

## **Names**

**by Reverend Victoria Ney**

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You've probably heard that the most popular names these days are no longer ordinary ones like Susan, Debbie, and Michael. You know, normal names. More popular these days are Atley, Destiny, Acacia, Lively, Stormy, and River!

A minister from a very large church said that he got very frightened when he had to baptize a child for a family he didn't know very well. He was afraid that he would accidentally give the child the wrong name. He mentioned the example of the name spelled La-a. He asked his staff if they thought it might be Laya or Lya. Turns out it was neither. It was Ladasha! The hyphen was the syllable for "dash!" La-dash-a!

Who knows what parents are thinking these days? Seriously.

Turns out there's nothing really new under the sun. A scholar doing some research on the Puritans of New England came upon the roll of a church which listed its members. There were many strange names on it, such as Standfast-in-the-Faith Brown and Hope-in-Mercy Martin. That scholar silently thanked God that his parents had chosen no such name for him!

But then he said he came across one name that he wished might have been a description of his own life – Renewed Robinson. He said, "That's what I need in my life—to be renewed!"

I suspect that at some level, all of us want our lives to be renewed.

Well, I'm here to tell you this morning that one of the joyful, wonderful things about a life of faith is its promise that God can renew our lives. By God's grace, you and I can have a whole new life, a fresh start, a new beginning each and every day. That's one of God's most precious gifts to us.

If you remember, the Psalmist described God as one who "restores my soul." And the prophet Isaiah discovered firsthand that "those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength."

Those are God's promises for us. I'm hoping that being reminded of those promises will definitely brighten your day today—and that you will feel renewed in God's love.

Will you pray with me?

Thank you Lord for offering us the chance for renewal whenever we ask. Help us to put down old baggage, old hurts, old resentments, and with your help have a fresh start today. Thank you for your presence with us and the strength you provide when we need it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.