

Session One: CALLED TO BE HUMAN

AIM

- ◆ To help the members of the group to get to know each other.
- ◆ To explore something of who you are by a discussion of given names, nick-names and rôle names.
- ◆ To consider some of the influences that have helped to shape who you are, by identifying some key events in your life and some key images in our present culture.
- ◆ To reflect on what it means to be human in the image of *God* and called into *Christ*.

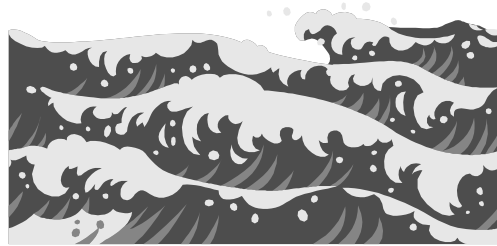


But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.
Isaiah 43:1

✦ WORSHIP TOGETHER

(See Worship Resource material for suggestions, or devise your own.)

WHO ARE WE?



The first call of God is His call of creation - His first call to us is to be human (to enter into our humanity).

The Old Testament presents the picture of a God who calls the creation into being - (He said and it was so). Everything that is created is given a name which gives it its identity. This is also true for Adam and Eve.

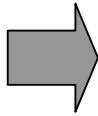
God shares with Adam this calling act of creation by bringing to him all that had been formed out of the ground - the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air - and the man gives them each a name. Genesis 2:19-20.



Our names are usually precious to us, though some people are not happy with their given names. They are an important part of who we are, our identity.

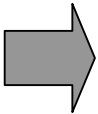
In order to try to understand what God's calling could mean for each person we begin by exploring what it means to be you, your identity. There is, of course, continuity about our identities but there is also change (it's still me who was once a small child and yet clearly I have changed). Over a period of time, or as the result of a traumatic incident, we can feel altered, transformed. In different settings and with different people we can certainly appear to be different. And this can be reflected in the names we are known by:

Jane, Ms Andrews, Doctor. Joe, Mr Smith, Constable.



1. Our given names?

Each member of the group in turn introduces him/herself by name and explains any known reason why this name was chosen. Some names have known meanings and these too should be explored where relevant. Do these things matter? Are they significant to you - or to others?

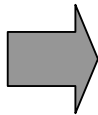


2. Our nick-names

The phrase 'a nick-name' comes from the Old English 'an **ee**k name' meaning 'an **also** name', an additional name. The Gospels tell us that Jesus called Peter "The Rock". He called other disciples "Sons of Thunder".

- i) If you are willing to, tell the group your nick-name, if you have one.
- ii) Do your nick-names have meanings?
- iii) How did you get your nick-name?

Nick-names seem less common these days than they were. Why might this be so?

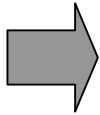


3. Our rôle names?

Our identity is not just a matter of who we are but also what we are and what we do. In Wales a person might be called Dai the Bread - his job, his rôle as a Baker, is part of his identity. Dad or Mum are examples of a rôle name. So is "Officer"

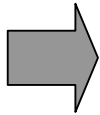
- i) As a group list the rôle names by which the different members are called.
- ii) Think how formal or informal settings change what you are called.

Our relationships at home, at work, at church, at play help to shape who we are. What we are called is part of that. But there are many other influences that help to make us the people we are - things that happen to us or around us. This is also true of the culture we experience in that part of the world where we live, be it: village / town, north / south, Western developed world / African developing world. For most of the time we take this for granted but the culture contains those values and attitudes that help to shape us - sometimes by our reaction against them. The next two exercises help us to explore this.



4. Events that have helped to shape us

In pairs share 1 or 2 events that have a special significance for you and have helped to shape who you are.



5. The culture that shapes us.

Our society is sometimes said to be a consumer, customer and commuter society and this typifies some of the values that we see in today's society. In the group discuss:

- i) how far you feel these aspects of society have shaped you
- ii) the values you have which challenge these aspects of society.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT THIS WEEK

As a group help each other make a note of the major pieces of learning.



PRAYER Offer the evening to God.

TOWARDS THE NEXT SESSION

In calling us to be human we are told that God made us in His own image Gen. 1:26-27. One way to understand this is that He has made us 'response-able' i.e. able to respond to Him. So He is **constantly** calling us into being, calling us to respond to Him. Because of our 'fallenness' we don't always make the appropriate responses. But God not only calls us in to *being* (creation), He calls us into *new being* (salvation). That is His work of new creation in Christ. Our humanity is not simply to be measured by what we are, what has shaped us from the world around us (Adam) but by what God calls us to be 'in Christ' - our humanity measured by nothing less than the mature stature we can attain in Him. It is the same God who calls us in and through all this - through His creation, through our relationships, through events, through our culture, through Christ. For the Christian, Christ is the one who provides the example to live by and to aim for. Against that yard-stick all else that shapes us is to be measured. Given that, how far would you say England is a Christian country?

This week we have explored who **we** are. Next week we explore who **God** is who calls us.



FOR REFLECTION 'Who am I?'