

Wake Forest University Freshman Orientation Speech – What’s in a Name?  
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ED CHRISTMAN: What’s in a name and what’s in a place? Your names and your places are now connected with this name and this place. So let’s see if we can make some of those connections specific. Bearing in mind that phonetic spelling is allowed a chaplain in an occasion like this. I don't recommend it on English compositions. For the first time in the years that I have been here my namesake is in the audience. Thirty-nine years ago I was in that audience after getting off the train with a wardrobe trunk, one of a handful of Floridians who had come to the town of Wake Forest and Wake Forest College. Oddly enough that morning I ate breakfast with a person who had come on the other train from the other direction, Massachusetts. See I have a namesake from Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. Who know? Maybe we can have breakfast. We might even invite the sixty-three Floridians and the nine other persons from the Bay State to join us and make many of the beginning connections that could have more significance.

But your name is significant even if it is thought of as a common name. Tims, Smiths and Johnsons, nine Joneses, eight persons named Brown and Martin and Davis. Six people named Wilson or White. Five people named Harris. Four named Anderson, Brooks, Clark or Hall and there are three people named Williams. Interestingly enough there is one person named Moore, no more. There is one person named Person. There is a person from the town of Wake Forest where Wake Forest College began. So many years before I got off the train my friend to be from Massachusetts got off the train. That name of course Pierce was a good family name, and he’s from North Carolina, but it isn’t as helpful as another name in this place. Meredith, because Thomas Meredith was one of the persons who in the 1820s and ‘30s helped make it possible for you and me to be here. Now this Meredith who is not from Wake Forest, he is from Georgetown, Guyana, and there is a student here from Colombia and one from Costa Rica and one from the Philippines.

There is someone here from the Republic of China and from South Africa, and there is a person here from France, which oddly enough makes a connection with a person named Fouche, David Fouche whose relatives ultimately came from France and settled in South Carolina. So he welcomes everyone and in particular the twenty-seven people from South Carolina. David Fouche, assistant chaplain and Baptist campus minister. [David Fouche speaking]

Some of the connections are simple enough. See, David's name is easy to remember. Fouche is like Touche, to touch in fencing. We would hope as campus ministers to do more than simply make the physical touch. We would hope that the relationships that may develop personally and through programs would be as at least significant as when one makes a touch in fencing.

Sometimes the names and the connections are obvious. Sometimes the connections are because they are contrasts. For example, we have two skulls and a cross but no bones in the freshmen class. We have a Day and Knight and of course the Knight is Polite although he pronounces it Polite [pronounced Po-leet] and there is a Palace to live in. There is a Brush but no comb. There is a Cobb but no Corn. There is Bigger, not littler. There is Fulton but no steam. There is Green, excuse me, yes, there is Green, but there is not any blue. There is Kodak but there is no Canon for the Atlanta Braves fans. There is Least but not most. There is Parr but unfortunately no birdies. There is Sharp but not dull. There is Venable and not ignorant.

See the admissions office has done a wonderful job. There are some people here named Goode. There is no one in the class named bad. Admissions office has done too good a job. I may be out of a job. There is a Vann in this class, and there is a Packard. Do you know what a Packard is? I'll give you a clue. There is also a Ford, and there are three other presidents, Carter, Eisenhower and Nixon. There is perhaps in the freshman class an answer to prayer. For you see sitting amongst you there is a real live Michael Jordan. [applause] Of course he's from Kentucky.

So answers to prayer would suggest that sooner or later I have to make connections in this class with names and places that are religious. So we have a Daniel. We have a Mark and we have a Paul. We've got one Lord, I believe in that. [laughter/applause] He's Divine. Yes, he comes from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. But the two other people from Bethlehem, they're not named Divine. They're Jones boys. Now actually I don't know whether any of them are divine. I rather doubt that any of us are.

But I think you should understand that since none of the campus ministers are. None of the students that participate in these upcoming opening events from various religious groups, they're not divine. They're ( ) with food so they volunteer to the events that they share conveniently and collectively. One of the events and one of the places that I hold up for your invitation is Davis Chapel and Thursday worship. It is a place that Ed Wilson referred to yesterday. We do the best we can to keep it open all the time for prayer and meditation and on Thursday at eleven

o'clock during a period that is not a class hour, you're invited to worship with us in a very special and rich place.

Now back to the class.

In this class, of course, you've got some religious places. I've already mentioned, Bethlehem. There is Luthersville for the Lutherans. There is Salem for the Quakers. We have one Christmas, which of course reminds us of an event that the provost also mentioned yesterday. The Moravian Love Feast which is held here on the first Sunday in December. Of course Christmas makes you think about lambs. So we've got two Lambs and a Kidd. There are two Shepherds to look after them and would you believe it there is a place, Shepherdsville. Lastly but not least, we've got some Pope and appropriate enough he is from Little Rock, Arkansas, which of course makes me think about one of my colleagues Lou Bonnaci, Catholic campus minister who welcomes all of you and the thirty-four fellow Pennsylvanians to Wake Forest. Father Lou Bonnaci. [Father Lou Bonnaci speaks]

Fouche, Bonnaci. Some of the names are not like Smith and Johnson. There is Constantino, Hardavich and Zahn and Zopf, and ( ) and Tardish, and those are as important names to remember and to try to learn how to spell as any of the rest of them. There are some names that may arouse a little attention, Graves, Coverstones. We've got Nill and we've got Nall in the freshman class. As if that weren't enough we've got Nealy as well. But neither Nill or Nall or Nealy will apply to our next campus minister. He has his own name. He's sometimes has another appearance which you may discover this year. His name is Bob Key and he is the Episcopal campus minister and he welcomes everyone and in particular the nine Roanokians who are here. Bob McGee. [Bob McGee speaks]

Roanoke, of course, connects to Roanoke Rapids and Grand Rapids and Hampton Falls that happens to be in New Hampshire. You're getting the drift now. We're trying to make connections with bodies of water. Toms River and Forked River, both in New Jersey. Sherrills Ford in North Carolina. Then there's Miller's Creek and Miller's Spring and Camp Spring and Carl Springs and Poolsville and Potomac and Annapolis and Oceanport and Southport. Now North Carolina doesn't have a lot of water in it, and some of us are more blessed than others. So Winston-Salem has been coveted after by other places especially the larger one nearby because we have the Yadkin River and Greensboro has got well, fifteen less freshmen who are here. I guess the people of Greensboro are glad that these people did not have any water, and there is another freshman who is not really a freshman but he is a freshman and he's from Greensboro. His name is Steve Angle and he is the coordinator for the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. [Steve Angle speaks]

I hope that by now you're beginning to understand that this business about names and places is not to use one of your names for little. I hope this is getting to be clear. I hope that also I remembered to use the name of one of the persons that would give me a lot of flack. I know there would be one person out there who is Leary of this whole thing, but I can't help that because that's their name.

There is a Cook in the freshman class. There is a Taylor and a Shoemate. There are three Masons. There are six Millers and five Bakers. There are a couple of pollsters. Well, they may not be pollsters, but there are two people named Nielson in the freshman class. There is a Fisher, he's got some Hooks and he just caught a Bass. Your job, your vocation relating to your name may be something that you will ask yourself about. But do I really want to be a Cooper. Indeed do you know what a Cooper is? Do you anything about literature? Would you like to be a Hawthorne or a Shaw? Would you like to be a musician like Ellington or Lombardi. And for you sports fans would you like to be like the certain Englishman whose name is Bannister.

Not everybody needs to know that but everyone does need to know that in addition to balloons and being good garbage and all of the kinds of wonderful things, there is only one sport in campus ministry. At least that's what David Rife believes. He's the Methodist campus minister some of the time and likes that some of the time and he welcomes the twenty-five West Virginians who are here and he welcomes the rest of you, but the only ones he's really interested in are those who play tennis. David Rife. [David Rife speaks]

I need to add David, he's from West Virginia. Why don't they call that other state East Virginia, and if one is interested in finding out, a brief study of history would help you discover. But whether it's West Virginia or Virginia or some of the other states, there are some picturesque locations in this freshman class, Aurora, Bluefield, Basking Ridge, Ridgefield, those are towns which perhaps you will remember and then you will wish you were there. Or you might wish you were at some of the beaches like West Palm Beach and Virginia Beach or Long Beach, which is both in North Carolina and New York.

Or you might ponder a little more history and wish you were in some place that is related to the Native American culture, Seminole, Pembroke, Massapequa, Setaukqua, or Painted Post or you might want to be in Pisgah Forest or Seacliffe, California or Santa Rosa, California. But all of those places bespeak somebody's concern how to describe who and what they are and where they live.

But not everybody has to be from a place like that. Some people may be from very interesting or strange towns, Nebo, Covenant Station, Street, Maryland. Did they simply run out of imagination or--? Those are curious

names. But whether they are curious or not, they are your names. They're your places. And if we tease about them, it's because we want you to claim them. How many people have you asked so far where they are from, and they say I am from Charlotte. That's not true. They're from Matthews, North Carolina or some other nearby suburb. See they're not quite sure they want to claim that. But let's claim it. Let's claim our names. There's Alexander and Burt and Carlos and Merrill. There's Hiyashi and Milburn and Tedford.

Now the next person I'm going to introduce will know some of those people because he is their minister. I am sure that you will be able to get to know every single person from his native state of Louisiana because you see there's only one Scott, and he is from Red Stick, Louisiana unless you know some French. I'm sure that Richard Groves knows a little French. But whether he does or not he is welcoming all of you and particular Scott from Louisiana to Wake Forest. He is the minister of the Wake Forest Baptist Church, Richard Groves.[Richard Groves speaks]

Fouche, Bonnaci, McGee, Angle, Rife and Groves. Part of the group of persons for whom I hope there will be an attachment of names of the program that we seek to provide the opportunity to help you and ourselves indeed search and grow. An alumna of the school, her husband and some friends were at the beach recently. As you might imagine they were inside playing Spades because of what was going on outside. A five-year-old wandered in and said Mommy, "Who made God?" That question comes in many forms. It doesn't have to be limited to five-year-olds. It does however bespeak of one more concern and just one more name.

A name above every name that we want you to covet and to remember and to care about and to explore your education with. Jesus Christ. Now some of you on Sundays will say they were a fine and splendid group and the chaplain spent a lot of time learning names. You will ask me did you do that? The answer then and now is with a great deal of hard work and emotion and then I will ask, well, why did I do that? If you do not know, let me say very simple and very briefly. It is because your name, your badge of honor. It is because you are unique in the sight of God. It is because you are now in a position we hope with our help to shape the meaning of that name and its future. Therefore, we invite you to chapel and to our programs. We invite you to church, and there are seats here at the front of churches away from the campus where you might go. There is a map in the packet of materials, which our student assistants have given you which suggest that what Lou Bonnaci said about finding part of the meaning of your name in some other place in Winston-Salem is something that we encourage.

Now let us conclude with something I haven't mentioned, but it is certainly as much a part of your name as anything else. The first number is five fifteen, five twenty-six. That is the number on this little piece of plastic which I have from that state board of motor vehicles that they give to people who don't drive cars but want to cash checks. That's an important number. I've never had to learn it. But the next one, you do have to learn because you see I want to cash checks at the Wachovia Bank and Trust Company. On the basis of the business that I've conducted over the years and the amount of business I rather doubt that my number will be retired when I leave. But it still is a point of identification and certainly a point of accountability because usually when the phone rings and it's June Crabb at the other end of the line I say what have I done wrong now. How far in debt am I? Well, that is a reality with which all of us must deal from time to time.

Life is not going to be just like the flowers and the roses and the ivy in the freshman class. Some of it is going to be more difficult. It is our hope that all of it will be what two of your names are, Hart and Soul. The name and the number that I of course know which we all are connected, my version of that is two-six-five-thirty-eight-forty-two-fourteen. Yesterday I went over there. I humiliated myself too. I had my picture made on that little machine. When I looked at it, it nearly frightened me to death. I tried to force an upperclassman into saying how terrible it was, but you will learn how to answer some of these questions when pushed upon. He said, "Well, Chaplain, you see it is a mug shot."

We're all connected and we're connected in ways that we hope will be meaningful for all of us. We thank you for your interest and your attention. If there are questions that you want to ask, we'll all be down in front after the program ends which is very soon.

Now one name I didn't mention with which I want to conclude, Engkvist. Now that name reminds me, makes the connection for me with Minnesota, Saint Paul Minnesota and six to eight o'clock on Saturday night and three to five on Sunday but most usually around seven-fifteen Saturday night when Garrison Keillor on *Prairie Home Companion* does his thing. He does what many ministers try to do what the parables of Jesus try to do, tell stories about a mythical place called Lake Wobegone. Pastor Engkvist is a pastor of a Lutheran church. He always ends by saying, where all the women are strong and all the men are good looking and all the children are a little above average.

Well, let's translate that. I do hope Wake Forest is not all numbers and all clear and all the angles are sharp. I hope there is something left that you don't fully know and I hope there will come to be a time when we sing

the alma mater some tears will come to your eyes. I hope that will happen. Let's change it slightly where all the freshmen are strong, and all the faculty are good looking—see how mythical we can be—and all the campus ministers are a little above average. The most important thing we can do is end with music, the universal connective language. So one brief song to which I hope you will listen by Darryl Adams, a Christian folk singer after which the program will conclude. There will be one or two announcements and the campus ministers will be here in the front. Let us listen to Darryl Adams. END