

- **The name feels a little bit formal, are we becoming a more formal church?**

I suppose we have come to appreciate some of the more formal elements of worship that have often been overlooked by the free church tradition—ancient hymns, confessions of faith, frequent participation in the Lord’s Table.

While Baby boomers and Gen-xers largely shy away from formality, millennials are drawn to the more participatory elements of a worship service. They like a mixture of “contemporary, classic, and casual—done authentically and done well (Millennials, Worship and the Church)”

That is what we like as well.

- **How about the name Christ Fellowship instead of Christ Church?**

I love the name Fellowship. It describes the essence of our relationship with Christ and with one another.

Church however is the name that is most consistently applied to New Testament Fellowships. While fellowship is at the heart of what it means to be a church, the church is far more than just a fellowship—it is the center of Christ’s redemptive mission in the world.

We not only want to boldly proclaim Christ, but we want to boldly proclaim the Church as the heart and center of God’s redemptive plan in the world. We are not only calling people to love Christ, we are calling them to unashamedly love his church.

Many people want the church without Christ; some want Christ without the church; others want Christ and His Church without actively engaging our world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS 02.19.17

NEWCOMERS COFFEE, Sunday February 26 @ 5:00p If you are new to Fellowship, we would love to have you join us next Sunday evening at Paul & Cindie’s for our Newcomers Coffee. We will have finger foods, great coffee and dessert waiting for you. The Newcomers Coffee affords you a great opportunity to meet our staff, other people who are visiting Fellowship, and to learn more about the church. For more info go to: experiencefellowship.com/events

SKILLED HANDYMEN NEEDED We need a small team of skilled handymen to help us with small projects on the property. The first project would be installing a sturdy mailbox on the property so that we can actually start receiving our mail. Please contact david@experiencefellowship.com if you can help us out.



Dear Fellowship Family,

We are currently preaching a series that captures the journey we have been on as a church over the past fourteen years.

Last weeks message was entitled, “Christ the Center.” We talked about Christ as the Heart and Center of the Christian Life; Christ as the Heart and Center of the Biblical Story; and Christ as the Heart and Center of All We Are and Do as a Church.

As we continue in the series we will talk about the “Church as the Heart and Center of Christ’s Redemptive Mission in the World.”

If anything has changed with me, it is simply that I have grown to increasingly treasure Christ as the beginning, middle and end of the Christian experience.

I consider my call as your pastor “To boldly proclaim the message of Christ so that people may come to know him, be transformed by him, and be actively engaged with him in his redemptive mission in the world.”

We have described our mission over the past several years as leading people into a deeper love for Christ, His Church and our City.

As we move into our new church facility in the fall, I would like to propose that we adopt a new name that more aptly describes who we are and what we are about as we reintroduce ourselves to the community.

We began this conversation nearly two years ago as we started to bring on new staff pastors and think more deeply about our future as a church. We have continued the conversation with staff, elders, and small group shepherds, and would like to extend the conversation to the larger church body this morning.

I would like for us to change our name to “Christ Church” and wanted to share my heart with you on the matter as we continue the conversation.

WHEN SHOULD A CHURCH CHANGE ITS NAME?

A friend of mine (Will Mancini with the Auxano Group) who consults with churches on major cultural shifts, suggests that there are five reasons a church may want to consider changing its name. I believe reasons 2, 3 and 4 apply to us.

1. When the scope of a church's ministry grows beyond a name that is geographically limited. (i.e. Westlake Bible Church to Austin Ridge)
2. **When the current name no longer describes the identity to the church.**
3. **When the new name aligns more powerfully with the vision and purpose.**
4. **When the name re-clarifies a church's identity during a relaunch, an organizational right of passage or a new strategic direction.**
5. When two churches have merged and the new name helps create a common identity.

Number 4 is especially powerful. We are about to experience a major organizational right of passage as we move into our new ministry home. Now it the perfect time to clarify who we are and what we are about.

WHY SHOULD WE ADOPT THE NAME CHRIST CHURCH?

1. It is simply a cool name. It has both an ancient and modern feel. The name "Christ Church" goes back to Oxford College during the English Reformation and was the name of the first Church established in the Colonies. It also reflects a bold gospel-forward identity that many young church planters in Acts 29 and the Gospel Coalition movement are choosing. Our younger pastors love the name and all it represents.
2. Christ Church describes the essence of what every church should be. Christ is our Head. We are His Body. We Belong to Him. Our purpose is to Glorify Him.
3. The name Christ Church better aligns with our mission: Fellowship Bible Church exists to lead people into a deeper love for Christ, His Church, and Our City. *Originally*, Fellowship Bible Church exists to introduce men and women to Christ and build them up in the faith so that they make a difference for Him in the world where they live."
4. While "Fellowship Bible Church" describes part of who we are, "A Fellowship of Believers who are deeply committed to the Scripture; Christ Church describes the essence of who we are, a people who are committed to proclaiming Christ, so that people will come to know Him, be transformed by Him, and actively engaged in His redemptive purposes in the world.

5. The Bible Church has traditionally been aligned with the Dispensational Theology of Dallas Seminary, and while we do not fit neatly in either camp, we are far more reformed than we are dispensational.
6. It is a bold proclamation of the gospel. The word "Christ" will be front and center as our neighbors pass our entrance day-in and day-out.

SOME COMMON CONCERNS WITH THE NEW NAME

- **Changing our name at this critical juncture in the life of the church could be needlessly disruptive and confusing.**

It could indeed be unnecessarily disruptive. It will call for a lot grace, understanding and clarification along the way. If the name change did not flow out of deep Biblical conviction of who we are and what God has called us to be, it would not be worth considering.

- **The name reminds me of the Church of Christ.**

Christ Church does share two words in common with "Church of Christ." But those are two really good words, that I am not prepared to abandon. The name is broadly accepted by a number of movements and denominations: Anglican, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, the Gospel Coalition and Acts 29 churches.

- **Fellowship Bible Church is a good name and that is how people have come to know us.**

Fellowship Bible Church is a great name. It is part of my spiritual heritage as a Student of Gene Getz at Dallas Seminary (Founder of the Original "Fellowship Bible Church") It is simply no longer an accurate identifier of who we are. Moving into the New Building is a perfect time to clarify who we are as a church and define what is most important to us.

- **If we change our name, people will wonder what else has changed?**

That is true, and the name change offers the opportunity for further clarity. We are more deeply committed to Scripture than we have ever been, but we are increasingly treasuring Christ and the gospel as the heart and center of Scripture. We are seeing Scripture through the lens of Christ, and that perspective has changed everything—our preaching, our worship, our discipleship, our calling and our mission.

- **Are you concerned with being identified with Christ Church of Austin?**

Not really. Cedar Park and Downtown Austin are two different worlds. They are a somewhat mystical anglican church, we are a gospel centered independent reformed church. A quick glance at our website or visit to one of our services will immediately reveal the difference. I do not mind sharing the name, and it fits seamlessly with our calling and mission.