

The Dean preaches on Safeguarding Sunday. If you need to speak to one of the clergy or to raise a safeguarding issue, please don't hesitate to do so.

Acts of the Apostles 9:36-43

John 10:22-30

*Jesus said, My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.
No one will snatch them out of my hand.*

It's called the "cocktail party effect"

the phenomenon of hearing your own name being spoken across the other side of a crowded room. Our names are so important to us that we can recognise them from the age of five months, and by just over a year of age, we respond consistently to hearing our name being spoken.

That link to childhood is important.

Our names are linked to the sense of being loved, of being secure and safe.

The first people who use our names are family and carers, the people who also feed us, change us, and keep us warm.

To know my name is to know something about me.

My name has existed since Roman times

but was at the height of its popularity in the early 1960's in England.

Guess when I was born!

Once upon a time, when baptisms, or christenings, were always carried out on very young babies, the parents might be asked to name the child at the beginning of the ceremony and in some traditions this would be the first time that the child's name would be used in public.

Naming and being known

were linked to becoming part of the family of Christ.

In our Cathedral Easter Vigil service,
one of the most powerful moments in the ritual of confirmation takes place
when the bishop invokes the Holy Spirit on the candidate, saying
“God has called you by name and made you his own”.

In our earthly families and in our membership of the Christian family,
names matter.

We saw that clearly in the events following the election of Robert Prevost as
the next pope.

From now on, he will be known by a new name,
that of Pope Leo 14th.

There has been some speculation about why he chose the name,
but two things may feature in his decision.

The previous Pope Leo, Leo 13th was pope in the late 19th century and was
known, among other things for his dedication to social policies and social
justice. He is remembered for issuing the encyclical "Rerum Novarum", "Of
New Things" which discussed topics such as workers' rights and social justice.

It seems that the new pope will sustain his predecessor, Pope Francis' concern
for the poor and outcast.

That link with Francis may also be reflected in the choice of name,
as *Brother* Leo, was a disciple, secretary and confessor of Francis of Assisi in the
13th century.

A name may be something to inspire us,
or to aspire to, as the new pope's choice shows,
but it is nothing unless it is used,
unless we are called and known by name.

Jesus tells us that he knows his sheep
and knows us by name.

He knows us because we are part of his flock.

He reassures us that as part of his flock
we are protected, we are safe and secure in his love.

We see that reflected in the early Christian community,
when the beloved Dorcas, or Tabitha, the needlewoman
so respected within the church family dies,
and Peter calls her by name and restores her to life.

Today we observe Safeguarding Sunday in the Cathedral
and focus on the importance of everyone feeling safe within our community.

Like the rest of the church, in this cathedral our safeguarding practice has been
under the spotlight over recent years.

We have experienced external independent audits of our practice and our
culture.

I am proud of the outcome of those audits,
which recognised the dedication of our staff and volunteers
to ensuring the safety of young people and anyone who is vulnerable,
whether on a school or family visit,
meeting the homeless outreach team.
coming in to seek peace and sanctuary,
or as a regular member of our choir or congregation.

But I'm also aware,
as many of us will be,
of the shameful history of the Church of England,
in covering up abuse
and turning away from the suffering of survivors.

We have learned
about the cultures which have enabled these things to happen,
cultures of deference,
secrecy used as a tool of control,
people feeling that they have not been seen or heard.

There will always be people who exploit the vulnerable and use sophisticated
means to groom young people, and those around them.
Statistically, there are victims of previous abuse among our community.

So, within our cathedral life
how we can create a community in which abuse is more difficult,
in which the traumatised feel safe,
and in which everyone can flourish?

What we have learned is that one of the most important things we can do is to
ensure that everyone here, everyone who visits, volunteers, worships or
works in the Cathedral, feels seen and heard, feels known –
as far as they are comfortable.

Being known
within a community of kindness, care and security,
is important for all of our wellbeing.

Being known by name is just the beginning.

Is this a place where you feel known?

And how well do you know those around you?

Is there someone here who knows your name and story, who could speak
about your skill with a needle, like Dorcas?

As you look around how many names and stories do you know?

Do you know which members of our cathedral family speak another language,
belong to a choir, grew up in another country, or have written a book?

What is someone here longing to share, to have known about themselves that
has never been shared because no-one has ever asked?

As the body of Christ
we are not only the hands and feet,
but the eyes and ears of Jesus.
If each person here is to feel seen, heard and known,
then each of us has a part to play.

How can we help to build a community
in which Jesus is known,
in the ways in which we behave,
in the welcome we offer,
in the depth of our compassion
and love for one another?

Let us take a moment to pray

Loving God,
we lay before you our longing for a safe church,
May your Son, the Good Shepherd,
guide and shape our life together
that all may find a welcome,
secure in your presence.
Amen