

# A TMC Renaming Ceremony

## Welcome

**Presider:** Beloved ones, we know that God continues to shape and mold us in our growth, inviting us to claim the selves we were always meant to be. Each new day is an opportunity to live more fully the promise of who we are. Throughout history, individuals have claimed their unique personhood and been given new names as a testimony to their faithfulness. Abram was renamed Abraham, Sarai was renamed Sarah, Simon was renamed Peter, and Saul was renamed Paul. Today, another child of God comes forward in an important renaming. We are blessed to have been asked to witness this moment, and to celebrate with [name] as [pronoun] rejoices in being seen and known by God and by others. We begin by remembering part of our shared story.

**Reader:** A reading from John 20:11-16. Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." But Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

**Presider:** In this story from the Gospel of John we see the value of naming in the recognition of ourselves and others. Mary isn't able to recognize Jesus until he calls her by name, and it's in that moment that she comes back to herself and is able to reconnect with Jesus. [Name], too, has been called by name, and is experiencing a time of resurrection. Let us bear witness to [pronoun] story, and [pronoun] journey from one name to another.

## Origins

*First candle is lit.*

**Presider:** We begin by lighting the Candle of Origins to honor the name given to this child of God at birth. [Name]'s parents gave their child the gift of a name, the gift of life, and the gift of love. We honor their gifts, and we give thanks that while names change

and children grow up, love endures. We honor, too, all the terms of affection that [name] has been given over the years by [pronoun] family members. Although old words may be laid aside in favor of new ones that fit better, we do not lay aside the love with which those names were given.

## Discovery

*Second candle is lit.*

**Presider:** We light the Candle of Discovery in honor of the call [name] heard into a new understanding of [pronoun]self. Friend, what is the full name you are taking, and what would you like to tell us about the meaning of the name?

**Individual:** [Shares]

## Affirmation

*Third candle is lit.*

**Presider:** We light the Candle of Affirmation in honor of [name]'s acceptance of [pronoun]self, and in celebration of God's love for [pronoun]. Child of God, you have heard the whisper of the Spirit calling you to this transformation. Please share with us the commitments you make as you take on this new name.

**Individual:** I, [first, middle, last name], lay down the name I was given at birth and take up the new name God has given me, fully embracing all of who I am now and all that has come before. I commit to continue this journey, following the lead of the Great Mystery who is beckoning me forward. I commit to bringing all of myself into communion with this world, trusting that my wholeness will make space for wholeness in others. I will continue to love God and love my neighbor as myself, now resting in the surety of God's love for me exactly as I am.

**Presider:** As you make these commitments, it's important to know that you're not doing this alone. To all of you gathered here today, it's your turn to welcome and affirm your [brother/sister/sibling]! Will you rejoice with [name] for all that God has done for [pronoun], and all that is left to be revealed? Will you walk with [pronoun] and hold [pronoun] in love, calling [name] by name as God has called [pronoun]? If so, please respond, "We will."

**Community:** We will.

**Presider:** [First, middle, last name], you are God's beloved child. On this day you are renamed in the presence of God and those who love you. What have you chosen as a symbol of the new name you have been given, a name that you now bear with pride?

**Individual:** [Explains the meaning of a chosen piece of clothing or accessory, which they then put on.]

**Presider:** Wear this [item] with the full confidence of one who is loved unconditionally, because that is exactly who you are in God's eyes.

At this time I would like to invite the community to share any words of encouragement or congratulations with [name]!

**Community:** [Time for sharing.]

## Closing

**Presider:** Please join me in a closing prayer. Loving God of all creation, we thank you for our [sister/brother/sibling] [name] and for every step in [pronoun] journey that brought [pronoun] to this moment. We are so grateful, Holy One, that you have always known exactly who [name] is, and that [pronoun]'s true name has always been written on your palm and in your heart. Bless [pronoun] now with a new measure of grace for the journey. Give [pronoun] the courage to share [pronoun]self with the world as [pronoun] works for justice, reconciliation, truth, joy, and peace. We ask all this in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer whose true name is Love.

**All:** Amen.

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Leanne McCall Tigert and Maren C Tirabassi, *Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 136-141.

Chris Dowd and Christina Beardsley, *Transfaith: A Transgender Pastoral Resource* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2018), 194-197.

Austen Hartke, "A Ritual for Renaming and Remembrance of Baptism," [www.austenhartke.com](http://www.austenhartke.com), April 11, 2016, <https://austenhartke.com/blog/2016/4/11/a-ritual-for-renaming-and-remembrance-of-baptism>.