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About that name...

Staccato Powell, a national leader in the AME Zion church, got his unusual name from a television series. The meaning of the word -- a burst of short, separate notes -- also fits his speaking style.

by [Ned Barnett](#)

June 21, 2011

When Lillie Powell became pregnant with her fifth child, she agreed to let her children come up with a name. Powell's sister, Dorothy, turned to TV for inspiration, selecting as her new brother's first name the last name of private detective Johnny Staccato.

Staccato, played by John Cassavetes, was a Greenwich Village jazz pianist who investigated cases on the side. The show ran on NBC for only 27 episodes from from September 10, 1959, through March 24, 1960, but it has gained new fame in the pulpit as Powell has gained a national reputation as a preacher and leader.

Staccato, of course, is also a musical term for a burst of short, separate notes. It fits Powell's energetic speaking style.

Powell passed the name on to his son, Staccato Kiethan, who is following in his footsteps as a divinity student at Shaw University. Unlike his son, the pastor has no middle name.

"With a name like Staccato you really don't need one," he says.

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