**New Kilpatrick**

**YouTube**

**10th July 2022**

**Genesis 17:1-9**

**Gathering**

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

     It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

     It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?

So begins the well known sonnet of Gerard Manly Hopkins the English Jesuit priest and poet. God’s magnificence runs through the whole of creation like an electric current. And there are moments when that current sparks, and we notice the almighty’s generosity and love and brilliance. So why does humanity fail to pay heed, he asks?

Abraham does heed. He grows to have eyes to see such grandeur and promise, in the star fields and sand grains, and in thin places where altars are built at Shechem and Bethel. But the story now moves the grandeur deep down, "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things” as Hopkins says further in his poem, and the grandeur is realised deep down in the very way we define ourselves: our names.

It is with those names, we gather today. My name is Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish. Let us gather in the name of love and hope and praise.

**Prayer**

In the turning of the universe

And the sliding of stars

In the flowing of air and water

And the running of life

In all the sounds of creation

May we pause

Hold breath

For a moment, O God

And in such grandeur

Listen

To the sound

Of our names

Beloved

Forgiven

Renewed

Names you have given us

Whispered to us before we were born

Gifts of your promise for each of us

Redeemed

Alive

Loved

And may we live in the echo of them

Your intent within each of us

To be in the world

Are promise-givers

Love-makers

Light-sharers

Your promise revealed in us

In the sound of our own names

May forgiveness redeem us

When we call ourselves by other names

With less magnificence

That limit life

Called sinner

Called heretic

Called doubter

Or when we call others

Less than they deserve

But find our deep down calling

To be who you have called us to be

In this world

In this community

In these parishes

Among these people

Loving God

Call us again

Renew our names

And we will be a blessing

In this world

Hear us

As we share the global prayer

**Reading: Genesis 17:1-9**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, ‘I am God Almighty;[a] walk before me, and be blameless. **2**And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.’ **3**Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, **4**‘As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. **5**No longer shall your name be Abram,[b] but your name shall be Abraham;[c] for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. **6**I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. **7**I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring[d] after you. **8**And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.’

**9**God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

**Music**

**Reflection 1**

Names aren’t always helpful. Names can become burdens, to be misused, cruelly twisted back on us. Tabloid politics and press have made a name for themselves in doing so where people become labeled by a populist version of their name. Crooked Hilary, Mac the knife, The Grocers Daughter, Tony Blur, Maybot, The Convict, to name a few.

The problem is, we become our names. We define them. How we live, gives our names meaning and value.

This is not lost on the biblical writers, who shaped our communities with the stories they gave us. From the dawn of time, they have known names hold a sacred power. In the beginning… God named creation, each part, each design, each sphere, each beast… When it was named, it was a blessing. Whatever God conjured, wasn’t complete until that moment of naming. And when it was named, that was the moment of life; it was free to be that which it was created to be: the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the light. Breathe on it a name, and you give it life.

But something else happens in the bible… There are times when life is so redefined, so changed, so turned around, that the old name no longer suits, and a new one is necessary.

These are unique and holy moments, when the path that was been followed turns in such a different direction, a new name is needed… and so Jacob becomes Israel… Saul becomes Paul… and Abram becomes Abraham, Sarai, Sarah…

These new names, shape a new calling, a new purpose and way of being in the world… These are new people, life rekindled and future reimagined.

And in this time that has changed us, might we be need new names? A new name that calls us into this world that is crying out for a change in direction, a renewing of the covenant with love and justice and grace?

But maybe we don’t need new names, just renew our oldest ones: beloved, forgiven, redeemed. Take back these names, to replace the ones we are more familiar with today: broken, hurt, bruised.

No longer called sinner or failure. Casting off these populist names and living into the names God gives us: reborn, renewed, resurrected.

This is our time of renaming, of calling ourselves by our covenantal names, not as the world knows us, but as the one who first named us, affirms us and loves us to be.

**Music**

**Reflection 2**

Abraham. A new name for the one who becomes forever known, through three world faiths and across countless generations as the father of many nations. Throughout the bible, Abraham is the primal name in how Jews describe God: I AM God of your fathers the God of Abraham, Isaac etc, a phrase you hear a lot in scripture in describing God.

The first of the ancients. Many see worth in tracing themselves back to some exalted ancestor. Such a character adds value to their family history.

But this is not the focus of the biblical tradition: venerating an ancestor so that you might be too, but it goes in the opposite direction. This is about insuring the well-being of future generations. This is not about past, but the future.

The blessing is outward from this original person. It spreads through a multitude of nations, all of whom are part of this heritage. So in this passage we hear the covenant being made with an individual, yet it is universal in degree. This is not a restrictive blessing, for one individual, family or even nation. It is never meant to be restrictive. It is meant to be expansive. The name Abraham doesn’t invite you to look back. It invites you to look forward.

**Music**

**Reflection 3**

In the renaming of Abraham and Sarah, what is happening is that everything is shifting. This new relationship will not not leave us are we are. When we encounter love, and truth, and grace, and forgiveness, the world feels possible again. We experience life differently, because we have changed.

And so a new name is given to both Abraham and Sarah. Their names become an invitation to live out what they are still yet to be. They are reminded of that as they hear the sound of their names, daily. Do you see how that happens. Whenever anyone mentions our name, we are reminded of who we are to be. We become our names.

Our lives change daily in the reminding each time our names are mentioned: beloved, renewed, light, hope. These are our names, the names of all God’s people. May they bring a change to us and our church and our parishes as much as a change in the lives of all those who come within the hearing of them.

**Music**

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

Among so many whose names we do not know

And who are our neighbours and friends

In this global community

We pray

Silently

That their names may be heard

In a world

Where names are a passport

And power is found in a few of them

Yet so many whose names

Feel worthless

We pray

Letting our silence

Make way

For the many whose names need to be heard

Instead of the powerful and wealthy

And in the intimate way we speak of them

The names of those we love and care for

The names of those we are concerned for and worry about

the names of those who have hurt and who have hurt us

We pray

Placing them in the silence

And all the truth that surrounds them

So for country and conflict: we name

For justice and renewal: we name

For environment and creation: we name

For family and friend: we name

Hear us

O God of many names

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**

Go in the blessing of your name

Your deep down name

That God whispers daily

And in the sound of them

Rekindle the promise you are