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The Changing Visual Identity of Churches:

From Symbols to Branding

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The Changing Visual Identity of Churches:

From Symbols to Branding

A THESIS

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Abstract

This study, titled "The Changing Visual Identity of Churches: From Symbols to Branding", follows the evolution from simple symbols to modern visual identity systems being used by churches. This research explores when the transition occurred and discusses the contributing factors such as church history, societal shifts, advances in communication and technology as well as modern consumerism and corporate brand identity, all of which play a pivotal role in the transfer from simple symbols to high-concept church branding.

Definition of Terms

Brand - A brand is a mixture of attributes tangible and intangible, symbolized in a trademark, which, if managed properly creates value and influence. Brands simplify decision-making, represent an assurance of quality, and offer a relevant, different and credible choice among competing offerings (*The Brand Glossary*, p. 14).

Branding - This is the strategic and creative practice of creating brands and managing them as valuable assets (*The Brand Glossary*, p. 20).

Corporate Identity - a corporation's brand communicated through the combination of the organization's name and its use of visuals (logo/color/artwork) (*The Brand Glossary*, p. 29).

Icon[1] - the symbol of a brand that is deeply entrenched in the minds of consumers (*The Brand Glossary*, p. 60).

Icon[2] - A representation or picture of a sacred or sanctified Christian personage, traditionally used and venerated in the Eastern Church (*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*).

Logo - the graphic element used to identify a company, service , or product. It is a distinctive mark, sign, symbol, or graphic (usually of the company or brand name) that is in continual use and typically trademarked to protect it from other companies (*The Brand Glossary*, p. 75).

Symbol - something used for or regarded as representing something else; a material object representing something, often something immaterial; emblem, token, or sign (*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*).

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Introduction

Church leaders are asking fundamental questions. 'Who are we?' in the sense of formulating a distinct identity in a post-Christendom era and 'What do we look like?' in terms of relevance, appeal, and how a new generation views the church, if they are looking at all.

The church's level of influence on culture has declined since the time of Christendom, an era in which it maintained great leverage in the market of ideas. A two thousand year old entity now finds itself trying to connect to a consumer-driven, brand-savvy culture, and modern churches are exploring new ways to connect to an increasingly discriminating public.

The simple symbols of the ancient church such as the Cross or Icthus, while not entirely replaced, have given way to new forms of visual communication. Modern churches are reinventing, or formulating for the first time, a distinct visual identity that will gain notice and connect with the current culture. It is now quite commonplace for a church to utilize an original logo along with a specific typographic treatment and color palette to package and communicate their brand image.

These new visual systems tend to exhibit the brand characteristics of for-profit companies as much or more than the religious tradition from which they come. The idea of a religious or church brand may seem antithetical, in that brands generally connote ideas of product, consumption, and competition. However, parallels between sacred and secular brands do exist. The goals to gain attention, communicate ideas, influence decisions, and create converts are present no matter what the product is, including religion.

'What does the church look like?' remains a relevant question. The leaders of the early church made the primary decisions as to the images and visual metaphors that would communicate the new faith. The modern church now seeks to reexamine and renegotiate the church's identity in terms of brand image, borrowing elements from its past and its current surroundings.

Review of Literature

The visual language of the church has taken many forms throughout its evolution. The early church, as a movement, was perhaps not conscious of the concept of brand as we know it. They were, however, creating the visual template from which successive generations would draw in communicating the identity of the church.

A Changing Identity

Churches have created a visual vocabulary to supplement verbal and textual messages. These images are often similar in theme, such as metaphors for salvation, but the presentation of images is highly relative to the specific cultural contexts in which the church finds itself. Over time people have adapted the Christian Cross, considered to be the eminent symbol of Christianity, to fit different settings, taking different forms due to variables in time, region, and theological shifts (see Figure 1).

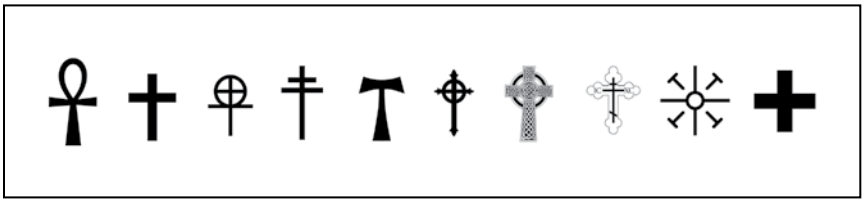


Figure 1. The Christian Cross

Various iteration of the cross based on theological and geographic shifts (Images from Wikipedia).

These visuals, or symbols of the faith, have served as a valuable vehicle to carry the church's message. While the first century church organizers would not have used our contemporary terms, they were in essence creating an original brand for the faith.

Though Christians have a unique message with a distinct identity, many of the principles at work are common to all brands, whether sacred or secular in purpose. A brand can serve to

proselytize, sell a product, or do both; and the two may be closely linked. Before examining church brand specifically, it is important to formulate a discussion surrounding brands and how they came about.

Leaving our mark

With an almost innate compulsion, we as humans seek to alter our environment—to leave marks that tell others of, or about, our existence. Everything from early cave paintings to urban graffiti speaks to our willful dissemination of identity. Some marks can be construed as artful and emotive while others seem to appear from a practical necessity to communicate.

Philip B. Meggs, in *A History of Graphic Design*, cites two natural by-products of village culture: the ownership of property and the specialization of trades or crafts. "Both made visual identification necessary" (1998, p. 8). For example, an artisan would carve his initials into a newly formed piece of pottery creating a permanent mark. As the piece was sold and resold, expectantly passing through countless hands, the piece would remain linked to the original artisan. Trademarks originated from a simple necessity to link a product to its producer for record keeping purposes, but additionally, artisans could form a reputation for their work "if superior quality inspired repeat purchases" (p. 8).

Brands identify a producer, but they can also serve another function in denoting property. Jack Gernsheimer noted that the word "brand" derives from an Old English word that meant "to burn", and for over four-thousand years these hot irons have been used to identify cattle (2008, p. 6). These simple marks literally burned into the hind-end of a bovine, permanently associate a cow or steer to its owner. A rancher's distinct image identifies his property, but it also differentiates it from the property of another rancher.

Therein lies a major attribute of a brand—the ability to distinguish one's property from another's. This has broad implications for modern advertising in that consumers can differentiate between similar products or offerings. In a contemporary setting we are now keenly aware of the concept of brand—consumers astutely discerning one from another.

Corporations spend a great deal of resources emblazoning their image—using every conceivable space and all available communication media—in effort to secure a position in the minds of fickle consumers. It is deemed by organizations to be a good use of time and money to create and maintain an awareness of their brand as set apart from the competition. Regardless of the sophistication or the scope, brands are a standard means of identification and differentiation within any proprietary framework.

However, brands aren't strictly proprietary, in that, they don't just identify a producer or signify ownership. They can also function as individual or group identifiers. A church group has an especially complex identity because it includes a dynamic synthesis of its members. Group is a broad term but very loosely defined as people with some sort of common tie. What or whom a group includes or excludes is an ever-morphing Venn diagram, converging and receding along many fronts but maintaining some discernible form through a defining set of characteristics. A church could define itself along theological, geographical or demographic lines, or a combination of these.

Groups utilize a brand to accomplish several missions: to identify the group, to identify distinct individuals as part of the collective group, to differentiate the group members from those not in the group and lastly the brand can serve to communicate the characteristics and values to people outside the group. Everything from the Boston Red Sox, to a family's ancient coat of arms (see Figure 2) are all examples of a group brand. These brands go beyond mere nomenclature and categorization. These entities use visual systems to identify, unify, differentiate, and communicate their respective brands to outsiders.

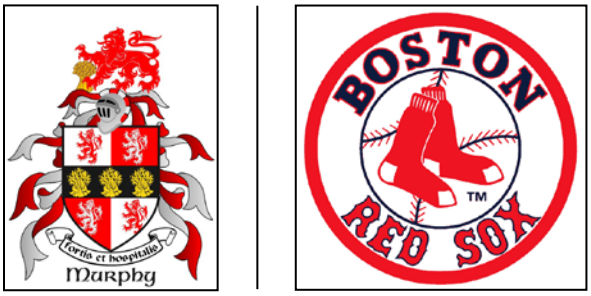


Figure 2. Group Brands

(left) heraldry for the Murphy Family (http://www.araltas.com/features/murphy/murphy_muskerry.jpg), (right) the logo of the Boston Red Sox (http://img.webring.com/r/r/redsox/logo)

We now exist in a climate that is hypersensitive to brands that are marks of quality and badges of status. And in a brand-aware culture, they are banners of strong loyalties to products or groups, be it a particular kind of automobile, laundry detergent, or religion.

Branding

What's in a brand?

A brand is "a mixture of attributes, tangible and intangible, symbolized in a trademark, which if managed properly, creates value and influence" (Interbrand, 2006, p. 14). The tangible aspect refers to the name and logo that represent or symbolize a company or organization. Alina Wheeler calls this *brand identity*—"the visual and verbal expression of a brand" (2006, p. 6).

People need a way to refer to the entity in everyday speech, hence the verbal expression. It is not the entity itself but refers or points towards it. This can take on several forms, perhaps most fundamentally, as a name, or a spoken word. When parents have a baby it is not only a nice gesture but near necessitous to give the child a fitting name. The word is not the child, but only a way to communicate to or about the referent (the child) in everyday speech. A name is perhaps an obvious component of a brand, but nevertheless important.

A further evolved form of expression would be a written word, as spoken language far preceded written language. A written word is a workable alternative or companion to a spoken word. This is typically accomplished through a system of agreed upon symbols. For instance, in the English language we use standardized phonetic symbols that collectively produce words. But a written word is not the only route; a word could be symbolized by a completely abstract form with no direct visual relationship to the referent (such as an image of a swoosh = Nike). In this scenario, education and repetition are imperative to inform people as to the meaning of the non-objective symbol.

In the case of popular or public brands, companies and organizations seek to leverage as much prominence as possible with a brand identity. Most companies use logos to create visual familiarity surrounding their brand. "The term *logo* dates back to ancient Greece, and it literally means 'name'" (Gernsheimer, 2008, p. 6). Although it has now taken on new meanings in corporate settings as symbol or trademark (p. 6).

A logo, as defined in *The Brand Glossary,* is "the graphic element used to identify a company, service, or product. It is a distinctive mark, sign, symbol, or graphic (usually of the company or brand name) that is in continual use and typically trademarked to protect it from other companies" (2006, p. 75).

The goal in standardizing a logo is to create a familiarity and in turn foster high-level brand recognition. Everything from the logo to associated typefaces, imagery, and color palette help to communicate the brand or put a proverbial face with the name. A logo is a consistent identifier and a compact, succinct visual word to communicate the brand.

The last part of the equation is the message. That is, what is implied by the brand name. In addition to the tangible colors, shapes, and letterforms of a logo, there is an intangible element to a brand. Walter Landor, founder of Landor Associates said that "Products are created in the factory. Brands are created in the mind" (Wheeler, 2006, p. 4). People's perceptions, good or bad, of a company or organization are inextricably linked to their visual word, or logo. Companies and organizations often attempt to adapt and reinvent their brand. They reposition themselves in the market by way of introduction to a new audience or perhaps through a reinventing of their identity to appeal to a waning or skeptical existing audience.

Brand is a verb

Up to this point, we've been discussing brand in terms of a static thing. However, in the modern sense, brand transforms from a static state, to a plastic state—from a simple identifier into a composite of consumers' emotions and attitudes. Brand is no longer a noun but a verb. According to Marty Neumeier, "A brand is a person's gut feeling about a product, service, or company" (Neumeier, 2003, p. 2).

So for a church or business, the idea of branding as an act is not just the standardization and dissemination of a brand identity, but it also includes the delicate task of controlling how the public perceives the brand. Even though organizations maintain great leverage in managing their own image, Neumeier states that in the end, individuals define the brand. (2003, p. 2)

The fact that a brand transcends a logo or mark does not make it obsolete. On the contrary, the logo's role in branding has added impact in that it identifies and also communicates a contained message. Logos are continuingly evolving, if not visually then in associated meanings. Gobé and Zyman call logos "a visual shorthand for the meanings attached to them" (2001, p. 122). Logos are the boxes that contain consumer perceptions.

As an identifier and manager of perceptions, brands play an integral role in consumer-culture. Wally Olins, commenting on the their prominence said, "Brands and branding are the most significant gifts that commerce has ever made to popular culture. Branding has moved so far beyond its commercial origins that its impact is virtually immeasurable in social and cultural terms" (Olins, 2005, p. 12). In fact, it is difficult to even conceptualize, in this present age, the detachment of product from brand.

The practical function is helping consumers differentiate between similar product offerings. Parity "is when a company's products or performance are no better and no worse than the competition's" (Interbrand, 2006, p. 94). Branding plays a major role in transforming negligible differences into defining characteristics or from mere "commodities to luxury items" (p. 94).

In its most powerful capacity, people don't see themselves as merely buying a product but rather deeply connecting with the culture of a company or organization. The brand becomes integral to one's personal identity. While people of sound mind possess the ability to readily discern propaganda from reality, it would appear that many people seek to associate with a culture built strictly upon a brand.

In Douglas Atkin's book *The Culting of Brands* (2005) he explores this phenomenon—the seemingly inexplicable loyalty of people to particular brands. He posits that people connect to brands for the same reasons they join cults. Through brands such as Apple and Harley Davidson, people find meaning and experience community. In his research he uncovered profound, almost cult-like loyalties to brands, among everyday types of people. However, he went a step further than

just comparing brands with religion. He states that the brands themselves are the new religion. Where does this then leave religious branding?

To analyze church branding is to ask many questions. Is church branding something new or something old? Is there a discernible difference between sacred and secular motives in regards to branding? To understand church branding, its evolution and influence, it's important to micro-dissect the subject while remaining mindful of the broader context of history.

Historical Examination of the Church

Imagery of the Early Church

Christianity as a burgeoning movement sought to hold its integrity as a unique belief system in contrast to its surroundings, first "the distinction between Christianity and Judaism, with which Christianity shared so many views and resources" (Kee, Hanawalt, Lindberg, Seban, Noll, 1991, p. 72), and secondly from the surrounding Roman culture, which was in power at the time. The early church, in the spirit of modern brands, sought to communicate and differentiate itself.

Christians set out with a distinct mission and message, but the visual language would evolve slowly. The mission was to make disciples, and the message was the Gospel. Jesus, the proclaimed son of God and the central figure of Christianity, is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew as saying "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (1991, NRSV, Matthew 28:19). Even with this clear mandate, much was yet to be determined. What would be the creeds, the monikers, and the visual language of the new group? Early believers had the rare opportunity of formulating the early Christian brand identity, so to speak.

To understand the images and symbols that the early church adopted, we must understand the context in which they were operating. Christians started out on an unsure footing—somewhat torn between the mostly non-visual Jewish tradition and the image-rich culture of their Roman occupiers. The Christians' choice to apply images to their faith could be attributed solely to the Roman influence since the Hebrews did not traditionally use imagery in their worship. In fact the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem contained no images of God. Nigel Cawthorne noted that "Such a thing would've been considered blasphemy" (2006, p. 14).

A verse in the Hebrew Torah—the first five books of the modern day Bible—could explain the rationale behind this avoidance of images, "You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4). The common interpretation of this passage holds that the creation

of images could result in worship of the physical image as opposed to worship dedicated solely to God. It was also a point that differentiated the Hebrews from other cultures throughout their history.

Timothy Potts, director of the exhibit "Picturing the Bible: the Earliest Christian Art", stated that, "Jewish culture had an ambiguous and somewhat inconsistent attitude to the representation of the divine" (Spier, 2007, p. XI). Early Christians found themselves in an awkward position—a continuation of a Jewish tradition that forbade the making of images, but surrounded by a polytheistic culture with a rich visual tradition. Potts mentions, "The Early Christian response was not a simple adoption of either stance, but a selective appropriation of pagan and Old Testament figures with which it invested new Christian meanings." (Spier, p. XI)

The overall religious climate of the Roman Empire was pluralistic and as such highly tolerant of various worship styles as long as religious affiliation didn't subvert dedication to the emperor (Kee et al., 1991, p. 76). As Howard Clark Kee et al. noted, religious affiliation was quite common among the mostly illiterate, lower class which constituted the majority of the population. "They would designate some deity or deities as their patrons and honor these gods in formal ways as their protectors and helpers" (Kee, et al., p. 77). With an illiterate majority, imagery played an important role in communicating religious messages. Interestingly, even in modern times within highly literate populations, symbols and pictures still play a critical role because of their ability to communicate quickly and in many cases to cross language barriers.

Early Christians used images and symbols as did the Romans, but chose Hebrew themes as the subject matter of their works. Perhaps because of their infancy as a belief system, lacking customary practices and images, the early church used Old Testament references in their visual representations. The stories they chose to depict were didactic and can be collectively associated with the concept of salvation. Common stories depicted are the sparing of Isaac, Daniel in den of lions, and Jonah in the belly of a fish—all metaphors of salvation (see Figure 3).

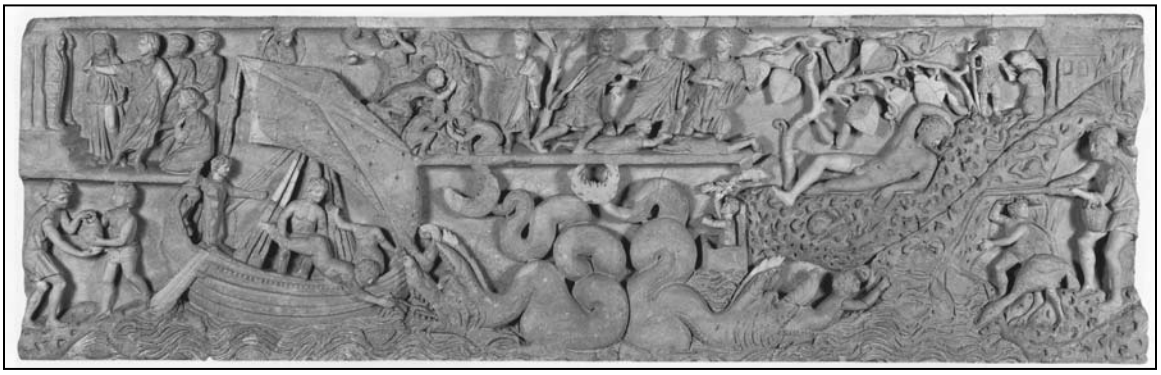


Figure 3. A Sarcophagus Depicting the Story of Jonah

Certain Old Testament stories served as metaphors of salvation for early Christians. Rome, late 3rd century (Spier, p. 207).

In addition to laboriously depicted narratives, simple symbols, such as the Icthus were also included in the visual language. Elementary forms were useful in communicating succinctly and could be quickly drawn or carved by common people with virtually no artistic ability. One such early symbol still used to identify contemporary Christians is the image of a fish, or Icthus (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Icthus

A modern-day rendering of the Icthus or "Jesus Fish" as it is sometimes called.

Symbols, as with modern corporate identity systems, quickly identify and communicate a message. In the case of the Icthus, it identifies a person as a Christian and tells something about his or her belief system. Because of its secretive use by the early church, the symbol holds legendary status as an ancient Christian symbol. According to Alva William Steffler (2002), early Christians called themselves "sons of the celestial Icthus" (p. 9) There were also literary references to the Icthus as a metaphor for the faith. In the second century Tertullian wrote, "We small fish, like our Fish, Jesus Christ, swim in the [baptismal] water, and we can be saved only by remaining in it" (p. 9).

Beyond literary references the symbol was purportedly used as an insider identifier—a secret brand identity of sorts—for the underground church. As the legend goes, one Christian would make a crescent-shaped line in the dirt with his foot. If the person opposite him were also a believer, he would reciprocate by completing the other half of the form with his foot, identifying them both as believers. Carol E. Whittemore (1987, p. 15), in her index of Christian symbols, identified the Icthus as "a secret sign used by the early persecuted Christians to designate themselves as believers in Jesus." Whether used as a secret symbol or not, the symbol is commonly present in early Christian artifacts.

The New Testament scriptures are replete with references to fish, so the metaphor was very apt for Christians. Jesus said to his group of his disciples who were fishermen by trade, "I will make you fish for people" (Matthew 4:19). Other references include Jesus performing a miraculous feeding of thousands with several loaves and fish. Also after his resurrection Jesus provided the disciples with a miraculous catch of fish. The Icthus as a symbol had more than metaphorical and parabolical value from the scriptures; there is also syntactical significance. The letters in the word Icthus, which is the Greek word for fish, form an acrostic for the phrase, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" (Spier, 2007, p. 5).

A few other symbols were present at the time of the early church. Seen often is the monogram of Alpha and Omega—the first and last characters in the Greek alphabet that

symbolize Christ as the beginning and the end (Steffler, 2002, p. 65). Often times the cross, or stauros, is found flanked with these two characters on either side.

Another symbol of note is the swastika. This symbol contains drastically different meanings for different cultures. Before being appropriated as a symbol by the Nazis in Germany, the sign was present in prehistoric drawings on early pottery (Steffler, 2002, p. 84). But Steffler pointed to its Christian use, "This non-Christian symbol was appropriated by early Christians. It appears in the Christian catacombs around A.D. 200" (p. 84).

The early church also relied upon visual depictions of early church leaders. The church did not get underway at the time of Christ, but rather, after he had left the earth. In the absence of a leader, early apostles such as Peter and Paul filled the void becoming the faces of the faith depicted in early Christian art (see Figure 5). The modern Christian identity still relies heavily on these figures and others, particularly in the iconography of the Catholic and Orthodox traditions. However, modern churches also rely on contemporary figures as faces of the faith—for instance Billy Graham for Evangelical Protestants and the pope for Catholics.

Figure 5. The Apostles Peter and Paul

A sarcophagus, Rome, late 4th century (Spier, p. 246)

It should be mentioned that early Christian art before the time of the Emperor Constantine, is scarce (Spier, 2007, p. 1). The reason for this lack in early Christian artifacts is unknown. Historians have speculated several causes. "The simple explanation may be that the Christians had little opportunity to create such images" (p. 1). Converts were generally poor, did not own

property, and probably had no means to create the kind of art that would have survived for centuries, as did their Roman counterparts. The early church was also heavily persecuted, so it was in the best interests of these new believers to not draw attention to themselves. This lack of resources and persecution perhaps led to positive unintended consequences. Conceivably the simplification and visual abstraction of early Christian symbols gave them staying power, just as the simplest corporate logos are often the most recognizable and unforgettable.

The scriptures indicate that the early believers met in informal meeting places and in the privacy of people's homes (Acts 2:46). Together they would sing hymns, be taught by elders and share in meals together that were a symbolic reenactment of the last supper (Halley, 2007, p. 897). Some of these house churches were adorned with Christian imagery (see Figure 6).

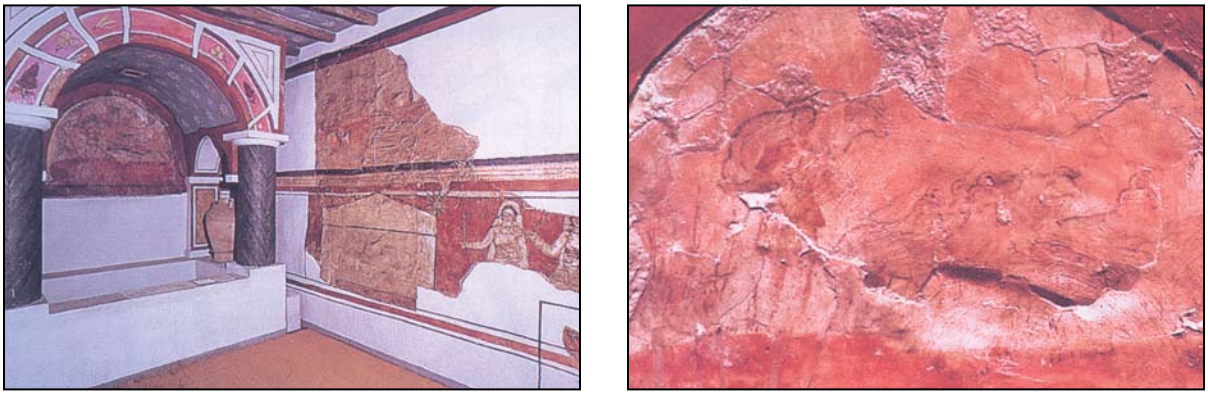


Figure 6. Early House Church

Dura (Modern Day Syria), c. 250 A.D. The image on the left shows the meeting room with baptistry. The right image shows a magnified view of the baptistry on the left. The barely discernible image is of David as a shepherd (Lowden, p. 21).

While the first outpouring of Christian art is dated as 2nd or 3rd century (Cawthorne, 2006, p. 14) or later, some scholars cite evidence that images were being produced earlier. The church historian and biographer of Constantine, Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, postulated: "I have examined images of the apostles Paul and Peter and indeed of Christ himself preserved in painting: presumably men of old were heedlessly wont to honour them thus in their

houses." His reference to "men of old" implies that he believed such practices went back well before the time of Constantine" (Lowden, 1997, p. 56).

Early Christian authors wrote little about the use of images. However, there is an interesting excerpt from Clement, a popular teacher of the time from Alexandria Egypt. He addressed the symbols from the Roman culture that were suitable for Christians to emblazon on their signet rings, and presumably other articles and wares (see Figure 7). His writing reads like a veritable graphic standards manual for early Christians:

> And let our seals be either a dove, or a fish, or a ship running with a fair wind, or a musical lyre, which Polycrates used, or a ship's anchor, which Seleucus had engraved; and if the seal is a fisherman, it will recall the apostle, and the children drawn out of the water. For we are not to depict the faces of idols, we who are prohibited from attaching ourselves to them, nor a sword, nor a bow since we follow peace, nor drinking cups, since we are temperate (Spier, 2007, p. 5).

Figure 7. Engraved Gems

Syria or Asia Minor late 3rd Century or Early 4th (Spier, 2007, p. 196).

Era of Constantine

Christianity spread furtively until the fourth century. In 313 Constantine issued the Edict of Milan ending the persecution of Christians. This edict and his own conversion dramatically changed the way the church would communicate visually. The church added masterly crafted worship centers attended by paid clergy. Through Constantine, Christianity gained a decreed legitimacy with which came more distinctively Christian architecture, art and other visual identifiers.

But Kee et al. (1991) noted that "In gaining imperial support—or as some cynics might say, through being used by Constantine to take over the empire—Christians were confronted with as series of problems and more severe responsibilities…" (p. 140). While thriving under the newfound official status, the church was also becoming more bureaucratized. The church was essentially morphing, for better or worse, from an underground movement and taking on the form of an institution.

Kee et al. (1991) noted that Constantine's conversion raised new questions: "Since the new emperor had claimed support of the God of the Christians in gaining victory over his enemies, was he to be the center of decision-making within the church" (p. 140)? The Edict of Milan led to the state legitimizing the religion of Christianity, and thus to greater influence of the state in religious affairs (Halley, 2007, p. 902).

Constantine created a "New Rome" in his self-named city of Constantinople, strategically placed within the new Christian empire. Constantinople was a "reliquary that would boast the tool that Noah used to build his ark, the head of John the Baptist, the stone of Jesus' tomb, the crown of thorns, the Virgin Mary's belt and robe and countless other precious remains" (Kee et al., 1991, p. 151). Additionally Constantine commissioned the "great church of Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sophia, and many other sacred buildings" (p. 151). However, these tangible relics did not necessarily diminish the purpose and role of symbols in communicating to distant audiences since few would ever visit, furthermore be granted access, to see the revered objects with their own eyes. In fact

two of the most ubiquitous symbols came into favor after Constantine's conversion—the Chi-Rho monogram and the Christian Cross.

Chi-Rho.

Another distinctly Christian symbol, which is largely unknown to contemporary Christians, is the Chi-Rho monogram or Christogram (see Figure 8). The Chi-Rho is a symbol derived from the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ (XPICTOC, pronounced "Christos") (Steffler, 2002, p. 66).

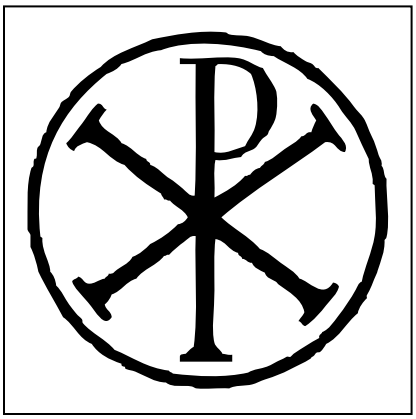


Figure 8. The Chi-Rho Monogram

The symbol supposedly originated with Constantine himself. One legend states that he "had sought the help of the God of the Christians when he undertook his invasion of Italy and that it had been promised to him" (Kee et al., 1991, p. 139). Constantine purportedly saw the symbol in a vision along with the message "In hoc signo vinces," meaning "under this sign you will be victorious" (Steffler, 2002, p. 66). There are reports of the symbol's use on the shields of soldiers (Kee et al., 1991, p. 139). According to Steffler (2002), the sign was later used commonly in Christian art on sarcophagi, Eucharistic vessels, and lamps (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Chi-Rho on Sarcophagus

Rome, c. 350 A.D. (Spier, 2007, p. 219).

The Cross.

No Christian symbol is more prolific than the Cross, which has many variations—the many manifestations due to geographical separation and theological splits, not to mention mere stylistic abstractions. Despite its current ubiquity, no evidence has been found that the early church [presumably pre-5th century] ever used the Cross as an identifier or symbol to communicate a doctrine (Spier, 2007, p. 233).

Steffler noted: "The Cross, the most significant symbol of Christianity, recalls redemption of humankind through Christ's sacrificial death" (Steffler, 2002, p. 27). Symbols similar to the Cross, such as the swastika were present before the rise of Christianity, however Steffler states that, "As a Christian symbol, the Cross is found on sarcophagi, lamps, and other objects beginning around the fifth century" (p. 27). It was around this time that the Cross began to "replace the Chi Rho monogram as the major symbol for Christianity" (p. 27).

Figure 10. Processional Cross

c. 500 A.D. The Stauros is flanked by the alpha and omega representing Christ as the beginning and the end (Spier, 2007, p. 59).

Spier (2007) noted, "The earliest attempt at a pictorial reference to the Cross was the staurogram (see Figure 10), a literary monogram used by Christian scribes around the year 200 as a sacred image for the word stauros, 'cross'" (p. 233). The Cross remained a literary symbol until the beginning of the fourth century, whereas later it was being used in church decoration.

The theory of why the early church avoided use of the Cross remains a mystery. However, it could be that the early church—in an environment of a pagan people with powerful gods—saw Christ's death on the cross as a perceived weakness. Perhaps a death by human hands, and in an excruciating way, was thought to be unbecoming of a purported God and king. Also since early Christians tended to focus on metaphors of salvation, perhaps they preferred to think in terms of life rather than death.

Cultural Synthesis and Mediums Utilized

Christian symbols were used for more than communicating stories and doctrine. They were also used to identify believers. The tombs of Christian Saints often bore markings, such as the Chi-Rho symbol, associating a particular saint with Christianity. Lowden noted that early Christians did not segregate their places of burial, meaning they were buried alongside pagans (Lowden, 1997, p. 25). In not being segregated, it would seem that the Christians sought to identify their religious affiliation through symbols on their tombs in attempt to differentiate themselves from the pagans. Also it was not uncommon for this Christian imagery to be present alongside Roman imagery of the time, which indicates a unique cultural synthesis (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Christian Tombstone

One of the earliest known Christian tombstones. The epitaph contains the Christian symbol of the Icthus but also the traditionally Greek or Roman laurel wreath at the top (Spier, 2007, p. 197)

Peter Brown (1996), in his book *Authority and the Sacred*, also discussed the integration of Christian and Roman imagery with regard to the religious pluralism of the time. He cited a custom-created calendar prepared for a member of the 4th century upper class. "The calendar contained a list of the festivals of the Roman Church, and the commemorative dates for the burials of leading popes," but additionally the calendar contained "rites of the Roman public cult associated with each month" (p. 12). As Christians differentiated themselves, it remained within the context of the culture.

Christian imagery was not relegated just to sacred tombs or worship centers; they utilized common, everyday items—everything from household wares to fashion items. This is strikingly similar to the contemporary culture as believers place the Icthus on a car or wear a t-shirt with a Christian message. Early believers used Amulets—which were believed to hold magical powers—signet rings, lamps, and ewers, all as a substrate for Christian imagery. Coins have also been found to bear distinctly Christian imagery. Less common but a significant and prominent instance of Christian decoration, would be that of the Bible itself—exhibited in masterfully carved, ornate wooden covers. (Lowden, 1997, p. 95).

The more skillfully created, artistic media include large-scale paintings and mosaics found on walls and vaults, smaller scale silver and ivory objects, textiles, and wooden panels. These objects date from around the 5th and 6th centuries. Lowden (1997) explained that, "We know about these not just from written sources but also from the preservation of a small number of examples, primarily at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai" (p. 95).

The Middle Ages

In 476, the Roman Empire dissolved. John A F Thompson (1998) noted that, "Although Christianity had been the official religion of the late Roman Empire, only a small minority of the total population was recognizably Christian" (p. 7). How then did Europe begin to take on a distinctively Christian identity? Thompson goes on to cite two ways this occurred: "The spreading of Christian worship throughout society in areas where the Church had been established in Roman

times, and the expansion of Christianity and similar consolidation in areas which had previously been pagan" (p. 8). Additionally, a correlation existed between the expanse of political power and the influence of religion.

It was during this time, that Christian art, especially the icon, began to thrive (see Figure 12). Icons flew in the face of the Hebrew tradition, but Cawthorne (2006) noted that "it is in the depiction of Christ that Christian iconography justifies itself. As God had made himself flesh in Christ, it could no longer be considered sacrilege to portray God's existence in the real world" (p. 14).

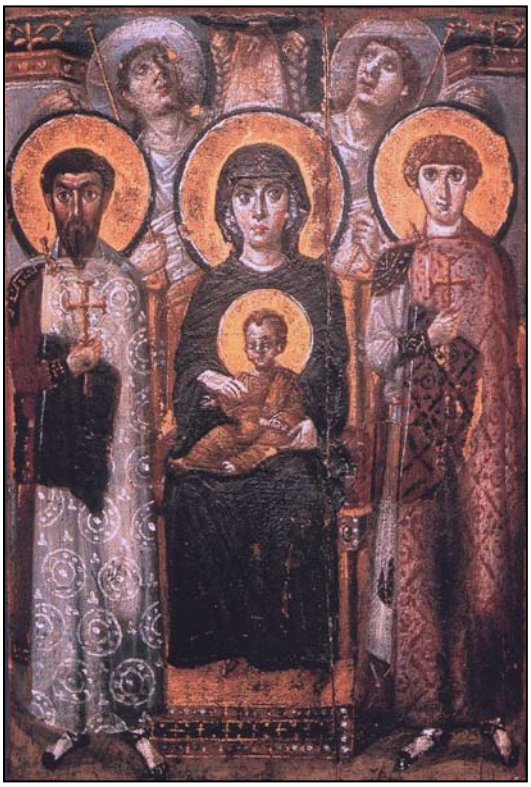


Figure 12. Early Iconography

Madonna and Child flanked by St George and St Theodore. St Catherine's monastery on Mont Sinai. A rare example of the first golden age of Byzantine art (Cawthorne, 2006, p. 28).

It could be said that icons and Christian imagery played a major role in its spread. "Since Christians came from a multiplicity of different backgrounds, the worship of religious relics and icons took a central role in holding the new religion together" (Cawthorne, 2006, p. 18). However icons, despite their popularity were not without their critics. Iconoclasts, the breakers of icons, waged a war against iconodules, those who favored icons (p. 18). The term iconoclast, which is embraced today by artists, was originally intended as a derisive term: "When emperor Leo V (813-20) ordered iconoclast slogans to be tattooed on the foreheads of the iconophile brothers Theodore and Theophanes it was intended as a mark of public humiliation not a fashion statement" (Lowden, 1997, p. 184).

Little is known of the earliest icons because the iconoclasts were successful in destroying many of them. However, common themes became apparent such as the Madonna and Child as well as depictions of early martyred Christians and Saints. By the 4th century prototypes of saints had been formed, a concept first coined by St. Basil. A prototype came to mean the earliest icon of a particular saint (Cawthorne, 2006, p. 36). Subsequent renderings were to be based upon the original, and by 787 graphic specifications were set out in a book called *The Herminia*. The idea was that the icon could be recognized without an inscription since few at the time were literate (p. 38). The standardization of icons for communication is reminiscent of graphic standards manuals utilized by companies today that are meant to insure the consistent communication of a brand. Also in common, icons communicated clearly in the absence of type, much like modern corporate pictograms such as Apple and Shell.

The time between 800 and 1300 A.D., known as the middle ages, Christian artists and designers began to further establish and expand upon standards for iconography as well as church architecture. The Middle ages brought change for the church—the formation of the Holy Roman Empire by Charlemagne, the Crusades, and a split between east and west, with the church in the west becoming the Roman Catholic Church and the church in the east, the Eastern Orthodox Church (Halley, 2007, p. 907).

Church history is riddled with splits and factions; the split between east and west being the first major split, but it would certainly not be the last. Eventually came the infamous Protestant Reformation, which created a cacophony of other offshoot denominations. With each of these changes came re-negotiated identities for these church sub-brands, all descendents of the original, singular movement.

The Early Modern Church

The Early Modern Age, roughly defined as the period following the middle ages from 1450 to 1800, saw significant changes in church organization and communications—namely the Protestant Reformation and the invention of the moveable type printing press attributed to Gutenberg. The ability to mass-produce messages and images created new avenues of communication which church leaders used to distribute their messages.

Previously, most of people's information came orally from church leaders (Halley, 2007, p. 910). Eisenstein (1983) noted that "there is a tendency to forget that sermons had at one time been coupled with news about local and foreign affairs, real estate transactions, and other mundane matters" (p. 93). The printing press meant that information was now more accessible than ever.

New accessibility to printed material led ultimately to new levels of literacy, and arguably greater thinking. "Bibles and prayer books were among the first books printed and people demanded to learn to read them" (Halley, p. 910). However, Eisenstein (1983) mentions that the progression toward literacy was very slow, "Most rural villagers, for example, probably belonged to an exclusively hearing public down to the nineteenth century" (p. 92).

These changes in printing technology coupled with a growing frustration with the Catholic establishment led to great change throughout Europe. Martin Luther, who in the year 1516 formulated his 95 theses—his critique of the current Roman Catholic Church—is cited as initiating the Reformation. Luther's original spark ignited the Protestant Reformation that led to the development of many protestant churches. The importance of the printing press with the

Protestant reformation was so significant that "Luther called printing the best of God's inventions" (p. 910).

The Reformation eventually took on many forms altering the religious makeup of Europe. Many sub-brands were formed that would ultimately create unique brand identities: The Anglican Church, the Puritans, the Anabaptists, and the Huguenots, or French Protestants, are all groups with inextricable links to the Reformation. But how were the advocates of the Reformation able to bring sweeping change in such a relatively short period of time?

Andrew Pettegree (2005), author of *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, cited three common forms of communication in the 16th century—preaching, music and drama (p. 102). However, Pettegree also discussed the important role of the visual image in the war of ideas: "In explaining how the evangelical teaching impacted on the population at large historians have postulated a special role for visual images, especially, in the context of Germany in the first evangelical generation, for the woodcut" (p. 102).

The woodcut was a popular, well-mastered artistic medium in Germany in the 16th century, so it would stand to reason that the reformers would utilize it to their advantage. Christian themes were a common subject matter for woodcuts. For instance, the famous artist Albrecht Dürer did a series on the passion and life of Mary (Pettegree, 2005, p. 103). The woodcut was also used to fuel the Reformation by creating "somewhat idealized portraits of Luther" (p. 103) and to promote the Reformation cause through images intended to disparage Luther's opponents and the clergy (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 146) (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Woodcut from Early Modern Era

This woodcut (1520) usually attributed to Joachim von Watt attacks Thomas Murner, one of Luther's opponents, and the Catholic clergy. Murner, depicted with a cat's head, plays "the song of the wolves." After 1520 Murner was always depicted with a cat's head—a standardization of the caricature (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 146).

There were several advantages to the woodcut in spreading the Reformation message. Images could be produced in large quantities. Pettegree (2005) tells of a seizure by Leipzig authorities of a large series of broadsheets. Fifteen hundred broadsheets, better known now as

posters, were confiscated for intellectually attacking a local Catholic leader (p. 104). Another advantage of the woodcut —they afforded the capacity for imagery in addition to typography. This was important in the midst of a largely illiterate 16th century population. In his book, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, R. W. Scribner (1981) examined the appeal of the reformation to the common man—in the sense that to be common was to be illiterate. Scribner says, "Printing made possible the exactly repeatable literary statement, but the print created the exactly repeatable visual statement" (p. 43). At this point, with a visual image, the literate and the illiterate were on an even plane of understanding.

The communication platforms of the 16th century are not largely unlike what we see utilized by churches in the United States today. Preaching, music, drama, and the visual image are still dominant means for spreading Christian messages. In what Pettegree called the "Culture of Persuasion" the church was using available means (e.g., woodcut posters) in attempts to alter attitudes and, as is the case with modern advertising, ultimately influence decisions. These early propagandist, or advertisers, during the Reformation indeed won over the minds of many.

It is interesting to note that the church in effort to remain relevant attempts to speak in the language of the people regardless of country, culture, whether well educated or illiterate. In following the transition from symbols to branding, it is now important to see how the Christian identity changed in the transference from Europe to North America, specifically the United States.

The Church in America

When Christian Europeans, both Protestants and Catholics, crossed to the Americas beginning in the 15th century, so did their faith systems. As these continental travelers began to settle and create communities, a continuation of their religious tradition came to be thoroughly interwoven into the religious make up of a new country.

The faith of early Christian colonizers has effectually left an enduring legacy, or at least a remnant of that heritage, on the religious make-up of America. Just as pockets of ethnic groups tended to add unique flavor to the neighborhoods, or prairies in which they settled, different

denominations also contributed to the unique religious character of geographical regions of the United States.

Halley (2007) discussed these enduring religious underpinnings. “By the end of the 17th century, Anglicanism was dominant in Virginia, Congregational Puritanism dominated New England, Dutch Reformed groups were strongest in New York, Baptists were predominant in Rhode Island, Lutherans in Delaware, Quakers and minority groups (known as non-conformists in England) in Pennsylvania, and Roman Catholics in Maryland, while most of the South became Baptist or Presbyterian” (p. 917). These religious regions are still evident today, not only in relics of the past, but also in a religious tradition that continues to thrive and carry through generations (see Figure 14).

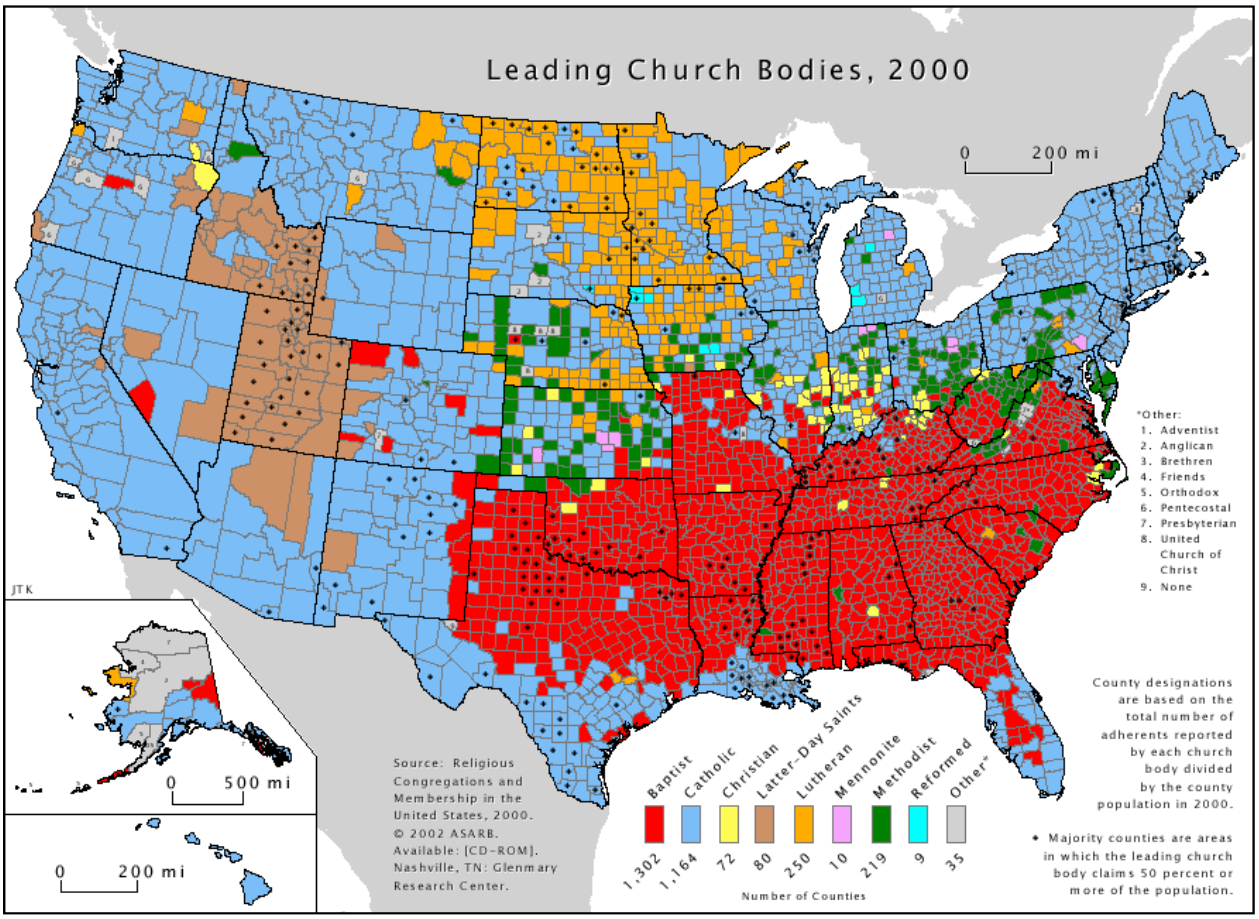


Figure 14. Map by Denomination

The 18th and 19th centuries saw two great awakenings insuring that Christianity didn't fall from the forefront. The First Great Awakening (1725-1775) came at a time in which the original zeal of the early settlers was waning. One of its driving forces was John Wesley, an Anglican. His teachings led ultimately to what is now known as the United Methodist Church. The Second Great Awakening (1800-1861) was "in response to rationalism and industrialization" (Halley p. 921). This period led to the establishment of many Bible conference centers and schools. One such from this era would be Moody Bible Institute in Chicago (Halley p. 921). Another fruit of the Second Great Awakening, which went hand in hand with the imperialism of the time, was a renewed interest in missions on the part of Protestants and Catholics alike.

Christians furthered their influence by founding many of America's prominent universities and hospitals. For instance, New England clergymen founded Yale as a school, "wherein Youth may be instructed in the Arts and Sciences [and] through the blessing of Almighty God may be fitted for Publick employment both in Church and Civil State" (About Yale: History). However due to the secularization of society, many of these institutions have broken ties, either officially or unofficially with their earlier religious identity.

The religious landscape of America is incredibly diverse, and difficult to deconstruct; the many splits and alliances form a complex stream that diverges and converges at times of struggle and reconciliation. Halley attempts to formulate a framework for discussing these movements and denominations. He identifies four main groups: Mainline Churches (non-evangelical), The Roman Catholic Church, Evangelical and Fundamentalist Churches, and Pentecostal/Charismatic/Third-Wave. Each of these branches has a unique identity of its own.

However, Halley allows that even these four labels are not as useful as they once were. He contends that "Today, by contrast, the most important theological differences are not so much between denominations as between, on the one hand, conservative groupings and, on the other hand, those who would once have been labeled 'liberal' but are now perhaps best described as "non-evangelical," largely because that appears to be the clearest common denominator"

(Halley, 2007, p. 925). With each of these labels and denominations come close-held values that differentiate the groups from one another in significant ways.

With a multiplicity of religious flavors, it is easy to see the need to create clarity of identity for churches. In the midst of a very brand-aware culture, contemporary churches are reexamining values and strategies—asking who they are and how they're perceived. Just as the early church took visual cues from the surrounding Roman culture, churches are taking notice of new trends in branding from the secular world. However, in pursuit of cultural relevance, many churches remain mindful of the rich, and ancient visual tradition from which they come.

Modern Branding

What are the parallels between commercial branding and church branding? It can be inferred that some churches of the 20th century, seeing the success of corporate branding programs, sought to appropriate the principles of commercial branding for their own purposes. Adopting a brand strategy is one way in which churches can speak the language of the culture.

While the general concepts of identity and brand have been present since the time of early village culture and trade, and while advertising has occurred for centuries, most dialogue surrounding branding as an art and science has occurred in the 20th century. This idea of branding as a complete package including logo, advertising, and public perception, is a relatively new discussion.

The 20th century ushered in unprecedented proliferation of visual communication in regards to the branding of commercial entities. Karl Long observes one contributing factor to this growth: "The ability to mass produce [in the late 19th and early 20th centuries] outstrips latent demand," therefore leading to more and more product choices for consumers (2008, p. 4).

In the film *No Logo*, author Naomi Klein (2003) cites, in her estimate, the origin of branding. She says that brands began when people began to buy less from the local farmer at the farmer's market, but maintained inhibitions about buying products packaged or canned in an unknown place from an unknown source. Brands were formulated at this time to ease the

transition to these unfamiliar products. Companies of this era utilized personified brands such as Betty Crocker, or the Quaker Oat Man to give a face to otherwise anonymous products.

However, DK Holland (2005) contends, "It's shortsighted to think that branding developed in the early days of industrialization, with the start of packaged, mass-produced products" (Holland, pp 208-218). She observes that branding has existed for quite some time, citing that religious garb and military uniforms are all, in a sense, perpetuating a brand.

Gobé & Zyman (2001, p. 124) identify three main shifts in branding philosophy within the 20th century—the Pragmatist Age (roughly 1940-67), the Evangelist Age (1968-89) and the Sensualist Age (from 1990 to the present). These specified ages, while not widely recognized benchmarks, do form a valuable outline of the changing approaches to branding.

Pragmatist

The first, the Pragmatist Age, was the time of the post-World War II economic boom in America. Long explains the war's effect, "WWII not only increases industrial capacity to produce goods, but drives society to be frugal" (Long, 2008, p. 6). With unprecedented production and consumption, "Corporations realized that their identity needed to be the very emblem of their business through a simple, powerful, easily recalled symbolic form of a logo or logotype" (Gobé & Zyman, 2001, p. 124). Meggs noted that "The national and multinational scope of many corporations made it difficult for them to maintain a cohesive image, but by unifying all communications from a given organization into a consistent design system, one could be projected to accomplish identifiable goals" (Meggs, 1999, p. 363).

Even though, as Meggs pointed out, "the use of visual marks for identification had been in existence for centuries," there was a new value placed in a corporate identity—defined as the "combination of the organization's name and its use of visuals (logo/color/artwork)" (Interbrand, 2006, p. 29). In this new perspective "Design was seen as a major way to shape a reputation for quality and reliability" (Meggs 1999, p. 363). During the 1950s and 1960s many American designers including Paul Rand, Lester Beall, Saul Bass and design firms such as Lippincott &

Margulies, and Chermayeff & Geismar embraced corporate visual identification as a major design activity (Meggs, p. 369) (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Corporate Identities

Designed by Chermayeff and Geismar (Meggs, p. 374.)

Gobé and Zyman stated that "Visibility, stability, and consistency" were the prime values of the Pragmatist Age (Gobé & Zyman, 2001, p. 124). With regard to these values, corporations adopted strict standards for how their brand identity was to be portrayed. Lester Beall, creator of many corporate identity programs such as International Paper Company also contributed to the "corporate-identity manual, a firms' book of guidelines and standards for implementing its program" (Meggs, 1999, pp. 373). All an effort to remain consistent, these manuals outlined the permissible uses of the identity, similar to earlier restrictions on artistic liberties for iconography.

Some of the iconic brands to come out of the corporate identity movement: IBM (1956), ABC (1965) by Paul Rand; Chase Manhattan Bank (1960), Mobil (1964) by Chermayeff & Geismar; AT&T (1965) by Saul Bass; and the CBS "eye" (1950), by William Golden (Meggs, 1999, pp. 373-374). Many of these identities are rendered today exactly as they were originally designed, or with minor adaptations. Since the Pragmatist Age created such changes in the way that companies brand, special attention was given to this era in particular. However Gobé & Zyman (2001) also identified two other eras that followed—Evangelist and Sensualist—that lead into a contemporary discussion.

Evangelist

Next came the Evangelist Age. The Baby-Boomers, the babies of post-World War II, grew up in the 1960s and 1970s amidst an affluence that rivaled even that of their parents. This was the era of the Vietnam War. Social activism was prevalent in a culture suspicious of government and big business. This led companies, according to Gobé & Zyman, "to literally evangelize about the values they believed in. Apple, for instance, created a corporate culture based on the belief that technology will give power back to people" (Gobé & Zyman, 2001, p. 125). The evangelist age didn't necessarily yield new companies, but altered the way existing companies related to consumers.

To relate to consumers in a time of political unrest companies sought to advertise not only through products but also through ideas. As D'Allesandro (2002) puts it, "Corporations needed to appeal to this empowerment of the common man and woman on the street" (p. 8). Even though the Evangelist Age thrived in the 1960s, D'Allesandro noted its lasting effects on today's culture evident in an enduring skepticism surrounding the motives of big institutions and big business (p. 8).

Sensualist

The next phase that Gobé and Zyman (2001) discuss is what they call the Sensualist Age. "The values of the nineties were geared more toward hedonism, glamour, fame and individual expression" (p. 127). They reference the style of identities of this era—results of a fast-paced culture that is constantly in flux: "This same generation is creating its own language, culture, and symbols that are derived from the energy associated with this unbridled digital playground" (p. 128). They cite Yahoo, eBay, Amazon, and Wired Magazine as being businesses that exemplify the Sensualist Age (p. 128).

Rather than the old, reliable, unchanging brands that marked the Pragmatist Age, brands of the Sensualist Age can crop up quickly, and die even faster. When dealing with a fickle public, quick adaptation is key in this era if brand longevity is to be sustained. In the Sensualist Age, it is

not a problem to re-brand or re-invent to appear current, which is in stark contrast to a pragmatist age that placed an utmost value on consistency of brand.

To summarize, the 20th century rang in an era of increased production that warranted the consistent identification of products within an international marketplace. Brands evolved quickly, morphing from mere identifiers to encompass concepts and messages that reshape in response to audiences. Brands now seek to not only speak to an audience, but to also complete the circle of communication by being sensitive and adaptable to what the public has to say in response.

The Church's Response to Modern Branding

The prominence of branding is nearly inescapable. This phenomenon has caused churches to take note of branding's potential for their purposes and messages. When considering branding in the context of the church, a pure parallel is not entirely possible because of the unique mission of the church. Concepts present in commercial branding systems, such as product, consumers, and competition, lack a perfect translation and application in a church setting.

However, Tipping (2005, p. 26) suggests that, "the similarities between branding and religion are stronger than you might think. Brands, like religious institutions, are built on values and beliefs." It's because of these distinct communicable values that parallels can be drawn at all between churches and commercial entities. Tipping continues the similarities, "…Supporters of both brands and religion remain faithful because they are promised higher-order benefits: a healthy, confident smile in the case of a brand like Crest, eternal salvation in the hereafter in the case of most religions" (p. 26).

It's interesting to compare the business vernacular with the most closely associated church equivalent. In this scenario, product would be the church and its programs, or perhaps to an irreverent extreme, salvation itself. The loyal customer would be labeled as an active church member. The competition, and this is perhaps the most controversial of all the comparisons, could be other churches with similar product offerings. The prospective customers would be those in

the community unaware or uninterested in the church. Even though the translations are a bit gray, there is merit to the parallel associations.

It could be that American churches in the mid-twentieth century were branding themselves even though they may not have used that terminology. DK Holland (2005) mentions that in the old days, "Advertising, or corporate identity were the monikers used. Branding is a relatively new idea in that sense, and it combines all of the above and more" (p. 208). Terms commonly used by churches in the 1950s and 1960s were religious journalism, public relations, and advertising. Evidence from that era shows that churches were becoming keenly interested in their image, and while the terms may have been different, churches were engaging in a process of exterior communications to cultivate positive perceptions.

James W. Carty Jr., in his 1965 book, *Advertising the Local Church*, writes, "Image, as a commonly used term in the business world, refers to the corporate identity or personification of an organization. The concept has relevance for the church, because individuals need to visualize the unique entity of the church or institution as 'the body of Christ'" (p. 15). Carty supplies practical approaches for churches to maintain and communicate their image, "The church advertisement is a special and valuable form of religious communication which is just starting to receive systematic attention" (p. 15).

It was the second half of the 20th century, in Carty's determination, when church advertising was starting to make a meaningful impact. He cites some of the sources of religious advertising, "Some outstanding work has been done occasionally by congregations, but more often by denominational headquarters or by advertising and consulting agencies" (Carty, 1965, p. 6). Stanley Stuber, in his book *Public Relations Manual for Churches*, written in 1952, cites several of the common advertising media used at the time, "Religious advertising is also done through posters, flyers, outdoor billboards, ads in denominational papers, car cards, stickers, buttons, stamps, calendars, and blotters" (Stuber, p. 83).

Much of the branding executed by mid-twentieth century churches was not created solely by the local church itself but through agencies that specialized in church advertising. Carty states:

"The Davenport service was begun in 1949 after extensive research. About 125 Congregations of practically every evangelical denomination use it" (Carty, 1965, p. 21). Local churches could buy ad space in newspapers, one of the prominent media of the time and instead of supplying completely original artwork they could purchase and use pre-designed ads, customizing them with their churches' location and service times (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Church Newsprint Ad

This ad from the 1950s from Arthur S. Davenport was a template that could be customized for a specific church (Carty, 1965, p. 28).

A company that also offered this service was Keister, founded in 1944, "which served more than 1,000 newspapers throughout the United States and Canada" (Carty, 1952, p. 21). Stuber (1965) also commented, "The Keister Company furnishes splendid professionally prepaid ads in mat form on a large number of different themes" (p. 83). Other companies making a business of church advertising were the Religion in American Life campaign and the United Church Canvass.

Much of the writing on the subject of church advertising and communication at this time is a call to improve upon the existing approaches of churches. Robert L. Flynn said, "Most churches which advertise in metropolitan dailies waste their money. Many such ads are ineffective, because

they have no fresh copy, are too crowded and black, and seldom do more than list sermon subjects, times of services, and perhaps show a picture of the minister" (Carty, 1952, p. 10).

The church ads produced in the mid-twentieth century seem blissfully dated, but so does much of the secular advertising of this era. It is important to remember that, for their time, this advertising was incredibly forward-thinking. These relics stand in sharp contrast to the visual communications prior to this time. Mid-century ads also bear little resemblance to the kind of visual communication that is occurring today.

Why do churches brand?

If the church wants to communicate in the language of the culture—and if our culture speaks brand—it is then imperative for the church to speak it fluently. What are the potentials that branding holds for churches? What can churches hope to accomplish by branding? Two fundamental reasons surface: to identify and to differentiate.

To identify

Initially, name brands in the modern era were just that, names. These simple names served as logical identifiers. Schultz (2003) mentions that, generally speaking, early brands were aptly named after the family that produced the product (e.g., Kellogg, Kraft, Wedgwood, etc.), and if not named for the family, then rather by the site of production (e.g., Waterford Crystal, Chicago Cutlery, Hershey's Chocolate, etc.) (p. 63). Churches of the modern era adopted similar naming conventions, but they generally used both the "family name" (i.e., a denominational association) and the site (i.e., the city in which the church exists). Many churches still follow this naming convention, for example *First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City.*

Schultz (2003, p. 63) acknowledges that with the passing of time brands have become more complicated. This further complication of simple brands has also affected the church. One cannot simply say, "I'm a Christian," without creating a great deal of confusion as to what that

means. It could be implied that the aforementioned "Christian" is a Catholic or a Protestant, and if Protestant, then perhaps a Methodist or Baptist.

But even these specific, historic denominations, or brands, are increasingly scrutinized. These mainline denominations or sects, in the sense of branding, can be compared to what has happened to the so-called "sumo" brands of the commercial environment. David F. D'Allesandro (2003, p. 8) contends that large brands that once held power over consumers have become less prominent.

By sumo he is referring to entities like the big 3 networks CBS, ABC and NBC; in regards to shopping Sears, and JC Penney. None of these have been truly supplanted, but he mentions other brands such as "The Gap, Home Depot, Sprint, FedEx, and CNBC" (D'Allesandro, 2003, p. 8) have taken some of the market share from the sumo brands.

Research indicates that people have a general distrust for big business. According to the General Social Survey, when people were asked whether they have "a great deal of confidence" in various social institutions the numbers showed a decline in confidence in regards to organized religion from 35% to 24% from those polled in 1970 to 2007. The decline in confidence in organized religion trumped that of other categories such as banks and financial institutions, major companies, as well as education (Brinton, para. 5, 2007).

A similar phenomenon is occurring to the big brands of churches. In an op-ed piece for *U.S.A. Today* titled "Do-It Yourself Christianity" Henry G. Brinton (2007), examines and comments on this trend. "A generation ago, people turned to trusted authorities such as newspapers and mainline churches to get information. But trust in such institutions has fallen over the past 30 years, eroding the relationship between Americans and a number of traditional sources of trust" (Brinton, para. 4).

A shift away from mainline denominations is evident in the migration of people out of mainline churches. "These mainline denominations grew through the 1940s and 50s but began to lose members about 1965. Today, some are one-third smaller than they were 40 years ago"

(Brinton, 2007, para. 6). But Brinton posits that many Christians are not leaving church altogether, but rather assimilating into other independent and community churches.

This creates an identity problem to be solved: if churches opt to un-affiliate themselves from one breed, how do they go about re-identifying themselves in a communicable way? Many community churches are simply re-branded versions of older denominational churches. For instance, Pastor Brad Powell pastor of Temple Baptist in Detroit changed his church's name to NorthRidge Church in 2000. Powell now calls the church a "non-denominational Bible-believing church" (Brinton, 2007, para. 7).

Screven Memorial Baptist Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which is New England's oldest Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) congregation, changed its name to Seacoast Community Church (Walker, 1999, para. 1). Ken Walker noted that, "Although there are more Baptist churches than any other Protestant denomination, these days Seacoast has joined an even larger group: churches with the word community in their name. That is now America's most popular ecclesial denominator." Brinton hypothesizes that these re-branded bodies "are trying to reach the many people who have a longing for community, coupled with a distrust of institutions" (Brinton, 2007, para. 8).

Church brands are becoming more varied through the dividing up of traditional denominations, but are conversely becoming increasingly similar in that they blur the traditional denominational lines. This affords and necessitates branding for churches in order to communicate their newly formed identity to an audience.

This shift has led to a more competitive market of churches vying for members. Formerly, a person who identified himself as a Mennonite Brethren would likely attend a Mennonite Brethren church, but that is not necessarily the case any more. Now a person has a multitude of Bible-believing churches from which to choose. People not only have alternatives, but they are trying them out. This leads to the next reason churches brand—to differentiate.

To differentiate

DK Holland (2005) hypothesizes: "The dawn of man: The first tribe was not branded, the second tribe was. Because in order for the second tribe to distinguish itself form the first, it had to brand itself" (p. 208). So, as Holland sees it, branding is a natural repercussion of branding two or more groups. The scenario of free-market choice demands churches create identities that distinguish them from the church down the street, whether that difference lie in theology, worship style, or something more obscure.

Even the mainstay connections between certain ethnicities and particular denominations are now in flux. The Pew Hispanic Center and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, in a major study called "Changing Faiths: Latinos Transformation of American Religion", found that Latinos are leaving the Catholic Church in significant numbers (Ramos, 2007, p. 28). Ramos boils it down to a branding issue in which Latino Catholics are leaving in search of a different, more vibrant worship experience. "Frequently, they defect in order to join other, often Pentecostal or other revivalist, denominations" (p. 28).

Al and Laura Ries (2005) in their book titled, *The Origin of Brands*—an analogy to Darwin's famous work *The Origin of Species*—write about competition's effect on brands. The analogy guides the authors' premise that just as species evolve, so do brands.

> The interplay of evolution and divergence provides a model for understanding both the Universe and the universe of brands. Evolution has received all the publicity, but evolution alone cannot account for the millions of diverse and unusual species that populate the Earth. If it weren't for divergence, evolution by itself would have created a world populated by millions of single-cell prokaryotes the size of dinosaurs. So, too, it is in the world of brands. Brands evolve to become stronger and more dominant. But it's divergence that generates the conditions that allow the introduction of new categories and new brands (Ries, 2005, p. X, introduction).

According to this model, beyond just evolving, brands must diversify themselves enough to warrant their own existence. Just as every animal has an enemy in the wild, so to every brand has an enemy. However, the enemy is often very similar. The authors mention classic brand rivals: Mercedes & BMW; Home Depot & Lowe's; Coke & Pepsi. "Every brand needs an enemy. BMW, Lowe's and Pepsi-Cola established theirs and then became the opposite" (Ries, 2005, p. 256). They contend that just meeting a need or solving a problem is not enough, companies must find ways to differentiate themselves from what is already in existence.

Churches are increasingly known for what sets them apart from the other churches in the neighborhood. Doctrine, worship style, programming are all things on the proverbial menu from which consumers can choose. In a competitive church environment with many choices, a prospective churchgoer can shop the market, so to speak, seeking out the church that best aligns with his or her religious appetite.

Seeing branding of the church through this lens begs the question, who is the enemy of the church? The church might say that sin, worldliness, apathy or consumerism is the enemy, however in a consumer-driven culture one church could conceivably be the enemy of another, even though they're all offering the same "product".

In the world, not of the world

The modern church certainly bears influence of the early church, but there are also striking differences between today's church and the one established by the original apostles. The use of advanced technology to communicate the gospel, the commodification of faith, and an ever-increasing desire to be consumer-minded create a drastically different mode of operation for the church these days. There is a concerted effort by some churches to remain current, therefore adapting to the culture. On the other hand, there is a sense among churches to be in the world but not of the world. That is to say, be relevant, but also to remain distinct in identity.

Christians have consistently grappled with their approach and adaptation to popular culture. This is evident even in early church history. When non-Jews were being converted to

Christianity in the first century, a debate arose among the Jews as to whether or not these new proselytes needed to embrace the historic Hebrew traditions. (Acts 15:1-29). It was a debate in which the church was forced to renegotiate and possibly compromise some defining characteristics in light of the new converts.

Later on in the 4th century, the celebration of Christmas, one of Christianity's most sacred holidays, is another example of a cultural synthesis combining Christian and pagan elements. Halley comments on the mass conversion of "barbarians" to Christianity in the 4th century. Christians were doubly influenced by the convert's traditions, which resulted in the appropriation of the "old pagan winter solstice" into a celebration of the birth of Christ, now known as Christmas (Halley, 2007, p. 904).

The church and Christians of today are no exception, and it is evident that they too have been influenced by the thinking of the times. In an article in the Wall Street Journal (Alter, 2008, p W1), one pastor, the Reverend Troy Gramling, claimed to glean advice from the marketing techniques of Starbucks when marketing his own church. Whether the issue be Hebrew tradition, pagan holidays, or borrowing modern business strategies, churches operate in the context of a culture and are profoundly impacted by it.

Technology

The response to the digital age is one such example of church adapting to culture. Many churches in America have openly embraced technology and used it as tool for communicating the ancient Gospel message. Stuber, speaking even before the digital revolution, championed the idea that, "Every possible modern medium must be used, and used effectively." (Stuber, 1952, p. 33).

Many contemporary churches have readily embraced technology, perhaps for several reasons. For churches that wish to appear cutting-edge or relevant it is near necessitous to have a clean, consistent logo and a prominent web-presence to connect people to the brand. Also, it is relatively easy and inexpensive these days to engage in digital technology. Production of multi-media content, previously isolated to professionals, is now possible through the use of "pro-sumer"

(a combining of professional and consumer) software. Anything from a sermon podcast to the production of a digital newsletter delivered via email is possible with the proper software and know-how.

If a church finds technology intimidating, there are many companies that target churches specifically with their services. There are many resources available for churches in need of a logo, advertising or web presence. A site called churchlogogallery.com offers logos that can be purchased and customized with the church's name. The artwork is obviously generic, but priced accordingly. Additionally, a multitude of web hosts and site developers market products specifically to churches, such as Element Fusion's Sky content management system for ministries. There is a monthly hosting fee and an additional flat-rate fee for custom designs.

When it comes to embracing technology, churches don't have to go it alone. Some denominations have pooled the collective power of their congregations to push major branding messages on a national stage. The United Methodists launched a major television campaign in 2001 with the slogan "Our hearts, our minds and our doors are always open." These ads benefited local Methodist Churches, without the individual churches having to create the content or foot the bill.

Commodification of Faith

Technology is not the only thing that differs the early church from the modern church. The commodification of faith is a relatively new concept. The mass-marketing of Christian resources such as Bibles, Christian music, or magazines is highly prevalent within the Christian subculture. Commodification generally refers to the transformation of a good or service into a commodity. Cartwright & Sturken (2001) noted that, "The role of brand is central to commodity culture" (p. 227). Through the branding of faith, it could be said that the Christianity itself has become commodified.

Most Christians would likely take issue with the assessment of faith as a product to be bought and sold. Christians have historically been opposed to utilizing faith for financial gain. For

instance, the selling of indulgences by Catholic priests has long been viewed as a black eye on the church's reputation. To decry this type of profiteering, Christians look to such verses as Matthew 21:13 in which Jesus said, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers."

It is a contentious debate: Does faith itself maintain the capacity to be commodified? Debate aside; it is clearly evident that money is being exchanged for Christian products and church resources. The Christian retail industry is not only viable but thriving. The Christian book publisher Zondervan, as of 2007, cited sales of Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life* at 30 million copies sold (Smietana, para. 8). Publisher Thomas Nelson touts "19 New York Times best sellers and the fact that 49 of its books sold at least 100,000 copies last year [2007]" (Smietana).

However, the success doesn't end at books. *Publisher's Weekly* (2005) reported on the other aspects of the Christian industry, "The breakdown shows an average of 61% trade books, 10% Sunday school materials and curriculum, 9% Bibles, and 20% other products (music, videos, software, gifts, and services)" (Ford, 2005, para. 3) (see Figure 17).

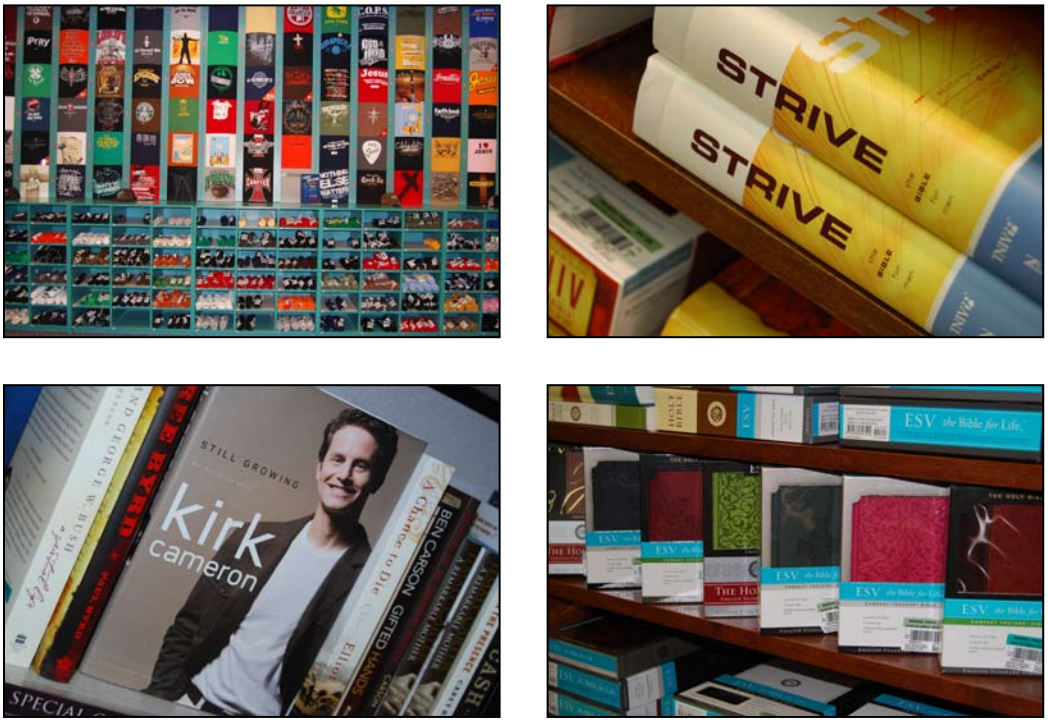


Figure 17. Christian Retail Products

Pictured are apparel, books, and a diverse array of Bibles—not only different translations, but various color schemes and styles to appeal to different audiences.

Music is one of the most apparent forms of commodification of faith. Contemporary Christian music now garners wide acceptance among evangelicals, however it was not always this way. Heather Hendershot cited the uphill battle faced by early Christian musicians such as Larry Norman: "One of Norman's early songs, 'Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?' boldly advanced that rock-and-roll was not inherently satanic, a message that did not fly with older fundamentalists, of the Jimmy Swaggart ilk" (2004, p. 55).

The seminal work on Christian commodification is *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Hendershot, 2004). The book by Hendershot is a scholarly work examining everything from Contemporary Christian music, film, apparel, animation, and abstinence initiatives such as True Love Waits. The book "looks at the 'center' of conservative

evangelical culture, the middle-class, mostly white Christians who can afford to buy into the 'Christian lifestyle' market" (Shaking the World for Jesus excerpt, 2004, para. 18).

Consumer Mindedness

Did the early church strive to be consumer-minded in its spreading of the gospel? The reason for such a question is to examine another possible difference between the early and modern church. Businesses that seek to offer excellent service and retain customer loyalty operate with consumer-mindedness—a keen awareness of what a consumer thinks. Has this attention to consumers' thoughts and attitudes had any impact on how the church brands itself?

The church has also adopted this approach in its branding methodology. Stuber, in the middle of the 20th century was paving the way for this kind of thinking, "Just as business makes an effort to determine what the public really thinks about it, so should churches" (p. 25). Gobé & Zyman hold that, unlike the stalwart, unchanging brands forged at the dawn of the branding revolution, new brands—effective brands, in his estimate—are those that have adapted to cultural whims to insure their staying power. They state:

> In order to reflect a changing business environment, corporate identity programs have evolved over time from an approach based purely on the concepts of visibility and impact (products of an industrial economy and the language defined by corporations) to one based on the concept of emotional contact with consumers founded on interaction and dialogue (couched in a new language of a 'people-driven economy'
> (Gobé & Zyman, 2001, p. 122).

Churches are not only maintaining a consistent brand but also examining that brand through the eyes of the audience. It is through these eyes, that success, in regards to communicated values is being determined. Perhaps a church's best chance to meaningfully communicate would be through a first-hand visit to the church by a prospective member, but how does a church tell its story or communicate its message to those outside of its walls?

Jeffrey Weiss (2006) commented the on the Southern Baptists' challenge of communicating values, "Officials at the nation's largest Protestant denomination have publicly worried for years about their image. Southern Baptists, they fret, are best known for what they're against: abortion, homosexuality, women pastors, dancing and Disney" (para. 4). Weiss references a television ad that attempted to address "…what Baptists are for – without disavowing those controversial positions" (para. 5). Churches are indeed using a multitude of media to send out there message and sculpt their image.

If the church or faith brand is evolving, who's steering the ship? There is no shortage of designers who are visualizing and actualizing the branding methods of churches and non-profit ministries. These designers are towing the line of remaining relevant while attempting to work with integrity to spread the message and mission of the church.

Designing the Brand

In an article titled "Putting a Fresh Face on Faith", Lisa Baggerman-Hazen (2007) discusses the applications and challenges of branding faith. She says, "There's a passionate group of talented designers who are reinventing the aesthetic for the Christian market. They know that effective marketing and design are integral to telling their story" (p. 100). Mattson Creative who "serves a wide range of clients from Coca-Cola to Maroon 5" is also helping to brand faith organizations. His Christian clients include the Purpose-Driven Life website as well as the Justice Mission (p. 102).

Often times brand differentiation is not based upon theological or denominational lines, but rather on demographic segments—the approach present in much secular branding. According to Baggerman-Hazen (2007), "Relevant Media Group is responsible for creating and publishing some of today's most progressive design materials for the Christian audience. This Orlando FL-based company publishes Christian books, a website, a print magazine and a weekly podcast, all targeted to a group of racially diverse men and women, aged 18-32" (p. 103) (see Figure 18).

Figure 18. Relevant Magazine

Even the Bible itself—the format, not the message—is also being adapted to appeal to various demographic groups. Baggerman-Hazen (2007) writes, "Once exclusively a sober, austere tome, the Bible now comes in seasonal colors inspired by the fashion industry" (p. 104). Joe Vriend, vice president of creative communications for Zondervan, a Christian publisher, says, "People want their Bible to reflect who they are" (p. 104).

Branding the church brings up special considerations for those involved. From an ideological basis, Alastair Sterne, creative director of Relevant Magazine, says, "We're not going to use sex to sell our magazine" (Baggerman-Hazen, December, 2007, p. 105). Aside from the ideological differences, designer Ty Mattson says that when it comes branding there are certain hurdles and education that must take place specifically with Christian clients, "There's an initial mentality we run into with many of our clients that branding is only for large corporations. The realization that your church or organization is a brand with a reputation to manage is a new idea" (Baggerman-Hazen, 2007, p. 106).

The effectiveness of branding for churches is perhaps subjective to further analysis. Danielle Green, in *Design Week* (2003), posed the question whether branding could be a tool "to lure people back round the pulpit" (p. 67). In the article, Simon Barbato contends that the best branding is not through media, but rather that, "The best ambassadors of the Church are

the congregations." He adds, "If we can unite them and create a strong sense of purpose and belonging then we've met an important objective" (Green, p. 67).

Barbato also warns of the dangers of re-branding the church, "Theology is sacrosanct and it would be criminal to rebrand a belief system. Where the work needs to be done is in repackaging how it is delivered to the congregation and beyond" (Green, 2003, p. 67). His allusion to church theology as 'sacrosanct' implies that religion is not to be toyed with—that there are major implications at stake. What are the ramifications of placing faith within the context of branding? There is no shortage of opinion on whether branding upholds or diminishes the sanctity of the church.

Objections to Church Branding

Many see branding as technique utilized to further the mission of the church. However, others see branding and marketing as a subversion of the church's central mission. Stanley Haurwas states his feeling toward the issue, "Of course, no one is more damaged by the assumption that marketing is 'only' a technique than those who advocate the marketing of the church" (Kenneson & Street, 2003, p.12).

The church marketing industry is big business, with a number of websites and books devoted to helping churches reach their potential in a given market. Many of these books offer tips unabashedly. On the back of one particular book, the *Concise Encyclopedia of Church And Religious Organization Marketing* by W Bruce Wrenn, David Loudon, and Robert Stevens, it reads, "Discover the marketing basics to draw new members—and more funds—to your church!"

The draw is apparently very appealing. Haurwas hesitantly testifies to the success of a book of this nature, "If any of us writes a book in theology, it might sell five thousand copies at best. Books in church marketing sell in the tens of thousands." (Kenneson & Street, 2003, p. 11). Philip D. Kenneson and James L. Street, in their book *Selling Out the Church: the Dangers of Church Marketing*, have attempted to tackle the ethical questions surrounding church marketing.

Though, from the title of the book, their position is quite clear. They sum up the question driving their suspicion: "Can the market-driven church remain Christ's church?" (p. 16).

They argue that the mission of the church is fundamentally opposed to the concept of marketing. They write, "Church marketing considers it axiomatic that people act primarily on the bases of self-interest. Since this is the case, the church that desires to attract new members must clearly articulate the benefits of membership to potential members" (Kenneson & Street, 2003, p. 18).

However this debate is nothing new, even Stuber in his 1952 book, recognized the difference between sacred and commercial entities and their respective underlying philosophies. Stuber asks, "Should a church secure an advertising agency to serve as its exclusive public relations counsel? No, not even if it can get the services absolutely free. It is dangerous business to turn over a spiritual enterprise to a commercial agency" (p. 84).

A study conducted in 1986, as reported in the *Journal of Advertising*, assessed the perceptions between the general public and clergy regarding the appropriateness of advertising the church (McDaniel). Perhaps surprisingly, the study reported that clergy perceived church advertising to be more appropriate than did the general public. In a twenty-year span, one could assume, however, that enough cultural shift has occurred that the general public may have a more positive outlook on branding the church.

While many do indeed see marketing as a compromise of values, others see it as an opportunity for churches to communicate. "Abare maintains that marketing isn't sleazy—it's just another way of getting the word out. 'Marketing is simply thinking through what you do and why you do it,' he says." (Baggerman-Hazen, December, 2007, p. 33).

Ryan Abare founded an organization called the Center for Church Communication "to frustrate, educate and motivate the church, to communicate with uncompromising clarity, the truth of Jesus Christ." As on offshoot of his organization, Abare also launched a blog—possibly to re-enforce the "frustrate" portion of his mission—called churchmarketingsucks.com (Abare, 2004).

One blogger on churchmarketingsucks.com attempted to boil the debate down to mere semantics, "Context is important. The word 'marketing' these days is usually attached to words such as 'aggressive', 'misleading' and 'scam'. Outreach is a word that should better describe the church. Marketing=money, while outreach=people... its an important defining statement" (Abare, 2004, Posted by: Jonny).

With all of the proponents of church branding, it's important to recognize that there are those opposed to the notion. Whether the contingency lies in simple matter of semantics, or a deeper core philosophy, the debate would appear to be far from over (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. Christianity Today Cover

"Marketing Jesus: How to Evangelize without Turning God into a Brand." *Christianity Today*, January 2009.

Conclusion of Literature Review

The Meaning of Images

When examining imagery, its important to not only look at the surface, but to dig deeper into the meanings that these images held for those who created them, and also the original audience for whom they were intended. Early Christians set the tone for many of the images still used today, and over a great expanse of time the meanings and motivations for displaying such images have changed little. David Morgan (1998) noted, "All signs are motivated by the history and system of meaning that produce them…" (p. 11). According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, artifacts, or images, can be used to, indicate traces of the past and expectations of the future (Morgan, p. 11). That is, images tell us about the context in which they were produced, but beyond that, what the producer felt in anticipation towards future events.

What then do Christian images tell us about those who created them? When dealing with an abstract concept such as religion, it can be assumed that images create some kind of tangible way to connect with ethereal ideas. Csikszentmihalyi held that, "material things assert our identities and maintain them in the face of an ever-present flux of sensation and mental activity" (Morgan, 1998, p. 5). Images essentially work as a medium connecting to, solidifying, and communicating spiritual concepts.

Images have proven to be powerful, and the church has leveraged their use throughout history. The simple symbols of the early church worked as visualizations of popular Biblical texts as well as systems to identify believers. During the middle ages artists and designer formed standards for the depiction of icons. The reformers of the 16th century—in what we would now call a marketing blitz—used pamphlets and broadsheets to challenge the world's most powerful institution at the time, the Catholic Church. With the determined success and power of images to engage the culture, the church would continued to use a visual language in the United States.

The modern day United States still shows remnants of the faith of early settlers and the influence they had on shaping the identity of a young country. The church has impacted the

culture, but is by no means impervious to outside influence. Faith has in many ways become commodified through the selling of Christian books, magazines, music, and apparel. Additionally churches have adapted to technology and sought to become more consumer-minded—understanding how they are perceived by the public. Each of these factors has perhaps eased the transition to modern church branding that we are now seeing.

But perhaps most significant, churches have become aware of, and even borrowed from corporate branding strategies. The success of companies in the 1950s to standardize their image, creating consistency of identity, in no way escaped the notice of churches. In the current setting, churches are perhaps more influenced by for-profit branding strategies than their own visual tradition. To assert or dismiss these claims, we need to look at which churches are branding, how and why.

Methodology

Objectives

It is easy to look at the prolific identities of mega churches and make a strong case for church branding, however that narrow scope lacks the generalizability needed for thorough research. It is critical to formulate a working sample that accurately mirrors a broader population. Church size, denomination, budget, and age are some of the factors in consideration.

The primary goal in the research methodology was to collect branding examples, find trends or often recurring instances, make meaning out of the data through discovering correlations and, finally, present that data in a meaningful way that paints a full picture of the present state of church branding.

Parameters

The Oklahoma City area is ideal for this kind of study because of its high density of churches. The University of Central Oklahoma functioned as the hub of my research. UCO sits in the center of Edmond, a suburb of Oklahoma City. When doing a search on yellowpages.com for "Churches and Places of Worship" within a 5 mile radius of the UCO campus, it yielded 44 results.

Oklahoma City is the capital of Oklahoma, one of the top 10 most religious states in America, according to Gallup Poll. When asked "Is your religion an important part of your daily life?" 75% of Oklahomans said yes. That is markedly higher than the national average of 65%, but lower than other southern states such as Mississippi or Alabama (Gallup).

Oklahoma City is an overtly religious city evidenced in the copious amount of worship centers one finds just by driving the streets. Beyond high volume, there's also a wide variety of denominations, styles and sizes of churches—small fellowships of under one-hundred people to mega-churches such as Life Church boasting thousands in weekend attendance.

Surveys

Collecting accessible branding examples provides a good starting point, but it doesn't tell the whole picture of how and why churches brand. To delve deeper into the mindset of churches, fifty churches were surveyed in the Oklahoma City metro area. Cold calls were made, and the subject was asked if they would like to participate in a survey. The survey taker was engaged with a script (see Appendix A).

Some were receptive; others were not. One challenge occurred in simply getting connected to a real person, rather than an answering machine. Many churches, perhaps because of resources or personnel considerations, lacked a person in the office to answer calls. Another challenge was in knowing with whom to speak at the church. Since the research subject was serving as the lone representative of the church, it was important to speak with someone privy to the church's branding activities. The researcher would generally ask to speak to the person in charge of the advertising or communications of the church (after being met with some confusion when using terms such as branding or graphic design). Often times the researcher spoke to the secretary, administrative assistant, pastor or associate minister since many churches do not have a staff member that deals specifically with branding.

The researcher worked out geographically from the nucleus by running down a list of churches generated from yellowpages.com (Churches & Places of Worship, ordered by proximity from 100 North University Drive, Edmond, OK 73034) until fifty churches had been surveyed. Fifty was determined as a reasonable amount to yield an accurate sampling of the general population. For a complete list of churches surveyed, see Appendix B. The survey was broken down into 4 main sections: General Information, Branding Information, and Self-Analysis, and Attitudes Towards Branding.

General Information

General Information was acquired in attempts to form correlations between church characteristics and how they brand respectively—characteristics such as church size and age. The rationale for collecting this information is in discovering, confirming or dismissing pre-theorized positive relationships that could exist between, for example, church size and perceived excellence in branding.

Church ages ranged from two years old to one-hundred twenty years in the case of First Church, a United Methodist Church founded in downtown Oklahoma city in 1889 (see Table 1). The purpose of this question was to see if older churches approached branding differently than younger churches.

Table 1. Church Age

Q: What is the age of your church? (the collective fellowship, not the average age of individual members.)

Average Age	51.8 years
Range	2-120 years

One unanticipated criterion that was added to the survey dealt with the number of campuses. Some churches had multiple campuses. These were not unique churches—the same brand—just in a different location. Six of the churches interviewed had multiple campuses ranging from 2 to 13 campuses in one case (see Table 2).

Table 2. Campuses

Q: Does your church have multiple campuses?

One Campus	44 churches
Multiple Campuses	6 churches

A breakdown of the various churches with multiple campuses:

Life Church	13 campuses
Victory Church	5 campuses
Church of the Harvest	4 campuses
Crossings	2 campuses
Henderson Hills	2 campuses
Northwest Baptist	2 campuses

The research includes a vast array of church sizes. Data was collected on membership and attendance. However membership became a problematic data as several churches do not keep record of this. Also, some churches stated that their attendance data was not up to date. All churches did keep some record of their weekly worship attendance. This number was important in determining if churches of different numerical size brand differently (see Table 3).

Table 3. Size

Q: What is the size of your fellowship, based on attendance?

Average	1400
Average without Life Church	857
Median	325
Mode	300

As Halley mentioned, a common distinction of churches these days is whether or not they are evangelical. However, this question was often a point of confusion for the survey-taker, as the term *evangelical* is apparently interpreted differently by varying denominations. However, several churches were staunch in their position on this question (see Table 4).

Table 4. Evangelical or Non-Evangelical

Q: Would you describe your church as evangelical or non-evangelical?

Evangelical	31
Non-Evangelical	13
Unsure or Other	6

The researcher asked whether churches would describe themselves as traditional, contemporary, emerging or something else altogether (see Table 5). In determining an answer, many churches pointed to their worship style (see Figure 20). Some churches are strictly traditional or definitively contemporary, however many churches listed themselves as a blend, with both a contemporary and traditional service. Emerging is a post-modern term that has come about in recent years to describe very unconventional churches. However, few churches in my sample used it as a descriptive word for their fellowship.

Table 5. Descriptor

Q: Would you describe your church as contemporary, traditional, a blend, emerging or other?

Blend	21
Traditional	13
Contemporary	9
Other	5
Emerging	2

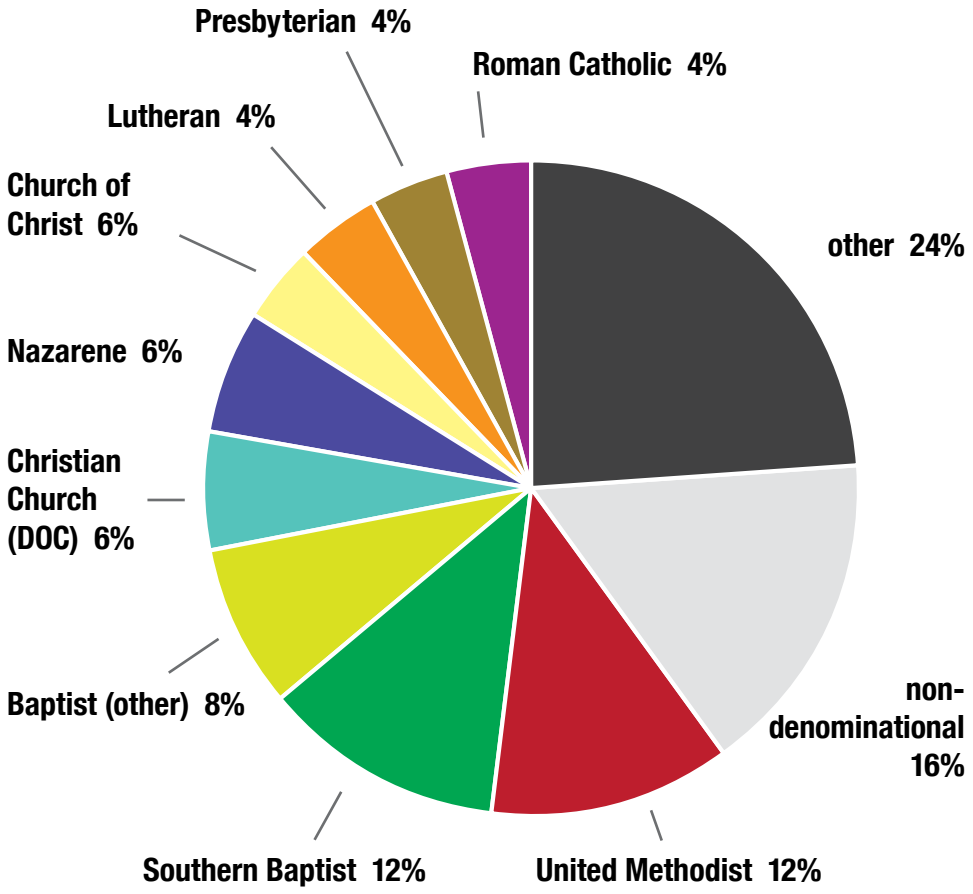
Figure 20. Worship Style

Many churches have formed distinct services, either traditional or contemporary, which alters their branding.

In seeking doctrinal and congregational diversity, the research includes many different denominations or associational affiliations (see Figure 21).

Figure 21. Denominational Graph

Q: Does your church have a denominational or associational affiliation?



Note. "other" includes churches with only one instance of a particular denomination.

Branding Information

After establishing some general information about the churches, the Branding Information section existed in effort to find out essentially how churches are proceeding in terms of logo use, advertising media, budget expense towards branding and also where the responsibilities rest for design and creation of publications or website.

It is one thing to have a logo, but to use it consistently is another matter. A question was phrased to reflect that important factor (see Table 6). Keep in mind, this is not the researcher's analysis, but rather, how a church representative felt about logo consistency.

Table 6. Logo Consistency

Q: Does your church have a logo that it uses on a consistent basis?

Yes	43
No	7

Many churches don't use unique logos for their local fellowship, but rather use a denominational logo to identify with a larger group. A fair amount of churches surveyed fall into this category—14 out of 50 use a denominational logo (see Table 7). Churches denoted with "X" either do not affiliate with a denomination or the denomination they do associate with doesn't have a logo. Churches denoted by "No" indicates that the local entity has opted not to use the logo.

Table 7. Denominational Logo

If applicable, does your church use or incorporate the denominational logo in your local church's logo?

Yes	14
No	13
X	23

The United Methodist Church has one of the more recognizable denominational brands. The unmistakable cross and flame is emblazoned on everything from church signage to parking lot warnings. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) use the St. Andrew's Cross silhouetted against a chalice. The Disciples of Christ website contains a usage guide with background information on the meaning of the logo: "The chalice points to the centrality of the Lord's Supper

in the life and worship of the Disciples. The Cross of St. Andrew, national cross of Scotland, focuses attention on the Presbyterian roots of the Disciples. St. Andrew has been identified with the laity and with evangelism, both of which have been prominent Disciples' emphases. The color red signifies vitality, spirit and sacrifice" (2009, http://www.disciples.org/Portals/0/PDF/chalice/chaliceguidelines.pdf) (see Figure 22).

Figure 22. Denominational Branding

On the left, First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) branding; on the right The United Methodist Church with the cross and flame.

In trying to determine when churches began branding themselves in the modern sense, subjects were asked, "How long has your church been using a logo?" Often times newer churches said from inception. Older churches had trouble answering the question definitively, generally citing the age of their most current identity system (see Table 8).

Table 8. Time with Logo

Q: How long has your church been using a logo?

Average	14.5 years
Range	2 - 50 years

The amount of money dedicated to branding may be an indicator of the level of branding that churches engage in. Subjects were told that the question was strictly optional, but if they

wouldn't mind sharing, "what is the percentage that branding or marketing takes up of the overall budget" (see Table 9)? Only 50% of churches answered the question. The results were generally a very small percentage. Results varied from 0 to 4.5%. Of course, percentages only tell a fraction, not an actual monetary number, but some churches did divulge actual amounts. In the case of one church 2% meant $120,000 spent towards branding, out of a six-million dollar, overall operating budget.

Table 9. Budget

Portion of church budget dedicated to branding

Average Percent of Annual Budget	2.41%

Since branding is executed through a variety of media, churches were asked to list those that they utilized (see Table 10). Many commonalities were discovered as well as some unique responses. Since this list is a bit unwieldy, answers were organized into a categorical system. The churches and their corresponding, utilized media were placed under one of three headings: 1) Traditional - things such as phone book listings, newspaper ads; 2) Contemporary - website, direct-mail, flyers; 3) Emerging - media-rich web sites, sophisticated branding (meaning consistent in multiple applications), YouTube presence, Facebook, Twitter to leverage SNP (social networking potential).

Table 10. Branding by Media Category

Traditional	24
Contemporary	15
Emerging	11

Examples

In addition to collecting branding examples, the researcher also asked churches who completed the survey to send logos, advertisements or any other branded materials. 16 churches responded. On subsequent pages you'll find these samples and others grouped by category.

Web and Interactive Media

Most churches have fully embraced web and interactive media. 48 out of 50 churches surveyed had some form of web presence, in many cases not just a simple splash page with a pastor's name and church phone number but rather rich, dynamic content (See Figure 23).

Figure 23. Web and Interactive Media

NorthChurch (left) has placed its sermon messages on its own website, and additionally on YouTube in hopes to gain even greater exposure. Northview Church (right), in addition to its regular site, added a micro-site with branding all its own. This is an online prayer room in which visitors can submit a prayer or a "thanks" online.

Direct Mail

Direct-mail can be an effective means to target households falling within certain criteria such as zip code or income bracket (see Figure 24).

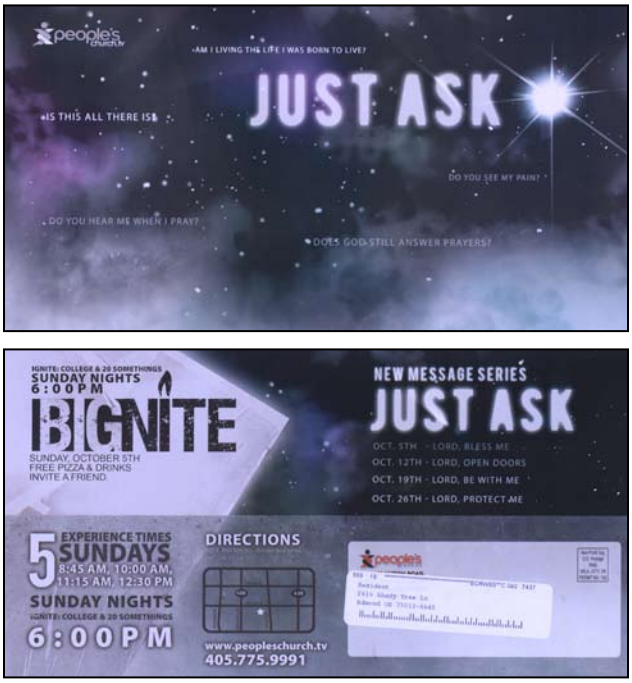


Figure 24. Direct-Mail

Direct-Mail from People's Church announcing a new message series and 20-something ministry

Service Programs

Branding doesn't exist just outside the doors. Printed service programs or bulletins are often passed out as people enter the church. It is another opportunity to reinforce the brand and advertise activities and ministries (see Figure 25).

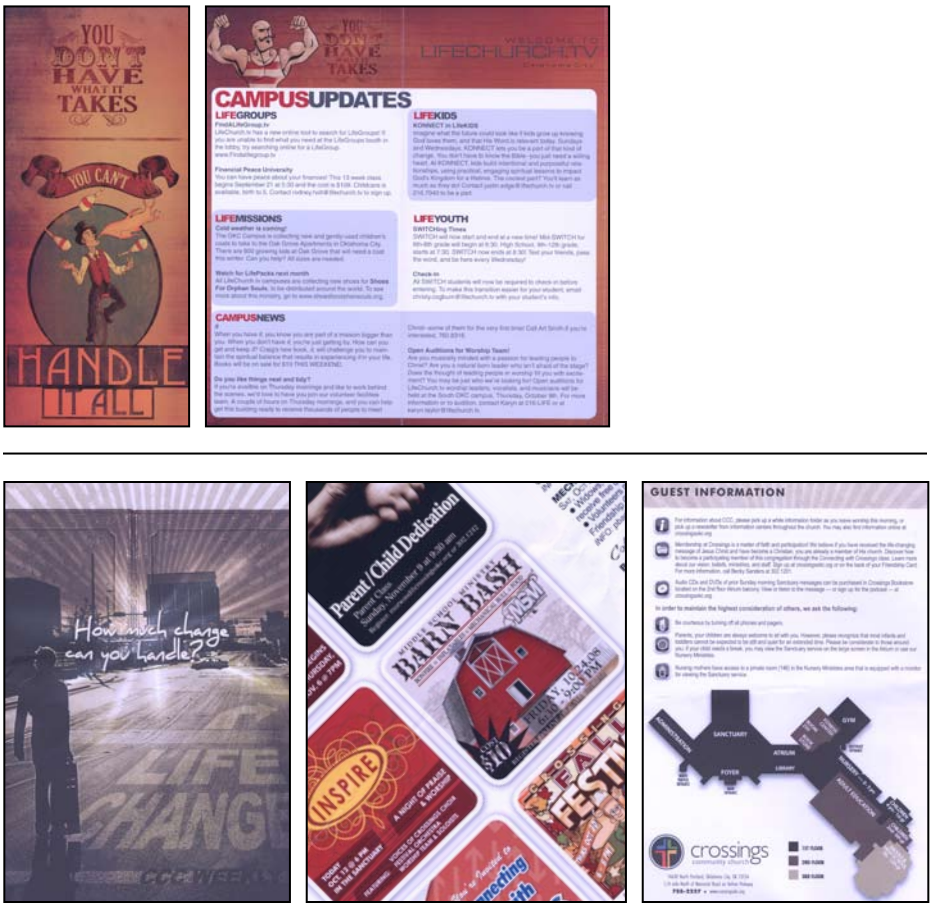


Figure 25. Service Programs

These programs from Life Church (top) and Crossings Community Church (bottom) reiterate the current sermon series; inside are programs and ministry opportunities for the upcoming week.

Through the surveys administered, it was also determined who was responsible for producing branding materials, such as advertising, TV spots or website. There were several broad categories from which to chose: 1) professional services, meaning those things that are

outsourced to advertising or design agencies; 2) church staff; 3) the laity, those who are not clergy or paid staff, and lastly to be determined was whether the church had an in-house design/ communications team, meaning people whose specific task or role deals with graphic design or visual communications. Interestingly, churches nearly unanimously relied on staff for creating branding materials, even if they used the services of professionals (see Tables 11 & 12).

Table 11. Branding Responsibilities

Q: Who is responsible for the production of branding media and materials, such as ads, signage, or website?

Professional Services (outsourced)

yes	23
no	27

Church Staff

yes	49
no	1

Laity

yes	33
no	17

In-House

yes	18
no	32

Table 12. In-House Breakdown

The table below expresses the number of churches that have an in-house team or individual dedicated to design/ communications. For example 9 churches have 1 person in-house; 1 church has 13 members on its in-house team.

Number of Churches	Team Members
9	1
2	2
2	3
1	4
2	5
1	7
1	13

Self-Analysis

The Self-Analysis section allowed churches—more specifically, a representative of the church—to gauge the perceived success of branding efforts. One way to gauge this is if the church feels visible to those whom they are trying to reach (see Table 13). Some cited their advertising, others a good location or involvement in the community. *Community* is a somewhat subjective term, but is an area that includes the target audience of the church, or the people they want to reach. For some churches, this circle is large; others mentioned they focus specifically on their neighborhood.

Table 13. Perceived Visibility

Q: On a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being high and 1 being low, how would you rate your church's visibility in the community?

Average	3.38
Mode	3
Median	3.5

Churches also provided the perceived level of quality or excellence of the strategies or branding materials that they produce (see Table 14).

Table 14. Perceived Excellence

Q: On a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor, how would you rate the job your church does in branding itself?

Average	3.06
Mode	3
Median	3

Churches also qualified how much they brand in comparison to other churches in their community, in effort to gauge extent of branding relative to other churches (see Table 15). Often churches would reference the prolific nature of other churches' branding strategies, to gauge their own, saying something to the effect, "We don't do as much as Life Church or Crossings... " (paraphrase).

Table 15. Extent of Branding

Q: Compared to other churches in the community would you say you brand a lot (2), a little (1) or not at all (0)?

Average	1.27
Mode	1
Median	1

Note. For quantitative purposes, numbers were ascribed to the answers: 2 = a lot, 1 = a little, and 0 = not at all.

Correlations

To discover correlations between church type and how they brand, the three self-analysis sections of Perceived Visibility (in community), Perceived Excellence (in branding), and Extent of Branding (level of branding when compared with other churches), were compared against two of the other data sets collected—age and size.

By Age

First by age—there were no strong correlations between the age of a church and how they brand. Based on churches' stated level of visibility, the chart immediately below shows a slight correlation from bottom left to upper right, indicating a mildly positive relationship between church age and visibility. Note that all churches over 40 gave a visibility rating of 2 or higher (see Figure 26).

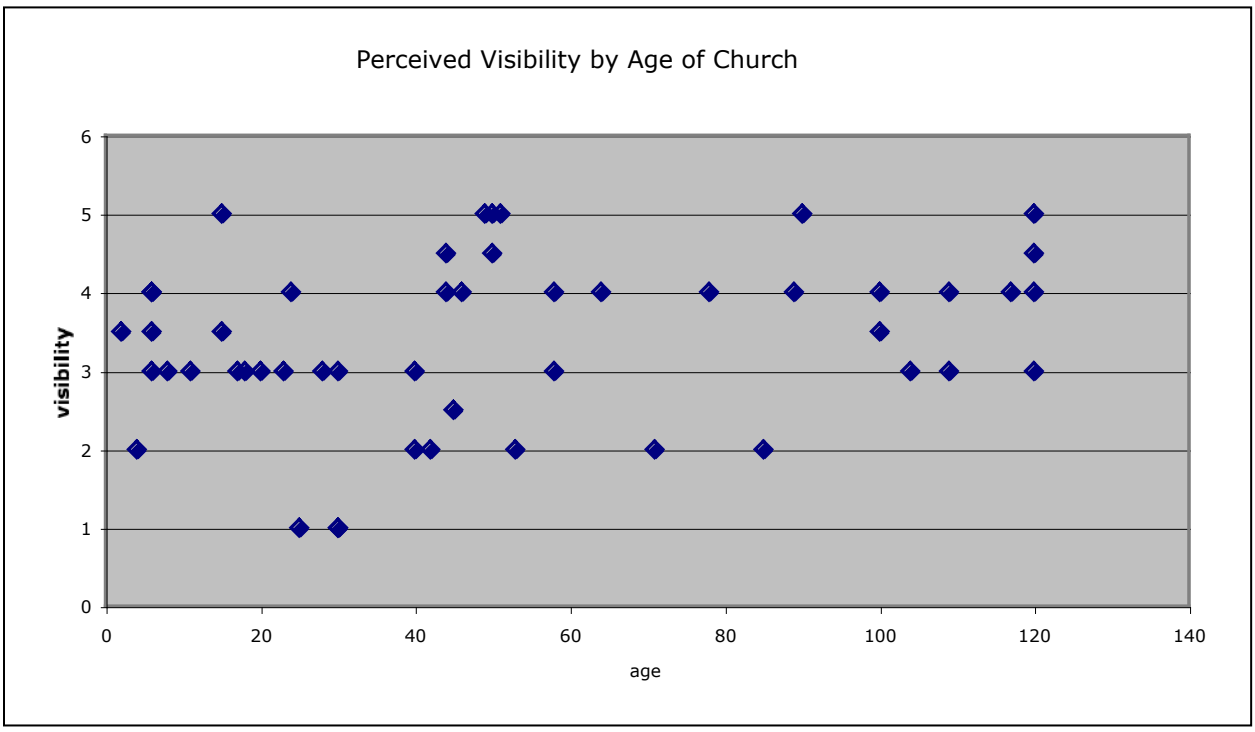


Figure 26. Perceived Visibility by Age of Church

In Excellence by Age, no definitive correlation exists, but there is a slight bottom left to upper right trend. This indicates that older churches and newer churches see themselves on an even playing field where excellence is concerned, but with older churches having a slight edge (see Figure 27).

Figure 27. Perceived Excellence by Age of Church

Comparison is the strongest relationship in terms of age. A more intelligible upward to rightward movement indicates that older churches feel they brand more than newer churches. Note that all churches over 80 said they brand “a lot” or “a little”, with none saying “not at all” (see Figure 28).

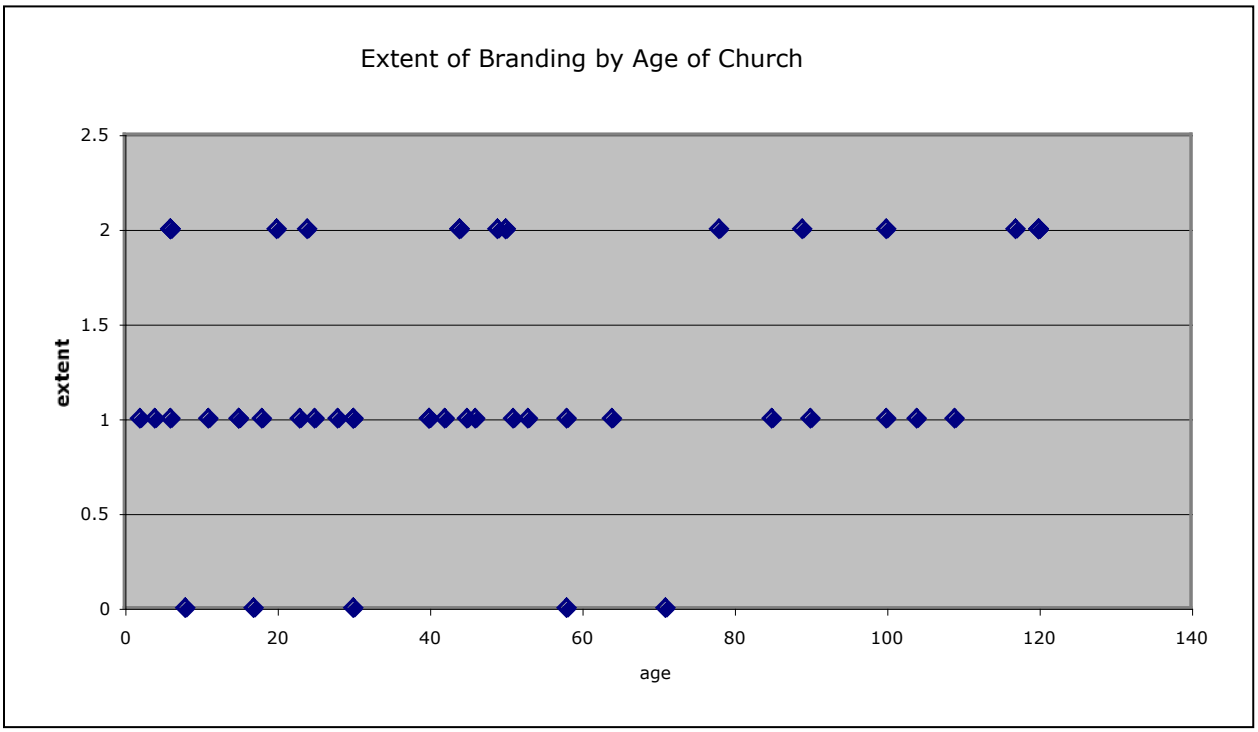


Figure 28. Extent of Branding by Age of Church

By Size

Correlation is not causation, but one could make the case that branding can increase church size. Where age of church showed slight correlations, church size revealed stronger relationships to levels of Visibility, Excellence and Extent of Branding.

Life Church with its 28,000 people in weekend attendance increases the size of the figure tremendously, increasing the unit of measure along the abscissa. However, the results are still telling; large churches have high visibility (see Figure 29).

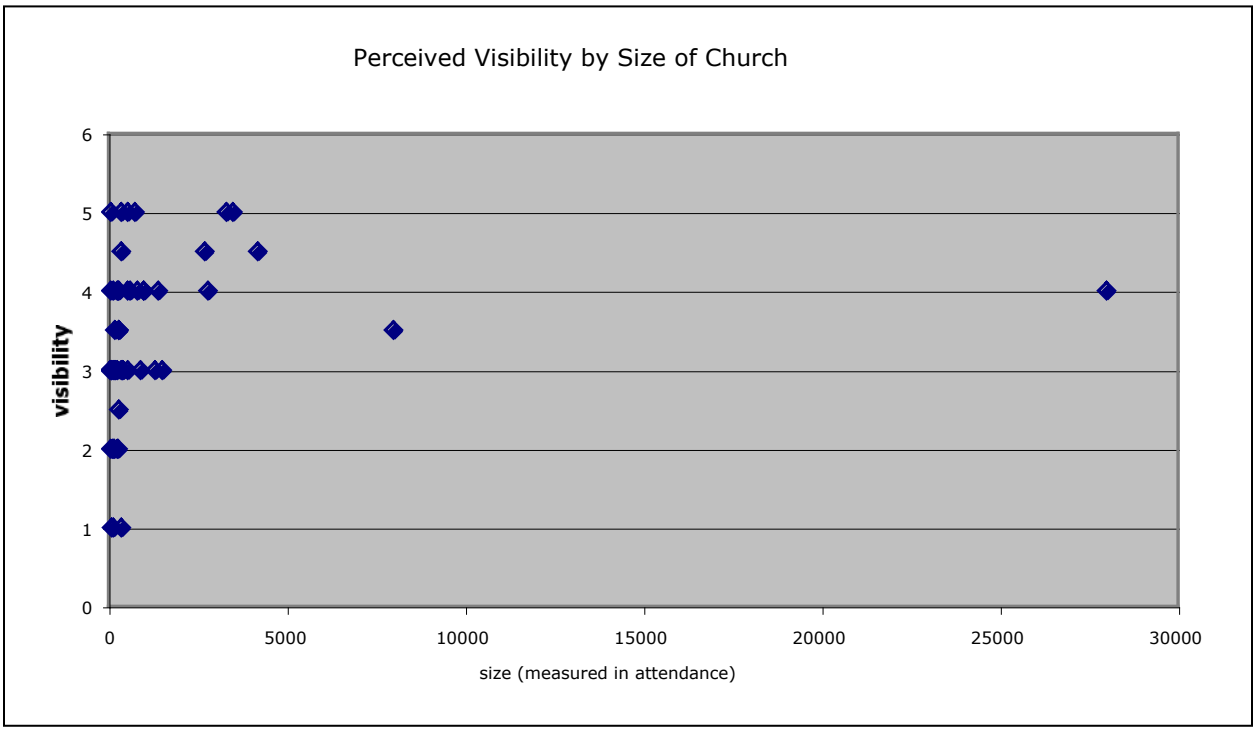


Figure 29. Perceived Visibility by Size of Church

Excellence by size created less drastic results than Visibility, but there is a positive connection between size and excellence (see Figure 30).

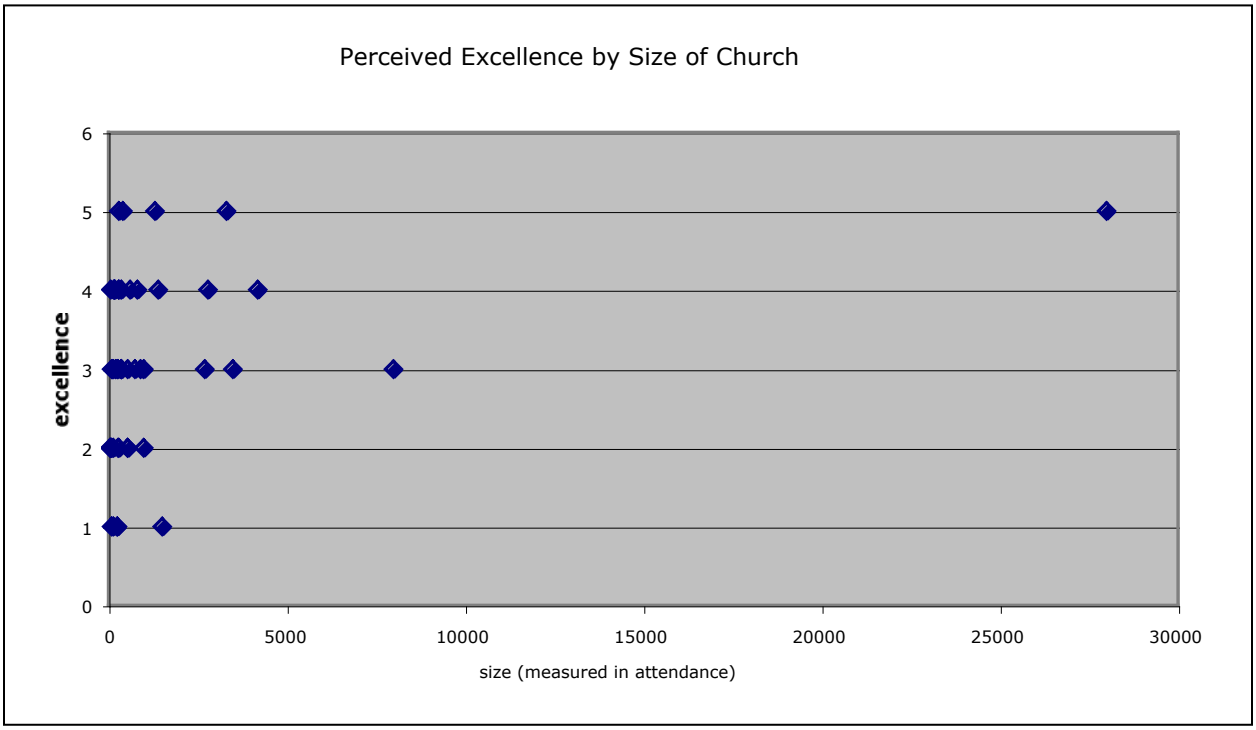


Figure 30. Perceived Excellence by Size of Church

Based on comparison, churches of larger size more often reported high levels of branding, than did smaller churches. No church over 400 people said they brand "not at all" (see Figure 31).

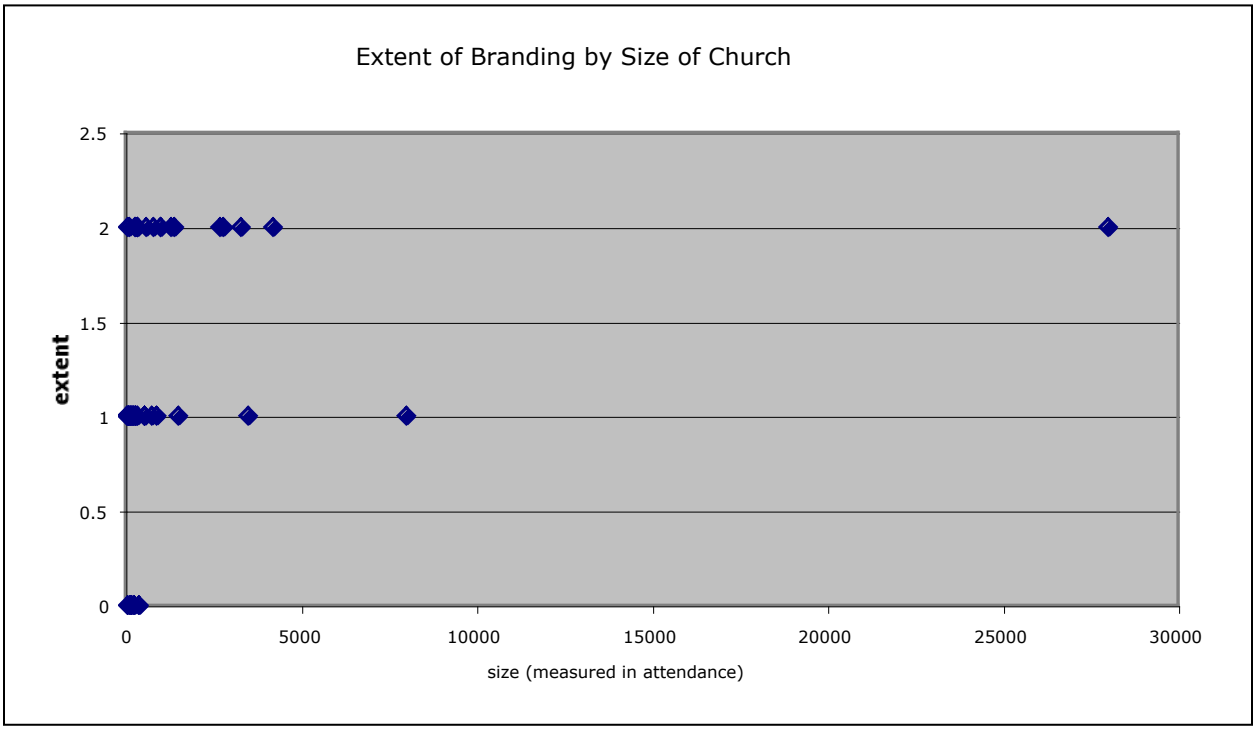


Figure 31. Extent of Branding by Size of Church

Attitudes Toward Branding

For many church branding is a hot-button issue. To assess the underlying attitudes towards branding, churches were asked if they had any moral hesitations in regards to branding. For the most part, churches did not have a problem with it. Some gave contextual or situational answers that were filed under a heading of "perhaps". Five people definitively said they had hesitations (see Table 16).

Table 16. Hesitations in Branding

Q: Do you have any moral hesitations in regards to branding your church or churches in general?

No	40
Yes	5
Perhaps	4
No Response	1

Conclusion

The topic, "The Changing Visual Identity of Churches: From Symbols to Branding", implies several things: 1) that the early church used simple symbols, 2) The modern church is branding, and 3) that some sort of transition occurred to link the two. Through the Review of Literature it can be comfortably said that early Christians indeed used symbols to identify themselves. Through the Methodology it was also shown that most churches surveyed are branding their identity to some degree to connect with audiences. But what led to this transition? Is there one decisive moment to be identified or a thread of subtle changes over time?

The simple symbols that successfully identified the early church no longer communicate as meaningfully as they once did. Symbols such as the Icthus or Cross identify people as Christians, but what kind? Protestant or Catholic; if Protestant, then Baptist, Methodist, or perhaps non-denominational; if Baptist, then Southern Baptist or Missionary Baptist? Also to be determined is if a church holds a traditional or a more contemporary worship service.

Simple symbols worked well within the context of a singular Christian movement, but lost their original usefulness with the emergence of church sub-brands. A sub-brand is defined as "a brand that builds on its associations with a masterbrand" (Interbrand, 2006, p. 113). In this case, Christianity is the masterbrand, and the sub-brand is any entity under that broad umbrella, for instance, a Lutheran Church.

Church branding is necessitous in the midst of parity—similar product offerings by competitors. Because all churches essentially offer the same product, branding provides a way to show differentiation. With differences in doctrinal issues and worship style, a brand identity provides a way to contain and communicate those differences visually. This is a direct appeal to the current culture as consumers are now astute in distinguishing brands in the midst of parity. Negligible differences in restaurants, car companies or department stores, can seem extreme because of the perceived image created through branding.

To create the strongest identity recognition and differentiation possible, churches have become more deliberate in how they brand. Life Church, with 28,000 people in weekend attendance across 14 campuses, would be a prime example (see Figure 32). The Life Church brand identity creates connectedness across multiple church sites, be it Phoenix, Oklahoma City or Albany. Life Church, with its own in-house creative department is certainly not the norm. However, many churches now have communications pastors and designers on staff. As revealed in the Methodology, 18 churches out of 50 have 1 or more persons on staff dedicated to the role of communications and branding.

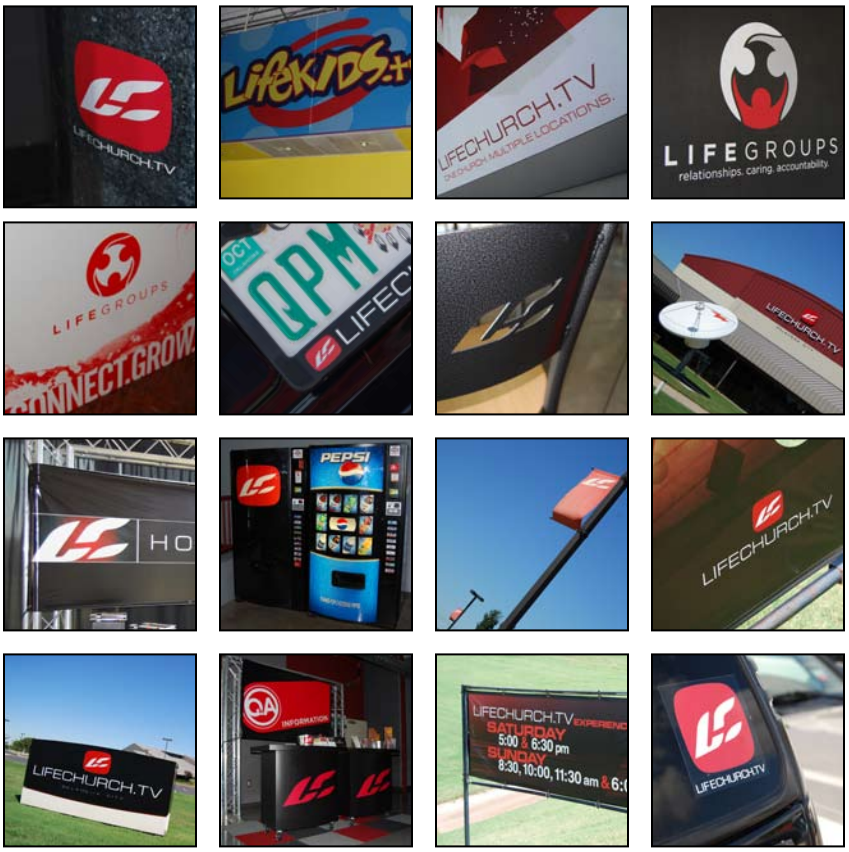


Figure 32. Life Church Brand

The above examples show the prolific nature of Life Church's branding strategy.

To create brand consistency churches have begun to use standardized forms of identity (see Figure 33). Most fellowships, 43 out 50, said they utilized a consistent logo. This can include a specific type treatment, mark, or color scheme to present a united front. Taking a cue from corporate identity, some churches and denominations also refer to a graphic standards manual for proper and improper usage. From the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod graphic standards guide: "When used correctly, the logo identifies our church body and links the many synodical ministries as belonging to one church body" (www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/LCMS/GraphicSheet.pdf) (see Figure 34).

Figure 33. Crossings Community Church Identity

The brand identity for Crossing Community Church was designed with various orientations to maintain consistency in various applications. (bottom) The identity is shown in the context of a banner announcing service times.

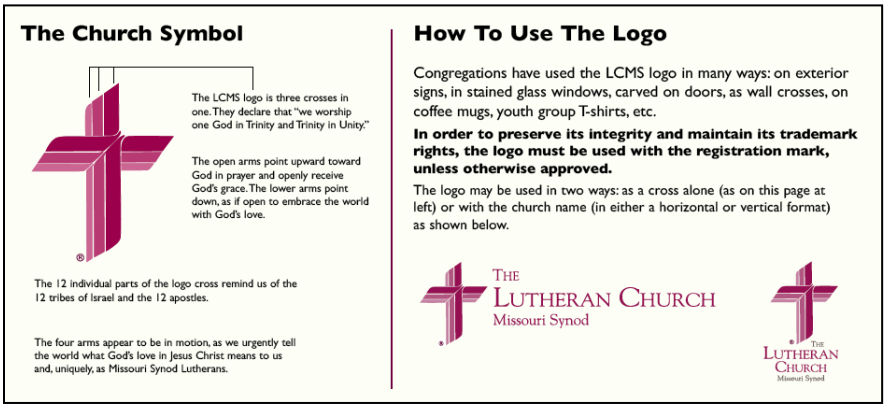


Figure 34. Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod Graphic Standards

This online PDF of graphic standards, outlines proper practices, specific Pantone® colors, and orientations, as well as possible misuses such as adding decoration to the cross or altering colors.

As seen by the use of the Christian Cross in the Crossings Community Church logo, and the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod logo, the simple symbols of the early church have not completely disappeared. Early symbols such as Icthus and Chi-Rho are incorporated into modern visual identities (see Figure 33).

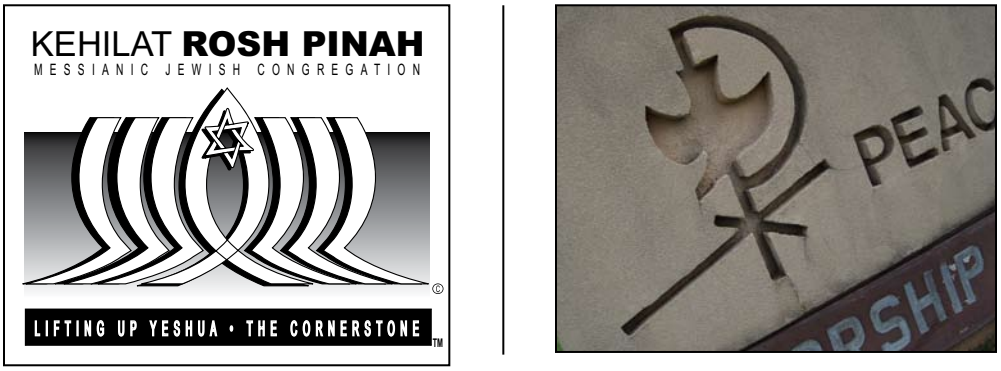


Figure 35. New Use of Old Symbols

On the left, Kehilat Rosh Pinah, a Messianic Jewish Congregation utilizes two ancient symbols, the Star of David to indicate the Hebrew tradition and the Icthus indicative of Christianity. On the right, Peace Lutheran Church uses the Dove, a cultural symbol for peace, along with the ancient Chi-Rho monogram.

With a rich, visual tradition and established symbology how do churches now negotiate their identities in the midst of a secular branding influence? Three approaches have been identified with the regard to discerning the imagery that churches employ in their brand identities. First, is an adherence to tradition—using traditional symbols with very little adaptation. In the case of St. Elijah Greek Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, they use a Greek iteration of the Christian Cross. The Cross doesn't change, only the accompanying typographic treatment of the church name (see Figure 36). This traditional approach is understandable, as the Orthodox church seeks to maintain absolute consistency in its liturgy, iconography, and thus its identity.

Figure 36. St. Elijah Greek Antiochian Orthodox Church

The second model is an appropriation of the early, traditional symbols into a new modern context— not forgetting or ignoring the past but trying to show that the church remains relevant. Often times the cross will be incorporated in the identity system but stylized to look more contemporary (see Figure 37).

Figure 37. Stylized Symbols

The third and final approach is a complete reinvention of the visual language. In an effort to appear modern and relevant some churches have created a brand identity that entirely replaces the traditional look and feel of a church. Devoid of all Christian symbols or iconography, identities for these churches appear very corporate and secular. Even the architecture lacks the traditional elements—crosses, steeples and stained glass (see Figure 38). Whether using strictly traditional symbols, a combination of new and old, or a complete reinvention of identity, churches generally speaking have standardized their brand identity.

Figure 38. North Church and Life Church

In the continuum of the visual language of the church, there have been many important shifts—from early symbols to iconography, from hand-written manuscripts to the printing press. The church which started as a singular movement over time has become divided into denominations. The church as a global body of believers is now a collective—a multitude of sub-brands. Whereas the early church used the cross and Icthus to represent their faith, modern believers attach themselves more strongly to individual church brands. This standardization and differentiation for individual denominations and fellowships in the midst of parity mirrors secular branding strategy and is a relatively new trend within the scope of church history.

Based upon the surveys conducted, churches on average have been using a distinct logo for 14.5 years. One church recorded using a logo for 50 years. These numbers are significant because they indicate that no church (based upon the sample) was using a consistent logo before the mid-twentieth century. The standardization of collective, denominational identities is also relatively new. The Methodist Cross and Flame was adopted formally in 1968, and the Disciples of Christ Chalice and Cross in 1971. Both are now registered trademarks with strict usage guidelines. These denominational brands are an attempt to represent consistency of experience, or "product", from one church to another. From the United Methodist Church website:

> Suppose you are vacationing far from home. You drive around, looking for a church in which to worship Sunday morning. Suddenly you see a familiar sight: a Cross and Flame insignia on a sign, pointing you to the nearest United Methodist Church. You've just proved how symbols and pictures provide instant recognition, meaning and a sense of belonging (http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=3206).

Brands create an associated familiarity with both secular products and sacred experiences. The Methodist Cross and Flame like the golden arches of McDonald's create a specific expectation of product or experience. The proliferation of distinct church identity in the mid-to-late 20th century correlates strongly with what was happening concurrently in the corporate

identity movement. During what Gobé and Zyman (2001) call the Pragmatist Age, the goal was standardization of identity in order to compete in national and international markets.

Churches during this time, perhaps seeing the parallels in sacred and secular branding, began to create standardized visual systems to connect to new audiences. This did not always manifest in a purely original visual language, but in some cases a modernization of existing church symbology, such as the American Lutheran Church's appropriation and simplification of the Chi-Rho monogram as early as the 1950s.

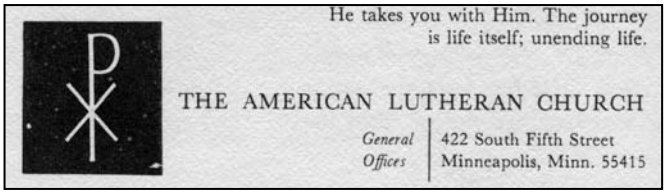


Figure 39. The American Lutheran Church

Left, an ad from the 1950s for Advent (Carty, 1965, p. 60). Right, a simplified, and standardized Chi-Rho monogram used as an identifying mark for The American Lutheran Church.

Beyond consistency, branding means being attuned to public perceptions. As Neumeier stated "A brand is not what you say it is... it's what they say it is" (2003, p. 4). Churches followed suit attempting to see themselves through the eyes of the public and communicate with relevancy. James W. Carty in 1965 commented on this newfound self-awareness, "Image, as a commonly used term in the business world, refers to the corporate identity or personification of an organization. The concept has relevance for the church,

because individuals need to visualize the unique entity of the church or institution as 'the body of Christ'" (p. 15). The methodology revealed overwhelmingly that most churches have no qualms about attempting to influence peoples' perceptions. 80% of those surveyed said they had no hesitations in branding or marketing their church.

In conclusion, the modern branding approaches of churches are inextricably linked to the influence of the corporate identity movement of the mid-twentieth century in America. It was a time marked by new levels of standardized identities with the goal of differentiation. Churches began to see the potential of brands to connect audiences to a particular "brand" of faith. It was after this time in the 1950s that individual congregations became both more purposeful and systematic in communicating their own visual identities—from the simplification of the Chi-Rho by the Lutherans to the prolific dissemination of the Life Church brand. While many factors were at work, the corporate identity movement was clearly the catalyst for the most substantial and enduring effect on the present state of church identity, namely the transition from symbols to branding.

Appendix A. Survey

Script:

My name is Corey Fuller. I'm a graduate student at the University of Central Oklahoma. Every graduate student in the design program at UCO must pick a topic of research for a thesis project. I have selected to study church branding.

Branding is the act of making people in your community aware of your presence. Churches use many avenues to do this: Use of a consistent logo, signage with your church name, advertising through newspapers or the internet, even your churches' activity within the community could be a form of branding.

My goal with this project is to better understand how churches are branding as well as churches' feelings and philosophies about marketing themselves.

General Information

Church name:

Address:

Your name:

Title:

Year church was founded:

Approximate age of church:

Does your church meet in a building owned by the church or in a rented space?

What is the size of your fellowship?

Membership:

Attendance:

Do you have a denominational or associational affiliation, or is it non-denominational/inter-denominational?

If applicable, does your church have the denominational label in your church name?

Would you describe your church as evangelical or non-evangelical?

Would you describe your church as traditional, contemporary, emerging, or other?

Branding Information

Does your church have a logo that it uses on a consistent basis?

If applicable, does your church use or incorporate the denominational logo in your local church's logo?

How long has your church been using a logo?

(optional) What portion of your church budget is dedicated to branding?

What forms of media does your church utilize? Examples TV, Newspaper, Radio, Internet, Billboards, or other

Does your church have a website?

If so, what is the address?

Select all those that are applicable:

Who is responsible for the production of branding media and materials, such as ads, signage, or website:

A professional such as graphic designer or ad agency:

A church staff member:

Someone from the laity:

Does your church have an in-house design team:

If so, how many?

Self-Analysis

On a scale from one to five with 5 being high and 1 being low…

How would you rate your church's visibility in the community?

On a scale from one to five with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor…

How would you rate the job your church does in branding itself?

In comparison to other churches in the community, would you say you brand a lot, a little, or not at all?

Do you have any moral hesitations in regards to marketing or branding your church or churches in general?

Appendix B. List of Churches Surveyed

Bethany First Church of the Nazarene

Chapel Hill United Methodist Church

Christ Community Church

Church of the Harvest

Coffee Creek Baptist Church

Covenant Life Church

Crossings Community Church

Del City Christian Church

Edmond Christian Church

Edmond Faith Bible Church

Edmond Road Baptist Church

First Baptist Church of Bethany

First Baptist Church of Edmond

First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City

First Christian Church (Edmond)

First Church (UMC)

First Presbyterian Church of Oklahoma City

First United Methodist Church (Edmond)

First United Methodist Church (Yukon)

Henderson Hills Baptist Church

Holy Trinity Lutheran

Kehilat Rosh Pinah

Life Covenant Church (Life Church)

Madison Street Church (COGIC)

Mayfair Church of Christ

Memorial Road Mennonite Brethren

Newchurch Ministries (Newchurch)

Northchurch

Northview Church

Northwest Baptist Church

Open Arms (UCC - United Church of Christ)

Passion Church

Peace Lutheran Church

Presbyterian Covenant Church

Real Church

Seminole Point Church of Christ

Shekinah Fellowship Church

Southern Hills Christian Church

St. Elijah Eastern Orthodox Church

St. John Missionary Baptist Church

St. John's Catholic Church,

St. Marks United Methodist Church (Bethany)

St. Mary's Episcopal Church

St. Monica Catholic Church

Sunset Heights Baptist Church

The Edge Church

Victory Church

Village Baptist Church

Village United Methodist Church

Waterloo Church of The Nazarene

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