Sermon:

New babies – choosing names. At least Mary and Joseph had no problem! Some adults change theirs.

In Bible some adults got new names (Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah, Jacob/Israel, Simon/Peter, Saul/Paul)

A new name would mean a new life; God gave Israel a new name (Isaiah 62.4) for a new life.

Why would God bother to do this? Only because of love.

Can this be true for us too? Are we looking for a fresh start in life, for 2016? If God still loves, then he offers us a new name, and with it a new start.

In garage found photo of Sharon & I getting married over 30 years ago in Canterbury (not the Cathedral!).

Not all here married, some longer, some experienced death of a spouse, others have been through divorce. Major relationships are a big step, binding.

NB Isaiah 62.4f, God marries Israel (the land or the people?). God wants to bind himself to Israel, to make sure that never again will the land be without God.

Why would God bother to do that? Only because of love.  
Can this be true for us too? This country is bound to God, this church is bound to God. God is our only God.

‘Location, Location, Location’ and ‘Escape to the Country’ – can never predict which houses will delight. What you might choose could be very different from others. The Wow factor.   
Similarly with friendships and marriage, about which there are many other TV programmes.

Isaiah 62.5 - God is delighted in Israel. Delight – highly pleased with, take great pleasure in, rejoice over.

Why would God bother to do that? Only because of love.  
Can this be true for us too? Does God take great pleasure in us? To us it may seem a poor choice, but in us God sees the Wow factor. Is not that wonderful?

All this is not because of who we are, what we have done, what promises we might have made, but purely God’s choice. Luxuriate in this! Read Is 62.1-5 for yourself and put parish name there. Your name too.