



Chaplain's Blog



Chaplains Blog May 18th 2018

The day before the Readers Day 2018 at St Petroc's – at which I hope to chat to a few of you!

Reflections on names

At the age of about three weeks I was baptised by rev Clinton of the Church of Scotland in my grandparent's back garden in Birmingham with the names James Newton. I was James after my father's favourite uncle and Newton after my maternal grandfather. (Known to all as Newt). Apparently if I had been born a girl I would have been called Deborah: some years later the name was put to good use with my grandmother's budgie!

Although my given name was James it was far from the only name I was called. My father would use 'James' mainly, my mother and other relatives used 'Jamie'. At secondary school Mr Harrison (George... not the Beatle) called me Jimmy, which I hated and that was shortened to Jim. That seems to have stuck.

In English in the first year we read Steinbeck's 'Red Pony' and for a term, much to my fury, I was nicknamed Jody after the main character. My friend Barnard (not Bernard) called me Ethel..... why? Seth.... Seth's Sethel.... Ethel obviously!

In teaching I have heard or seen on envelopes from parents, Seth, Sethy, Mr Seff, Mr Seft, Mr Zeph, even Mr Shepherd and many more – I answer to most things and rarely get cross these days but drew a line very firmly when the secretary of the Team Council dared call me Jimbob! I was not happy. My favourite, whilst teaching in Stithians School, was the letter from an IT company addressed to Mr J Seth – St Sethians School. I should have framed that one!

I was praying through the Lord's Prayer whilst out dog-walking through the mine stacks today as is my wont. When I got to the bit about 'forgive us our sins and lead us not into temptation' I paused for some conversation with the almighty.

"Well Lord what sins need I bring before you today in particular for they are many as usual!"

And God replies, giving focus to things I might work at but I do not hear my name and yet He calls me by name. I know I am being called, I know God is communicating with me but that name is all important to the message. If it is God the Father, it could be James. God as mother might be calling Jamie. God needing to rebuke me would certainly be JAMES, and God as friendly companion might call me Jim. But I don't really feel right with any of them.

God names Adam, Jesus gave Simon a new name (Peter) and with that change of name Peter grew and became that which God had called him for. Saul became Paul and turned the course of his life. Names are important.

Maybe I will know my name in my final breath when God say.... "it's alright..... (insert name here) you can stop now.

A week after writing this first draft I tuned in to Radio 4 at 6am on Sunday morning for 'Something Understood' –with Rabbi Shoshana Boyd Gelfand – but just in case you did not here is the link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b2gs7d>

Imagine my amazement when it was all about names! There follows a poem read on the programme.

EACH OF US HAS A NAME - ZELDA



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Each of us has a name
given by God
and given by our parents

Each of us has a name
given by our stature and our smile
and given by what we wear

Each of us has a name
given by the mountains
and given by our walls

Each of us has a name
given by the stars
and given by our neighbours

Each of us has a name
given by our sins
and given by our longing

Each of us has a name
given by our enemies
and given by our love

Each of us has a name
given by our celebrations
and given by our work

Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness

Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given by
our death.

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