

## Wayzata Free Church Paper On Name Change

Over the past year, God has called us into a time of reflection and seeking His guidance for the future. Our church name is one of the strategic areas we will look at during this time of “reset”.

Many of us have a strong sense of history, connection and attachment to our name. Our intention is to honor the history of those who invested their lives in our church. *A change in our name is all about our vision of reaching our community for Christ.* We remain focused on the core doctrine of the EFCA and desire to have a church that is open and inviting to our community. Our name says and means something to everyone who encounters it.

As we reset, we are seeking God’s vision for our church. Changing our name will coincide with our missional vision for the coming years. Name changes are evident in the Bible when a person was re-envisioned and given a new name (Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter, Saul to Paul).

We will seek a name that ties to our vision of serving the West Metro and removes any barriers to fulfill the mission Christ gave us. We will seek a name that will:

- Provide a churchwide identity and vision for current members as well as those we want to reach in our community.
- Give a clear, public identity to make it easier to reach our entire geographical area. We draw attenders from several communities in the West Metro, not just Wayzata.
- Offer an ease of explanation – a name that ties to our community and purpose.
- Remove all barriers in order to fulfill the mission of reaching the religiously unaffiliated. Our name is our first opportunity to share our vision. Specific elements of our name may not accurately describe our vision:
  - Wayzata, as a community, is often affiliated with wealth and could feel exclusive.
  - People tend to confuse us with Wayzata Community Church.
  - “Evangelical” was omitted from our name 10 years ago. While the word describes us, it is often polarizing and limiting. The word’s use in politics and the media can create confusion and connect us to values we may not all share. An Evangelical Free church pastor in Colorado shared about a visitor who was thrilled to find a church that was “Evangelical-Free” meaning free of Evangelicals.
  - “Free,” a well-known descriptive religious term in the late 1800’s, no longer carries a shared definition in our current context.
  - When talking to outsiders, we spend more time explaining what “Wayzata Free Church” means rather than talking about our values and Jesus.
  - Other local churches found success after a name change (examples: New Hope Church, the Grove and Revive Brooklyn Park Church). Like our sister churches, we would continue to identify with our denomination, the Evangelical Free Church of America, by using the designation, “An Evangelical Free Church”.

This process is just beginning. Next steps will be communicated as the process gets underway.

None of us attend our church because of the name. We attend because we love this church. We love what this church has meant to our family, our marriages, our kids, our relationships and mostly our relationship with Jesus. For these reasons, please join us in praying about this initiative.