

THE NAME THAT FOUND US

Some things in life and conversation are totally predictable. One of those is whenever a person asks me "What is your charity called?" the next question will always be "And what does DCI stand for?" This is the story of how we found our name or rather more curiously how our name found us.

It is one of those inexplicable things that you cannot just be yourself but you have to be something, and if not you slither through the systems of society and in consequence nothing that is official recognises you. So you must have a number and be either employed, unemployed, self-employed, non-employed, a limited company, a PLC, a sole trader or royalty, and if all else fails, then a charity. All else had failed so the next stop was going to have to be that venerable institution called the Charity Commission where little had changed in over a century and letters were still handwritten.

In fact by 1987 which is where we are now, a change was afoot and the archaic legislation of yesteryear which confined charities to tin-rattling, jumble sales and a narrow range of do-gooding activities was being reviewed as the work of thousands of volunteers nationwide was discovered to be a valuable national asset. A lawyer by the name of Stephen Marshall, whose trademark red braces held up his suit trousers was one of the motors behind the proposed historic changes; and his office was conveniently in nearby Heanor. Stephen proposed that we might be a kind of guinea-pig to see how accommodating the Commission might be towards granting charitable status to a vision that reached not to the end of the village but to the ends of the earth and included the previously highly disapproved of idea of promoting trading to fund the ongoing work.

At an average speed of a six weeks to gain a reply in the post in these days before fax and e-mail, the next eighteen months went by slowly but in the end to everyone's surprise the commissioners granted us a wide ranging status that may not have been rivalled to this day. The only thing that remained was to complete the application by a certain date, sign it, send it and put a name to the whole thing. A name. Something so simple that we had left it till the end, which was indeed nigh. Minds suddenly went blank.

My friend Rowland Evans smiled knowingly having been through the same dilemma not many years earlier and said that in the remaining hours before his deadline he had resorted to scanning his bookshelf to find any suitable title, settling at the last possible minute for a book on mountaineering titled World Horizons which happily has made complete sense to this day. For me though not even WH Smith or the City Library contained the inspiration we needed to produce that inner 'buzz.' The deadline was days away, would we really have to start all over again ?

In those days a radical young preacher by the name of Gerald Coates was rapidly making a name for himself and earning the enmity of many a pastor

and vicar with his calls to '*come out*' and actually enjoy following Jesus in new house fellowships where liturgy and pews were out and friendships and sofas definitely were in. Many were doing just that and so a first conference for them had been arranged in Guildford University, Surrey. My friend Ged Kelly and myself decided to go, quietly finding the whole idea to be quite appealing. Actually, we loved every minute of the weekend, especially the novel way of taking communion which involved numerous small groups, each with a loaf of bread and a whole tumbler of real wine, all of which made the occasion a rather happier one than our own Sundays where crumbs and a thimble full of Ribena was said to be the Lord's Supper.

Gerald Coates was speaking, a small man overflowing with ideas that promised satisfaction and suffering for the cause in equal measures. He seemed to be the pastor to everyone in showbiz and government and even the Cliff Richard look-alike turned out to be the real thing, and one of his church members. We were impressed. Half way through his talk he stopped and appeared thoughtful, walking up and down the platform quietly repeating something to himself that I couldn't quite hear or understand. "What's he saying," I whispered to my friend Ged, who being a scholar always knew these things. I was right. "It's New Testament Greek," Ged replied, "he is saying *doulos christou iesou*."

"Well, what's that?" I hissed back under my breath as people waited expectantly to see what would happen next. In fact nothing happened as moments later Gerald Coates continued where he left off. In a lowered voice Ged explained, "It means servant of Jesus Christ, it's what Paul called himself to start his letter to the Romans, don't know why he was saying it." But I did.

The rest of the meeting went in one ear and out of the other because in my mind I was busy completing the application form for the Charity Commission. You see, in sharp contrast to a popular and later totally discredited teaching about bringing people *under authority* that was coming over from the USA in those days, all I wanted to do was to serve, not to be in authority, and certainly not to own or control anyone.

So '*doulos christou iesou*' that is 'serving Christ' became the DCI Trust and with the wisdom of hindsight twenty-five years later no better name for this global family could have been found. DCI is easy to remember and just as easy to pronounce and translate in any language as is the BBC, FBI, CNN, IBM and so on. The name of DCI is totally bland and meaningless to any government official of another world religion yet to those of us who know the significance of the words behind DCI it means absolutely everything. More than once knowing our name has kept us in our place - serving rather than owning or saying how '*things*' should be.

So you see after all the searching of hearts, minds and even bookshelves we never did find our name, it was the name that found us.

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