

**1. *Why are we changing our name?***

For the past two years there has been some confusion concerning our name. This has primarily come from an online segment initiating contact with us through our Facebook page. This growing group assumes that Illumination Church is affiliated with The Illuminati—a global cult. A smaller number of people have asked if our church is part of the “New Age Spiritualism” movement based on our name. One of Pastor Mike’s mentors—Pastor Joel Johnson of Westwood Church in Chanhassen—has expressed concern about our name. He suggests that a Twin Cities’ based new age cult called Eckankar is now very much connected with the term Illumination and we should consider the possibility of unintended associations as they or we grow. We don’t want our name to give a false impression to non-believers as we endeavor to share Christ with them. We don’t want our name to hinder Christian transplants looking for a solid Bible-based church. **We don’t want any real or perceived negative associations with our name to make it harder to accomplish the mission Christ gave us to go and make disciples.** These observations and concerns led Pastor Mike to bring the subject to our church Board. After thorough discussion, a congregational town hall meeting, distribution of congregational surveys, and a 6-week season of prayer and fasting, the Board voted to change the name of our church in January of 2019. The vote was unanimous.

**2. *Is it true we have already changed our name once? If so, why?***

Yes, there has been one other name change in the past. Our church was planted on Easter 2009 under the name Lifeprint Church. In February 2010 our planting pastor had a very public moral failure. This was devastating to the church and our young name in the community. After a painful and prayerful process, the church leadership chose a name that would remind us to live in the light and to point people to the light of the world—Jesus Christ. This name—Illumination Church—has served us well for the past 8 years of healing, stabilization and direction setting. Under the name Illumination we have seen God do wonderful things. Although the name has been Biblical and a source of healing, recent years have revealed several emerging negative associations that now call into question the sustainability of the name.

**3. *What were the results from the congregational survey that was distributed in December 2018?***

Over 50 surveys were returned to us from regular attenders and/or members of our church. We also received surveys from church leaders outside our congregation that were sent to gain outside perspective. Several Facebook dialogs were initiated that resulted in robust conversations with a wider audience of both believers and non-believers on the subject. The feedback yielded more than one hundred different name suggestions in addition to other information. We focused on overlapping suggestions, themes, and the congregation’s tolerance for change. From this data we concluded:

- The overwhelming responses were in support of a name change (over 99%)
- No new name suggestion was frequently repeated (3 or more repetitions)
- There were a remarkable number of names with the word “Mercy” in the title
- No survey marked “I would leave the church over a name change”
- Almost half of the surveys indicated a name other than Illumination would make it easier to invite people who do not currently attend a church to our worship services

#### **4. So what will our new name be and why?**

**With the support of the staff, our church board voted unanimously on the name “Mercy Road Church.”** Pastor Mike brought this name forward as the leading candidate after analyzing the survey feedback. Consideration was given to what suggested name might describe our history, catalyze our present, and cast a compelling vision for the future. **Mercy** points people to the forgiving love of God poured out in Christ through the cross. **Road** reminds us all that we are on a journey of faith and nobody fully arrives this side of eternity. The best road trips are those shared with family and friends and in this we are reminded of the journey we are on together. Practically, this name serves us well in that it is easy to spell, remember, and is not commonly used by other churches. Although no name is perfect, we feel it has appeal for both believers and non-believers. **Several guiding Scriptures are proving helpful in explaining our new name:**



## MERCY ROAD CHURCH

- **Micah 6:8** *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* \*This text reminds us that following Jesus is a journey in justice, mercy, and humility. Our part is to simply keep walking with God on the road he sets before us each day.

- **Luke 24:13-35:** The Road to Emmaus inspires us as it invites all people into the journey of knowing Jesus on the road of life. This journey involves coming to recognize that the mercy of God—Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior—has been walking alongside us the whole time—even those times we did not recognize His presence.

- **The Roman Road—God’s Mercy Road:** The combination of Scripture from Romans speaks into our name selection. 1) I have sinned (Rm. 3:23); 2) The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is Eternal Life (Rm.6:23); 3) God showed his great love for us by dying for us while we were still sinners. (Rm. 5:8); 4) If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Christ is Lord and was raised from the dead then you will be saved (Rm. 10:9).

### **5. *When will we officially become Mercy Road Church?***

We have purchased the domain name [www.mercyroadm.com](http://www.mercyroadm.com) and that domain will be live and take you to our current site within the next three weeks. Signage, printed material, a new logo and other aspects of branding will change over the next two months with the launch of a brand-new website by Easter. The change will be somewhat gradual due to our limited budget and our value of quality over speed.

### **6. *How much will this renaming/rebranding cost and how will we pay for it?***

An overhaul to our website has been on our to-do list for over a year. This makes sense to do in a season of name change. This will cost us approximately \$7,000. Other signage, community advertisement, marketing and incidentals may bring the total rebrand to around \$10,000. Additionally, Hosanna Lutheran Church recently wrote our church a check for \$15,000. This unexpected gift is part of their mission to bless the larger church in the South Metro and invest in smaller churches that they notice are living out the hope and heartbeat of Jesus Christ faithfully in our context. We will put a portion of this generous gift towards the cost of the rebrand.

### **7. *Why didn't we have an all church membership vote on the new name?***

Many churches would have assembled the membership and voted on the new name. The leadership decided not to do this primarily because our regular attenders far out number those who have actually gone through the membership process at our church. Partly, this is due to the vision of the last Lead Pastor who feared Church Membership communicated an exclusive and non-seeker friendly message. Pastor Mike has offered three membership workshops in the past two years and although we have grown the number of members it is still arguably too small to truly represent the larger church. Our goal is to grow our membership roster to a size where votes like this make sense. In the meantime we will make major decisions through the staff and church board with careful sensitivity to the pulse of the congregation at large.

### **8. *What if I don't like the new name?***

Being part of a healthy church family does not imply we must all feel the same way or have the same preferences. It would be unrealistic to assume that everyone loves our new name. We ask those who may not like the new name to do two things: 1). Pray regularly for unity and that the Lord would work in our midst, and 2). Keep an open mind—you may just find that over time your affections will warm toward the name. Often it is only as memories and miracles are made that we come to appreciate new names, people, and life courses that we initially would not have preferred.

### **9. *What if I have more questions or want to help with the rebranding process?***

We welcome your questions, ideas, and help in coming days. You can contact Pastor Mike or any other staff or board member through the contact information on our website or in person on a Sunday morning. We are in this together and by His grace we'll walk the road with unity, humility and sense of gratitude for all He has done and will do.