

## What's in a name?

New signs will soon appear at the entrances to our campus. They have been a long time coming. Initially we requested permission for a computer-driven “message sign” that would electronically flash messages to passers-by on Manchester Rd., but such signs are not permitted. Finally we have settled on a sign that will simply say, “St. John” with our address; 15800.

There were those who thought it should say St. John Church, St. John Church and School, St. John Ministries, St. John Youth Center, St. John Bookstore, St. John Ministry Center, St. John Commons etc. etc. It was finally decided our ministry is so diverse that a simple sign, easily read, was best: “St. John.”

Others wanted us to add the denominational title, “Lutheran.” That too was carefully considered. We are proud of our heritage and commitment to, “God’s Word as the only rule and norm for true teaching.” We love and support our historic commitment, “salvation by grace through faith and not by human effort.” In fact, we are so committed to those teachings we would like to increase the number of people who hold our historic, conservative doctrinal beliefs. The best way, we believe, to accomplish that goal is to encourage people to “check us out.” We believe that if our denominational affiliation were attached to the sign, most people who are not “Lutheran” would simply drive by – the same way most Lutherans would drive by a sign that said, Roman Catholic, Baptist, or Presbyterian. People make judgments based on names. “I am not Catholic (Baptist, Lutheran, Assembly of God, etc.) so that is not a place I would feel comfortable in worship.” St. John has become known as a conservative Bible-teaching ministry that conducts its worship in a creative, relevant and dynamic format. Believers and religious seekers of all traditions feel comfortable with our style of worship and quickly see the Biblical basis for our beliefs. Our mission is not to be the best, biggest, or most well-known Lutheran Church in town. “Our mission is to reach the lost and strengthen the saved to live bold and courageous lives of Christian witness before a non-believing world.”

Many have a mistaken notion of what Lutherans look like, how they worship, and what they believe. If the name “Lutheran” appeared on our sign, their false perceptions would automatically be applied to our ministry. Clearly we are not like most other Lutheran Churches in style and focus. Please understand, I am not saying we are better than other Lutherans. Inasmuch as they are faithful to God’s Word and the administration of the sacraments instituted by Christ; they deserve our respect and support. More traditional Lutheran Churches will reach those people seeking a more traditional style of ministry. Our mission is more focused on those outside of Lutheranism who have no, or only a limited understanding of the gospel of Jesus. If our ministry is different in style, the way we communicate who and what we are should be an honest reflection of that reality. The majority of our members have come out of traditions that are not Lutheran, but they have come to appreciate and value the faithfulness of our teaching and doctrinal beliefs. We want

to continue that mission to reach anyone and everyone who is searching for a faithful expression of God's truth and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is our goal to increase the number of Christians who hold to the true teaching of God's Word. For this reason we wanted to remove any false assumptions that might keep them from visiting our congregation. We want to give them every reason "to come and see!"

*Welcome to St. John!*