

What's in a Name?

I wonder what the attendance will be like my first Sunday at Gay Street UMC? Will it be 100? Or will it be 500? No matter what the number is, one thing is for sure, it will be a lot of names to remember 😊. I'm not sure how long it will take to remember them all, but I promise to do my best. One big help in remembering names, is wearing a name tag. Of course, that's assuming you have one. Another big help is grace, remembering that I will have several hundred names to remember, while each of you has three: Christopher, Connie and Anthony.

Names are so much more than a way to grab one's attention. They are part of our identity and can be a part of our calling.

I still get asked what I preferred to be called. Many options are often thrown my way such as: Pastor Christopher, Reverend Christopher, Pastor Chris, Reverend Chris, Pastor Liberati, Reverend Liberati, PC, Hey You, and one of my favorites Pastopher (combining Pastor and Christopher). All of these will work to get my attention, but let me share some insight on why I prefer Christopher (the Pastor part is a good prefix 😊).

My full name is Todd Christopher Liberati, but as you may or may not know I prefer to go by Christopher. In April of 2005 I dedicated my life to Christ on my journey as a pilgrim on a Walk to Emmaus. Let's just say that my heart was strangely warmed, much like John Wesley's at Aldersgate Street.

It was on this spiritual retreat where I realized that Christ had always been in my name, but not in my heart. I happened to share this statement in my closing address for the weekend. Shortly after the closing ceremonies, the Spiritual Director for the weekend approached me to share some news. He asked me if I knew what my name meant. I offered up the explanation that Christopher referred to some saint. He said that was true, but that did not define the meaning of Christopher. He then shared with me that Christopher meant "Bearer of Christ!" I was again strangely warmed.

If you ask me what I prefer, I will tell you Christopher. This doesn't mean that I won't respond to other greetings such as Pastopher 😊. However, if you shorten the name from Christopher to Chris, you eliminate Christ. That is something I never want to do in my life.

In today's fast-paced world we are always looking for ways to be more efficient, faster and better. Sometimes by doing so, we unintentionally eliminate Christ. Paul writes to the Ephesians, *"He determined in his love before time began to adopt us to himself through Jesus Christ, in the good purpose of his will, so that all might praise the glory of the generous gift which he freely gave us in the Beloved."* (Eph 1:5-6)

So in my preference for Christopher, I hope to praise God by being a "Bearer of Christ" to you and to the world. My hope and prayer for you is that you, in your own way, will also be a "Bearer of Christ" to the world. The generosity of our God is beyond our comprehension, but my hope is that we all live a full life that reflects the glory of His love.

Intentionally bearing Christ for the sake of His Kingdom,

Pastor Christopher Liberati