" by continuing to be on an exploration for new and uncharted territory in our search for the "Jesus Path" and social justice. Changing the Mayflower name won't change history. But we can move forward and celebrate the importance of the journey! As we sing in the hymn, "*We are Pilgrims on a Journey.*"

Mayflower has been, and will continue to be, my church.
But, please take into consideration the opinions of us "old timers."

The Conundrum - Female *

What's in a Name? I'm really struggling with this concept. On one hand I don't like the idea of changing Mayflower's name at all! The name has a presence here! We've built it for almost 100 years.

But, on the other hand, the name Mayflower is a reminder of colonization/manifest destiny, racism, and slavery. Can we remember it and condemn it at the same time? Certainly, we don't want to celebrate it!

It's important to be welcoming to all people—that's what Jesus would do. But, are we *truly* welcoming of others? Are we *truly* respectful and sensitive to the cultures and histories of others? Why change the name if we don't walk the talk? We've only just started to understand how our symbols make others feel. Do we take down the organ screen, the white angels in the narthex, the CROSS?

What are we doing to help bring black, brown and indigenous people into the congregation? Maybe *they* want a *brown* angel in the narthex?

I don't have the answers to these questions, but I do know it will take more than a name change for Mayflower to become the church we say we want.

The Vessel - Male *

Often, it's the young people who put things into perspective. In one of my meetings with former students, I asked them about Mayflower and changing the name.

In each case, the consensus was that the "Mayflower" was a boat. Why blame the boat for what happened afterwards? One student said, "It's like blaming the police car for what officer Chauvin did to George Floyd."

That got me thinking. The Mayflower was a vessel that carried the hope and promise of freedom from religious persecution. Mayflower, this church, has been a vessel for the LGBTQ+ community, immigrants, those seeking truth and social justice.

My parents were refugees...never giving up on what was good and wonderful about America. Even after the World War II prison camps, resettlement and the dissolution of the church they had come to love, Mayflower gave them respite, a place where they felt they belonged. It was the vessel that sustained them even in their final days.

So, why not celebrate that vessel...that boat...as a symbol of hope, promise and opportunity. Isn't that what and who we are?
Mayflower Church, the vessel, heading into our second century?

I LIKE IT VERY MUCH - Female *

When a name is changed, there is usually a good reason! To have a new identity! If the Mayflower name is changed, it will *lose* its identity. It will have to start over to make a new identity.

Those who came over on the Mayflower were people looking for a new home where they could worship freely. They made friends with the Indians. This is part of our history. Why hide it or attempt to change it? We need to be reminded of it. All the things that have filled our walls and sacred spaces speak to what we have done and where we came from. Leave all evidence of our past where it can be seen.

Our Mayflower Church has a very good reputation within the UCC community. It is highly regarded, respected and recognized; a desirable parish that has served the community well.

Let's honor those who made this church what it is today.

IT'S MAYFLOWER! MY CHURCH!

PLEASE DON'T CHANGE THE NAME! I LIKE IT VERY MUCH!

New Possibilities Await Us - Female *

I've always loved the name Mayflower because it is MY church – and I've been a member for many years.

I also loved working for Northwestern Bell which eventually morphed into Century Link and now Lumen. There is nostalgia for the old names, but I think it's more nostalgia for the working environment and the people we worked with. Those memories will always be with me, and it doesn't matter what the company name was at that point in time. Heck, I still collect Dayton's memorabilia!

I have come to accept that names change!

My parents are buried in the Columbarium in the Memorial Garden, and we plan to be as well. My parents never attended Mayflower although my kids did. Will they care if the name Mayflower changes? They have said no. My only hope is that they'll come by once in a while and say "hi".

I want the name of our church to be welcoming to all, and not unintentionally one that puts people off, or makes them feel uncomfortable. New possibilities await us.

Youth group members *

Hear these comments from 2 members of the Youth Group.

YG member: In my opinion we should not change the name because I feel connected to the name of the church and changing it would feel like a new thing. I think our church's actions represent enough good to make up for a name that could cause trauma for some

YG member: I don't like it. I think we could do better. We should find a name that isn't connected to cultural suffering or controversy.

And now, this from a former Youth Group member...now an adult....

Not What You're Thinking - Female *

Growing up here, Mayflower meant *church* before I knew any of the historical context of the name. The way colonial history was taught in public school, I remember being confused about why the most liberal space in my life was named after something from such an uptight, conservative group as the Puritans. Religious freedom and atrocities committed against Native peoples were mentioned in passing at most.

Discomfort with the name came later with more understanding. It's hard to tell people about this place without saying "*it's called Mayflower, but it's not like what you're thinking.....*"

Names are Important - Male

Growing up in the 1940's – 1950's, my name was very important to me. I was named after my father and was given my grandfather's name as my middle name.

Names are important. Names help identify who we are, both to ourselves and to those around us. The name Mayflower has a unique identity. It is that of the vessel that brought the pilgrims across the sea to this land in 1620.

Since then, there have been many brave souls who have traversed many miles to build a new life here and enrich the fabric of our society. I believe that the name of our church should represent our identity, values, and mission in today's world for the future, not the past; a name that is welcoming to all people.

Grateful and Proud - Female *

After the George Floyd event, I became more aware of white abuse and annihilation of our native and indigenous peoples and was *adamant* that the name “Mayflower” needed to change! I saw it as a representation of colonialist imperialism.

But as I sat through the listening sessions and heard what others said, my passion, my resolute need to have this name change, diminished!

Listening to others tell their stories about what “Mayflower” means to them I thought about my memories over the last 45 years. Changing the name is not going to take away my memories. The name, “Mayflower”, is just that, a name. I alone have the power of what it means and symbolizes for me.

Our UCC denomination and this congregation is a prophetic voice in the world. We are often the first to seek justice for those whose voices have been squelched: the LGBTQ+ community, immigrants, those on the paths to recovery and so many others. I am grateful and proud to be part of a denomination who always fights the good fight.

In closing...some lines from a Rumi poem I want to share with you.
(*Note: The following was used as The Gathering Litany in the services*)

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing, There is a field. I'll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, The world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrase ‘each other’ Doesn't make any sense.”

May this congregation know we are always one in spirit even when we *don't make sense* to each other!

This Isn't Hypothetical - Female *

Imagine this! You are organizing educational events for a group of social justice-minded youth who have expressed interest in learning more about the history of local indigenous communities. You enthusiastically contact an organization that specializes in educating about the effects of colonization on their indigenous way of life. And then they ask you what church you represent. You go to say *“Mayflower”* when you realize the name of your church is practically synonymous with colonization and here you are requesting education FROM those most grievously affected. Eventually you say the name, quickly followed by *“Yeah, I know how it sounds, but we’re not like that. The name is about religious freedom and the possibilities. We’re really very progressive.”* But even as you say it, you realize how hollow it must sound.

This isn't hypothetical. I can't tell you how many times I have watched people make the *cringe* face when they hear the name of our church.

In my opinion, our name is getting in the way of the conversations we need to have and the connections we need to make if we are going to do the work we are so passionately called to do! It's time to unpack our baggage and get it out of the entryway—it's blocking the door.

What's more important the church's past or its future?

I Know the Name..... - Female *

Back in the 1960s my mom was heavily involved in community ministries through Edina Morningside UCC and 5th Avenue Congregational Church. Several decades later, after she had moved to another part of the country, I told her our family had started to attend Mayflower UCC. She immediately said, *"I know the name Mayflower. They are the church who could always be counted on to step forward when help was needed."*

As we think about, talk about and wrestle with the idea of a name change, I wonder about the notion of *"I know the name Mayflower."*

Mayflower? What is THAT? - Male *

I am not observant. Not. At. All. I knew that those Europeans on board the Mayflower, the ship, who settled here had devastating consequences for those already living here. However, it didn't occur to me that THE Mayflower had anything to do with *my* church being named Mayflower. DUH!

I have a friend who is an atheist and has a visceral hatred for all organized religions. So, of course, being a good friend, I send her the most *religious* cards I can find for birthdays, New Years and other holidays.

One day I told her I was going to *Mayflower* for a meeting. She said, "*Mayflower?! What is that?*" I explained that Mayflower was the name of my Church. "*Mayflower??? Seriously!? Do you know all the horrible things that happened with the Mayflower; how can you belong to a church with that name?*"

I was silent. It was the first time I realized that my wonderful, inclusive, loving community had a name that was connected to the brutality and deaths of thousands of indigenous people. At first, I wanted to defend the name, but quickly realized she was right.

Shortly after this experience, we started the "What's in a name?" discussions and I am forever grateful!

Reader #1: When you hear the word Mayflower, what words come to mind?

- A pretty flower, most commonly seen in May.
- Pilgrims.
- Life and rebirth.
- A ship!

Reader #1: Do you think Mayflower is the right name for our church into the future?

Reader #4: I think so because it's a beautiful name and it should be kept that way.

Reader #2: I don't think so because it has a lot to do with colonization and Pilgrims.

Reader #3: We should change the name because if even one person decided not to come anymore because of the name. Because they deserve to learn about and enjoy the grace of God and it's just really important for people.

Reader #4: I don't know. It's hard to decide because this is a complex question and I don't want to upset anyone. Let's keep it how it is cause no fights have broken out yet and I don't want any fights to happen.

Mary: Thank you!!

All We'll Lose is the Baggage - Female *

I'm a lifetime member of the Society of Mayflower Descendants! Seriously!

My grandmother did all the genealogical research to prove our connection to the Society of Mayflower Descendants! She was incredibly proud of that connection and bought all of us 11 grandchildren lifetime memberships.

So, now that my family and I are members of Mayflower Church, it somehow seems pre-ordained. The hymns, liturgical elements and symbols make me feel right at home.

When I think about the NAME issue? I find myself saying that Minnesotan Nice refrain, *"It doesn't matter. Whatever you guys want to do is fine."*

BUT, last fall I read the story of a then-visitor who pulled into the parking lot when her car was dying. Relieved to find a church and certain of help, her certainty turned to worry when she read the name "Mayflower". It didn't say "Welcome!" to her and she didn't ask for help.

What else need be said? I know all the arguments for keeping the name... but if the name "Mayflower" causes anxiety to the very people we want as part of our family, I don't see a discussion to be had. The building that houses our congregation will be the same building with a different name. The people will be the same people with a different name. All we'll lose is the baggage.

Being On Board - Female *

As the name discussion goes on, I keep remembering being on board the replica *Mayflower* off the coast of Massachusetts. She is a small ship, kind of boxy, but beautiful in her own way. Being below deck boggled my mind. All I could think about was how it must have smelled, with over 100 humans, a herd of goats, some pigs and chickens in residence. No sanitary facilities, no way to bathe, no privacy. People must have been seasick and had all sorts of ailments that come from living in close quarters. People weren't as obsessed with cleanliness as they are today, but still - 3 months of this?

I know the long history of white and native struggles, and it's shameful and shocking. But I keep thinking about how brave the *Mayflower* passengers were and all they endured for religious freedom.

Let's Stay in The Boat - Male *

I've belonged to churches named after a suburb, a neighborhood or a city street. "Mayflower?" Now *that's* a name with a resonant history for a church that is genuinely congregational in its search for a living relationship with a loving God. The name shapes our theology, our expression of it, and our relationships with one another. I want to belong to a church in which we are free to find our own way to God. In other words, the congregational way.

Granted, the Pilgrims were a bunch of privileged white guys who were at the forefront of a genocidal empire that continues to leave profound suffering in its wake. Fair enough. But let's step beyond that caricature, because it shortchanges what they were trying to do. They came here to find the freedom to practice their religion the way they saw fit. That legacy lives on at Mayflower, and our name honors that – *"this collective we call Mayflower,"* as I heard from the pulpit on a recent Sunday.

Our history deserves our respect. We should do our best to emulate the good while doing our best *not* to repeat the bad.

The Jesus path can be considered a voyage in this boat we call Mayflower. As Martin Luther King Jr once said, *"we all came in different ships, but we're all in the same boat."*

Let's stay in that boat, and call it by its name...a name worth hanging onto.

Tough Complicated, Uneasy Question - Female *

I grew up Lutheran in South Minneapolis and knew about Mayflower since I could remember. When it came time to choose a church in which to raise our daughter, Mayflower fit the bill. I didn't think much about the name, but if I had, I think I would have said something like *"Huh. Kind of an odd name for a church, but whatever!"* It obviously didn't stop me from joining this solid and loving community!

But *now* my feelings about the name have shifted. Given the millions of Native people who have died of disease, alcoholism and more because of white settlements, Mayflower reminds me more of death and manifest destiny than anything else. I know that sounds dramatic, but, can we say a land acknowledgement and *not* change the name of our Christian community? It's a tough, complicated, uneasy question.

6th/7th grade comments - 2 Male *

Reader #1: The 6th and 7th grade Faith Formation class was asked to participate in the Readers' Theatre request for stories. Here are a couple responses from the 6th & 7th Grade Faith Formation class.

Reader #2: A name should show beliefs, opinions and perspective for what it is used for.

Reader #3: When I think of the name Mayflower, I think of both a pretty sprig of white flowers...AND the mosaic in the Fireside Room.

Thank you!!

Thanksgiving Service at Mayflower - Female *

In an early interdenominational Thanksgiving service hosted by Mayflower, a group of mostly school children from Four Winds Elementary School participated in the ceremony. They came in their regalia, leading the procession with song and dance. After the service they were invited to share in refreshments in the Fireside Room, under the bas relief picture of *Pilgrims' Landing*. If having a bunch of Native American children participating in a Thanksgiving Celebration in a place called Mayflower wasn't weird enough, the juxtaposition of those children and that picture was troublesome. Everyone was polite that evening, but the children never returned to Mayflower, and subsequent interdenominational Thanksgiving services were hosted by other congregations. Before that evening I never questioned the name Mayflower. But ever since, I certainly have.

NOTE: *This writer also submitted the following which was not included in the original reading on 3/17/24*

Celebrating Columbus Day was a big deal when I was growing up. In a town full of second- and third-generation Italian Americans, another group that was not warmly welcomed to this country, being able to claim an "Italian Who Done Good" as a national hero was a kind of salve and proof we belonged as well. As my understanding deepened of what Columbus wrought, my Italian pride gave way to a kind of embarrassment, that those who followed were so blind to those who were already here. I understood that for many, that guy's triumph was the beginning of the end for many. Can I still be proud of my people's efforts? Or do the consequences so outweigh the accomplishment it's best to not speak of them? Is there a place for Columbus?

Names Matter - Female *

When I visited Mayflower over 20 years ago, I cringed hearing its name. And when I saw the bas relief of the Mayflower vessel in the Fireside Room, I cringed again. My gut reaction was based on the colonial history of injustices and oppression. There seemed to be a disconnect between the church's name and the progressive reputation that Mayflower had in the community. Words and images can carry a powerful message that can either attract or repel us.

This past fall I visited Mayflower again, and my impression of the church took a 180-degree turn. I learned that a renaming committee had been formed and the congregation was engaged in a process of discernment. Wow! That changed my impression of Mayflower altogether. I now feel drawn to this church that is willing to consider new ways.

Reminds me of the UCC "God is still speaking" campaign, "*Never put a period where God has placed a comma.*" That comma allows a church to respect the past, live fully in the present, and prepare for the future with hope.

I Found a Church - Male

The year was 1975. I was 25 years old and ready to take on the world as an ambitious, confident young man running for election to the Minneapolis City Council. The League of Women Voters had scheduled a debate between my opponent and me on a dark, rainy night in late October at, of all places, a UCC church by the name of Mayflower!

With social justice as my calling card, I was hot under the collar that night about many issues which separated me from my opponent. Despite the weather there was a respectable crowd at Mayflower. A StarTribune reporter was on hand for what was seen as a toss-up race for the 12th Ward seat. I was a bit of an underdog to my independent conservative opponent. He had run previously, had high name recognition and the endorsement of the Republicans, police and Labor Unions.

My opponent, for whatever reason, did not show up which made me angry! However, often one speaks better and from the heart when your back is against the wall. I gave a good speech that night and then went out into the rainy night to knock on doors for votes. I was followed by the newspaper reporter. He complimented my speech and the next day there was a nice story about the race in the newspaper.

Unfortunately, I went on to lose that election by a 60-40% margin, but the story still has a happy ending since that night I found a church!!

More Than a Name - Female *

Mayflower has been my church *home* for 50 years! The name and our symbol of a ship to me signifies a journey...along with my community of fellow travelers, we explore what it means to follow the Jesus Path. This is where I find comfort and spiritual guidance...a safe place where I can ask important questions about Jesus and worship God with trusted friends old and new. In a word - Mayflower is HOME! When I am out in the community, I am proud to tell others that I am part of the *Mayflower* community where we work for justice!

I have not heard clearly from those who want to change the name as to WHY! There have been intimations about racism and issues with Native Americans, but I think we need to make a real effort to learn the history that seems to be at the root of this question. Develop a plan for everyone in the congregation...not just the Council...to participate in the education. We should not divert valuable resources of time, money, and effort to a name change until we have strengthened our own community and put our own house in order.

Changing the name based on negative history of the past does not recognize and honor the meaning of the name for me. We need more time to consider this extremely important question. Let's have an extended process to discuss, learn and educate ourselves about who we are as a spiritual UCC community. *Then* we look at whether the name Mayflower matches the mission and vision.

I want to look to the future, not the past!

Words change - Female *

As a life-long student of language, I've come to terms with the fact that a words' meaning can change and whatever we interpret from it nowadays may not have been the original intention.

To paraphrase Shakespeare: *“What's in a name? That which we call a congregation by any other name would love just as sweetly.”*

Do we have so little faith in our community that changing the name on top of our letterhead would break us apart? I don't necessarily know what could replace it, but surely we are rational enough to find something that better suits what our congregation has become.

With that being said, I find it hard to imagine calling our church something else. To me, it's been Mayflower all of my life, and it would admittedly be hard to let it go! But it's not about me, and it's not about the few. It's about the future!

Native American relative - Female *

One of our relatives adopted a Native American. He is now an adult and has returned to living with his native community. We wanted to have a big Thanksgiving for the extended family, so I invited him to join. He paused. I said I understood his reluctance, since Thanksgiving was not celebrated by many Native Americans, but we were not trying to celebrate the traditional Thanksgiving; we just wanted to celebrate family and to get together. *“You know”, he said, “those Pilgrims in the Mayflower were at the beginning of a movement to annihilate us. And then they were mostly forgotten for two hundred years until Thanksgiving became a national celebration of the white settlers in America. At about that same time Minnesotans were hanging people of my tribe for protecting their land, and my people were starving. It hurts.”* He did not join us for Thanksgiving. But, he did join us for Christmas.

We have talked more, and I think he understands how we feel, but I worry that if we invited him to a building named in honor of the Mayflower, he would politely refuse.

This Name Is Complex - Male *

The name, Mayflower, is complex, rich with history. For me it represents truth, challenge, hope and faith.

There is truth in the fact that I have ancestors who arrived here in the Mayflower...whether or not it was actually *the* Mayflower itself, it IS my heritage. At some point, our ancestors arrived on ships with noble intentions, and then took what they wanted, with a rationalization that is hard to fathom.

There's the challenge. To live WITH the truth, to be part of the generation that finally claims it and does something about it. And if there's anything I've learned about this church, it's that this church has a firm commitment to "do something about it".

That's where hope and faith come in. The name Mayflower, aside from the ship, is the name of a flower that faithfully returns every spring representing rebirth and hope.

Whatever we call ourselves, we are still in the storm and I have no choice but to remain hopeful and faithful in our spiritual journey.

Reassessing - Female *

I have been involved in dealing with racism such as desegregating Minneapolis public schools and joining discussions here at Mayflower for *years* so my reaction to the insinuation that *I* was somehow responsible for this mess, I thought, *"It couldn't be me! I was descended from strong, righteous Pilgrims"*.

But, much to my dismay, as my book club began to read books dealing with racism, we read a book titled "Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists and the Origins of American Slavery" by Margaret Ellen Newell which is a powerful revelation of what these ancestors of mine did! They not only stole food the natives had cached for the winter but they kidnapped their children and sold them into slavery on a Caribbean sugar plantation. The book goes on to describe many other atrocities. These people were just awful! It made me reassess my ancestry and admit I was as complicit in our present sinful culture as anyone else.

So when we started talking about changing our name from that leaky, smelly former slave ship, the Mayflower, to something more representative of who we aspire to be, I was all in. I am excited to hear about the proposed names we could adopt and am eager to help us grow into our new identity.

Creekside Montessori School's Name Change - Female *

As the Mayflower Early Childhood Center emerged from the challenge and chaos that was the pandemic, the parents, staff and board had spent months studying and discussing what it would mean to become more inclusive across race. How could we live further into our mission of overcoming the lasting effects of racism? And could the name “Mayflower” actually be counter to this mission?

We worried that the name “Mayflower” could evoke the imagery of slaving ships and white imperialism, especially in the perspectives of people of color and indigenous people. We wondered whether the name alone could keep the very families we wanted to reach—from ever considering the school.

So the school conducted a creative and inclusive process to adopt its new name: Creekside Montessori School. This name was widely appealing because it pays homage to a meaningful shared place, while offering a peaceful reflection of the natural elements and a nod to the school's connection to Creekside Commons - an important part of the school's founding story, to serve families across the economic spectrum with a full-day program.

As Those Before Me - Female

When I was a little girl growing up on the prairie in SW Minnesota, I often wondered where the Indians had gone...since they *must* have roamed our prairies and lived beside the banks of the Redwood River. I still wonder about the souls that were here before me...

As Those Before Me

Over the silvery, luminous lake, the call of the loon echoes, ancient and eerie, My ears hear as those before me heard.

Up through the endless azure sky the eagle soars, gliding and graceful, My eyes see as those before me saw.

In the dappled, dark green wood, the deer stands quiet and still, then leaps away, My heart sings as those before me sang.

As those before me...

We cannot change the atrocities of history, but maybe we can continue to evolve as the free thinkers we are and become a symbol for healing.

Indigenous Heritage - Female *

I mentioned to my friend, who is a Cheyenne River Sioux, that my family started going to church. She was surprised, since she was steeped in Native traditions and was skeptical of church-goers. She asked, *“What is the name of this church?” (Pause) “Umm, it’s called Mayflower”*. She raised an eyebrow. *“But it’s a super cool church! They are cool with all kinds of cool people, like LGBTQ+ people, social justice issues, climate change issues, peace and love!!!”*

My kids and I are citizens of the Cherokee Nation, but I didn’t grow up with indigenous traditions...I was very disconnected from my ancestors. But, I was embarrassed by the name “Mayflower” in front of my friend. And since then, I can’t stop thinking about it. Little ships on the organ. Colonizers coming to America on those boats, people who destroyed another people. It bothers me every time I come to church. What would my ancestors, who traveled on the Trail of Tears, think?

For some people, the name Mayflower does not represent an open and welcoming community. It represents the start of a genocide of a people. So, I would definitely be in support of a name change for the church.

Parking Lot Dilemma - Female

I first saw Mayflower Church...and the name...in 2001. I was moving back to south Minneapolis after 10 years of living north of the Cities and as I pulled off the Diamond Lake Rd exit on my way to my new neighborhood, my car began to have problems. I made it into a parking lot nearby where it died! I laid my head on the steering wheel and wept.

When I came up for air, I noticed the sign, Mayflower Church. "*Mayflower? What kind of church is this?*" I had been married to an indigenous man and thought this must be some group of white Puritans. I did not enter the church to ask for assistance.

Once settled in, I started looking for a church...a church that shared my values of a just world, promoted spiritual growth, allowed me to develop my faith and was inclusive. A friend told me about a progressive church nearby, involved in social justice issues...named *Mayflower!*

As I drove into that same parking lot to visit, I remembered that day, years ago, and my first thought, not to enter the doors of a place named Mayflower. However, that day I *did* enter those doors and received a warm welcome! And when I heard Rev Sarah Campbell preach, I knew I had found my church.

The *name* Mayflower initially deterred me, but it was Mayflower's *reputation* that brought me through the doors.

God Will Lead Us - Male *

The Pilgrims' arrival had positive elements of seeking, exploring, and growing into more Christlike behavior. But in our wider culture, when people hear the name, "Mayflower," it naturally evokes the story of racism and bigotry that has all too often been led by Christian churches. What justice-minded person of any race would want to be part of that toxic history that continues even today?

I didn't think of the problematic name when we came to Mayflower. What drew me was the strong witness and action for justice, the openness to a broad range of theologies, the desire for lifelong faith formation, the music that lights the flames of our hearts, and the joy and laughter that helps sustain us. The name has undeniable negative baggage and I'm convinced it's time to choose a new name. That's what the Pilgrims might even advise us, given their seeking of something new.

I'm grateful for our sacred process of discussing this and I trust that God will lead us into a new name that will be more congruent with who we seek to be as God's UCC people of faith.

Is It Safe There? - Female *

Fifteen years ago, I was a spiritual refugee searching for a place to worship God and be accepted for who I am. I found this church, Mayflower, that had a rainbow colored sign and would not sign marriage licenses until LGBTQ people were included.

It has become my spiritual community where I can worship, serve, learn and grow.

So, I was greatly saddened to hear stories of people who would not enter this church because of the words “Mayflower” or “Congregational”. Neither word has any special meaning to me.

However, recently, I was meeting a friend for coffee and we wanted to find a new locally owned coffee shop. Arriving at the destination, we were both surprised that the coffee shop was inside a large well known Evangelical Church. Neither of us felt comfortable and quickly went to Starbucks!

LGBTQ people are still not welcome to worship in many churches. So, I do scrutinize church names and their outward facing symbols and wonder ... *“Is it safe there?”*

Mayflower Memories - Female *

I grew up in the “old” church across the street and have very fond memories of Mayflower from childhood.

The Mayflower bell is one of my favorite memories! The rope hanging down, the awesome sound it made. I also remember the heavy adult choir robes hanging along the hallway in the basement and the smell of them! I sang in the children’s choir; we had white robes! I remember hymns and Christmas carols and making crafts during advent. I remember a friendly, smiling man who greeted us on Sundays. Cliff! Our maintenance man!

I remember running around the old church during Lock-Ins, exploring all the stairways, hallways and nooks and crannies!

I remember my dad taking the tiny Communion glass as it passed along the rows of pews and balance it on his knee to impress me.

My grandparents attended Mayflower, I was baptized at Mayflower, was active in choirs and youth group, was Maid of Honor at my sister’s wedding, was married at Mayflower and put my mom to rest at Mayflower. Her ashes are in the Columbarium. My mom and stepfather designed one of the little wooden boats that surround the organ pipes, and my stepfather occasionally gave sermons.

To me, Mayflower represents love, peace, humanity, inclusivity, community...and *family*. That is what Mayflower means to me. And the name is synonymous with all of that!

Marty in The Hymnal - Male *

We were members of a UCC church in northern Minnesota and moved to Minneapolis. We were looking for a church with a diverse membership, but that church doesn't seem to exist. We chose Mayflower because the members were socially, religiously and politically like minded to us and we had *heard* of Mayflower.

Why had we *heard* of Mayflower? Here's one example from the Black Hymnal, # 581: And I quote, "*The musical setting and additional stanzas were composed by **Marty Haugen**, composer-in-residence at Mayflower United Church of Christ Minneapolis, Minnesota.*"

The following response was sung by the congregation at the end of the reading. It is the refrain from The World Peace Prayer, #581 in the Black hymnal:

*"Leads us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
from despair to hope, from fear to trust.*

Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace.

Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world, let peace fill our universe."