I Have Called You By Name

Context: *After reaching stability in the community and greater group unity, communities seek a new identity. At other times several communities merge and a common identity becomes key to the group's unity. Thus a reflection on what to call the community becomes a significant session to achieve group cohesion. This may be done in 1-2 sessions, depending on the time. The entire session may last between 3-5 hours depending on the group size, length of reflection and sharing time.*

Space Required: A room that has the potential for flexible seating

Materials: *Bible, cassette or CD copy of the song "I Hear My Name" or "You are Mine", cassette or CD player, Behind the Names handout*

Grace to beg for: Lord, help us to hear the name that you wish to call us as your people.

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I.   Opening Prayer: *"I Hear My Name"[1] or "You are Mine"[2]*

II.   Motivation question:
        What's in a name? What do you feel when someone misspells or mispronounces your name – or worse, calls you by the wrong name?

III.   Short sharing

IV.   Short Introduction of the Activity
        Our names are important. A name is a label for a person, thing, place, product (as in a brand name) and even an idea or concept, normally used to distinguish one from another. A name establishes relationship. A name confers blessing—the blessing of belonging, of inheritance. A name brings with it some status—you are no longer a "nobody." In order to understand the significance of name changes in our context, let us read some stories of biblical character name changes. *You may use the handout "Behind the Name" or choose from the following passages:*
Genesis 17:5
Genesis 17:15
Genesis 35:10
Genesis 32:28
Matthew 16:18 and John 1:42
Acts 9:1-4; Acts 13:9

V.   Reflection:
        What struck you as the biblical character changed his/her name? Why?

VI.   Faith Sharing

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[1] Manoling Francisco, S.J., Kapayapaan (Quezon City: Jesuit Music Ministry and Jesuit Communications Foundation, 2004).

[2] David Haas, "You Are Mine," Prayers from the Upper Room (Quezon City: Jesuit Music Ministry of the Jesuit Communications Foundation and the Religious of the Cenacle).

VII.   Deepening

In the handout "Behind the Name," Abraham (Abram), Sarah (Sarai), Israel (Jacob) and Paul (Saul) are some of the most famous name changes besides Peter. In each of these cases but Paul's, God is mentioned as responsible for the change, and in every case but Paul's, there is a deliberately expressed symbolism: Abram becomes Abraham, "father of a multitude", Sarai becomes Sarah, "princess", Jacob becomes Israel, "prince of God" (or also "he who struggles with God"), Simon becomes Peter, the "rock" (or more properly "stone"). The Hebrew etymologies here in particular are open to interpretation, but suffice it to say that in the most famous name change situations, God is making a point about the individual concerned (memorializing their spiritual accomplishments, their spiritual potential, and His blessing of them).[3]

The God of Israel, the God whose story is told in this scripture, always calls us by name: Adam, Eve, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Samuel, Mary. This is the God we see in the face of Jesus Christ. The God who walks along the shore and calls by name: "Peter, Andrew, John, follow me."

This is the God who knows your name, who knows the number of the hairs on your head, the God who remembers you and does not forget you, the God who, even when the winds howl and the seas roar, listens for your voice, knows your cry, and says to each of us, "Do not be afraid. I know you. I have called you by name. I am coming to help you. You are mine."[4]

Let us remember that in this activity of naming our community, it is ultimately God who "calls us by name" for he says "you are Mine."

VIII.   Reflection
1.   What are the gifts, values and characteristics that describe our community and differentiate us from others? Identify them.
2.   "What is the name I hear the Lord calling us?"

IX.   Sharing of the community's gifts, values and characteristics

X.   Quiet relishing of the giftedness of the community

XI.   Brainstorming of possible names
1.   This brainstorming is to answer the question, "What is the name I hear the Lord calling us?"
2.   In this portion, the members are encouraged to cull phrases, words that describe the community best. As this is a brainstorming, all ideas are welcome and no screening needs to be done.
3.   The community silently reflects on the result of the brainstorming for a few moments.

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[3] Bob Luginbill, *What is the significance of biblical name changes?,* http://www.ichthys.com/mail-names1.htm

[4] Reverend Dr. Thomas G. Long, *Called by Name,* http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/14011.htm, (January 2004).

4. One round of sharing is done to express which of the names resonate with him/her.
5. The top 3 names are identified.
6. Depending on how "at peace" the members are, the community may choose to rank the names accordingly or to vote on which name they feel most drawn to and describes their community best.
7. Process 3-5 may be repeated until a final name is arrived at.

XII.   Synthesis

Today, the Lord has called us by name to follow Him as _____ CLC. When the Lord calls us to come follow Him, we leave our old life behind and become a new community in the Lord. The new creature we become has received a new name revealed to us by God. The purpose of the new name is to separate us from our old life. As we begin being called by this name, let us remember that we are never the same community after God calls us out of the world to be His witnesses.

Furthermore, the sense of group identity and uniqueness that a name gives us is at the heart of why names are important to us as a community and to our National community as a whole.

The election of a local community name and the subsequent notification of the National community about it is a kind of symbolic contract between us and the National community. Seen from one side of the contract, by choosing a name and announcing it to the National community, the National community confirms our local community's existence and acknowledges its responsibilities toward us.

The new name differentiates our local community from others; thus, the National community will be able to treat us as a community with needs, aspirations and gifts different from the other communities. Through our name, we become part of the history of the National community, and, because of our name, our local community's deeds will exist separate from the deeds of others.

XIII.   Evaluation
Where did I feel God's presence/absence during the meeting? How did it affect me?

XIV.   Closing Prayer

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Behind the Name

the etymology and history of first names

OLD NAME	NEW NAME
ABRAM **Pronounced:** AY-bram [key] Means "high father" in Hebrew. In the Old Testament God changed Abram's name to Abraham (see Genesis 17:5).	**ABRAHAM** **Pronounced:** AY-bra-ham **(English)** [key] This name may be viewed either as meaning "father of many" in Hebrew or else as a contraction of ABRAM and Hebrew הֲמוֹן (hamon) "many, multitude". The biblical Abraham was originally named Abram but God changed his name (see Genesis 17:5). He led his followers from Ur into Canaan, and is regarded by the Jews as being the founder of the Hebrews through his son Isaac and by the Muslims as being the founder of the Arabs through his son Ishmael.
SARAI **Pronounced:** SER-ie [key] Possibly means "contentious" in Hebrew. This was the name of Sarah in the Old Testament before God changed it (see Genesis 17:15).	**SARAH** **Pronounced:** SER-a **(English)**, ZAH-rah **(German)** [key] Means "lady" or "princess" in Hebrew. This was the name of the wife of Abraham in the Old Testament. She became the mother of Isaac at the age of 90. Her name was originally שָׂרַי (Saray), but God changed it (see Genesis 17:15).
JACOB **Pronounced:** JAY-kub **(English)**, YAH-kawp **(Dutch)** [key] From the Latin *Jacobus*, which was from the Greek *Ιακωβος (Iakobos)*, which was from the Hebrew name יַעֲקֹב *(Ya'aqov)*. In the Old Testament, Jacob (later called Israel) was the son of Isaac and Rebecca and the father of the twelve founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. He was born holding his twin brother Esau's heel, and his name is explained as meaning "holder of the heel" or "supplanter". Other theories claim that it is in fact derived from a hypothetical name like יַעֲקֹבְאֵל *(Ya'aqov'el)* meaning "may God protect".	**ISRAEL** **Pronounced:** IZ-ray-el [key] From the Hebrew name יִשְׂרָאֵל *(Yisra'el)* meaning "God contended". In the Old Testament Israel (who was formerly named Jacob; see Genesis 32:28) wrestled with an angel. The ancient and modern states of Israel took their names from him.
SIMON **Pronounced:** SIE-mun **(English)**, see-MAWN **(French)**, ZEE-mawn **(German)** [key] From the Greek form of the Hebrew name	**PETER** **Pronounced:** PEE-tur **(English)**, PE-ter **(German)**, PE-tur **(Dutch)** [key] Derived from the Greek *Πετρος (Petros)* meaning "stone". This is a translation used in

שִׁמְעוֹן *(Shim'on)* which meant "hearkening" or "listening". The New Testament presents Simon, also known as Peter (a name given to him by Jesus), as the most important of the apostles.	most versions of the Bible of the name *Cephas* (meaning "stone" in Aramaic) which was given to the apostle Simon by Jesus (compare Matthew 16:18 and John 1:42). Simon Peter was the most prominent of the apostles during Jesus's ministry and is considered by some to be the first pope.
SAUL **Pronounced:** SAWL [key] From the Hebrew name שָׁאוּל *(Sha'ul)* which meant "asked for" or "prayed for". This was the name of the first king of Israel who ruled just before King David, as told in the Old Testament. Also, Saul was the original name of Saint Paul before his conversion to Christianity.	**PAUL** **Pronounced:** PAWL **(English)**, POL **(French)**, POWL **(German)** [key] From the Roman family name *Paulus*, which meant "small" or "humble" in Latin. Saint Paul was an important leader of the early Christian church, his story told in Acts in the New Testament. He was originally named Saul, but changed his name after converting to Christianity. Most of the epistles in the New Testament were authored by him.

http://www.behindthename.com/nmc/bibl.php