



A Letter From Heaven

Steve Butler

Vaun Healey, Illustrator

(January 2008)

Softcover \$9.95 (36pp)

978-1-4343-4715-2

Jamie's mother keeps a beautiful ceramic jar on their mantelpiece. The jar is painted with blue flowers and sometimes Jamie's mother puts real flowers next to it in a vase. Jamie has been asking his mother about that jar ever since he learned to talk. Each time he asks his mother answers "That is Alexandra." The answer is sufficient to satisfy little Jamie until the next time. One day however it occurs to Jamie that Alexandra could be someone's name so he asks his mother again. This time he does not ask about the jar but about the name. When Jamie asks "Who's Alexandra?" his mother sits down with him in the living room and takes a pretty pink envelope out from behind the jar. On the envelope someone has printed his name James Donald. This note was written especially for Jamie.

Author Steve Butler is a chaplain and an ordained minister. He has seen parents and grandparents grapple with how to prepare children for the death of someone close to them. The approach he has presented in Jamie's story is simply a way to open the conversation whether about an impending death or a previous one. While Jamie's sister died before he was born this text could be used to introduce death in a myriad of circumstances. Healey's illustrations are a little weak and because the book was written for young children it should have illustrations on each page. However the child-like drawings will be easily acceptable to even the youngest child. Although author Butler offers an additional resource for the parent it seems that in the age of the Web other resources could be added. It is interesting that even though Butler is an ordained minister he does not suggest connection with a family minister or church family for support. This is an acceptable effort to address a difficult subject.

(August 21, 2009)

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