

**Summerland United Church**  
**Jan 18, 2026**  
**Know You Name**

**Threshold and Christ Candle**

Our theme this Epiphany season is 'Beloved' I am adapting this theme from the Worship Design Studio, which had it named "Who are You?" and as I know many of you are now mumbling the Who in your head, I think you can understand why I changed the name. But, in talking about being beloved, we may ask *whose are you? Not just who are you?*

In the scriptures, people describe Jesus by many names as we'll hear in our scripture today — Rabbi, Messiah, Lamb of God — as they try to understand who this special person is. Jesus will refer to one of his friends as both Simon (which means listening) and Peter (which means rock). These are not just names, but descriptors of the type of person they are.

Isaiah says we are known, called and named while still in our mother's womb. As we consider this and these biblical names, let's turn to wonder: *Who has God called you to be? What has God named you? Who does God already know you to be?*

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 49: 1 and John 1:35-41

Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth, metaphor or story, listen for the meaning it has for you on this day.

Isaiah 49:1

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! God called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb God named me. —

John 1: 35 – 41

<sup>35</sup> The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup> and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi." And then, "Where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

<sup>40</sup> One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup> He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah (which means anointed)" <sup>42</sup> He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

Reader: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

## Reflection

Oh January 9<sup>th</sup>, Bishop Rob of the Episcopal church of New Hampshire spoke at a vigil for Renee Nicole Good. One part of his speech has been shared across social media this week as he said,

*“I have told the clergy of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire that we may be entering into that same witness. And I've asked them to get their affairs in order—to make sure they have their wills written, because it may be that now is no longer the time for statements, but for us with our bodies to stand between the powers of this world and the most vulnerable.”*

He spoke about those who call themselves Christians who sit among the highest echelons of power in the USA, who tell us the way the world works is through force. He contrasts those sentiments with words from Paul's letter to the Philippians,

*“Let this mind be, let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you.”* Meaning be like Jesus. Who bishop Rob says, *[Jesus] had every force in the world and could just lay assault to the whole universe, chose instead to enter our humanity, to empty himself, and to take the posture of weakness, of vulnerability, to enter even death, even death on the cross.*

He ended his speech with a prayer:

*“Live without fear. You have been created holy in the image of the divine. Whatever race, whatever gender, whatever orientation—straight, queer, trans, you have been made in the image of the divine. God has always and will always protect you no matter what happens. So live in that without fear. God supports you, protects you and loves you with a power and a presence that is stronger than death. That is how we live free or die.”*

*And may the Creator, the Anointed, and the Holy Spirit uphold, give you courage and strength and compassion to live these days. There is a new day ahead. It is coming. We can see [and] smell it. It is on its way.*

*Let this light shine. The darkness, the shadows of our lives will not overcome it. Amen.*

For me, a member of Clergy, these words are both inspiring and terrifying. Conversations with my clergy friends and colleagues have been thoughtful and positive. None of my colleagues have said he's exaggerating, or he's creating shock value, rather for some there's a sense of relief that someone is finally naming a fear we all feel.

Naming that we've reached a point where bodily defence of those most vulnerable is the reality and that we as clergy need to come to terms with our call to stand up for the most vulnerable.

*Our boss went to the cross*, one colleague said. Never in my life, until today have understood the willingness for someone to put themselves in harms way because of their religious convictions. I am honestly not sure if I'm up for that.

We're meant to be talking about names today and not just our personal names or family names, but the names we want to be known by. The names God has given us and called us to own. I started this week thinking I would talk about name changes and the importance of our given or chosen names in creating our identity. My given name is Andrea, but I feel more like an Anne, so I use that name instead and have for over 25 years.

But what truly gave me pause this week when it comes to names is my full name with its title I am The Reverend Anne Ellis. I'm not particularly comfortable with the title. It feels weird The Reverend. Who me? There is a power that comes from having such a title and I'm uncomfortable with the imbalance of power having a title creates.

And yet, as I reflect on names this week within the context of what's happening in the world and what Bishop Rob said – this title which is a part of my name and part of my identity has taken on new meaning. And I am struggling with it.

Last week we talked about the story of Moses and how his name means in Egyptian 'a man' any man, any person really. And that creates the sense that any person was capable of being the prophet for God in that time. It wasn't the person, but the actions of the person that mattered. Similarly the writer of Matthews gospel wanted us to see Jesus as the new Moses. A person from a nobody family, born in a dirty barn. That God appears in human form in grimeiest and lowest of circumstances requires us to know that God can appear in human form anywhere; within anyone.

According to Isaiah God knew us and named us before we were born. God chose us and calls us before we know ourselves. We feel like nobody special, we say 'who me?' We're no one important, we don't have big names. God never chooses those who are important, never chooses the somebodies. It's the nobodies who are named beloved.

It's the nobodies who become the prophets and the spiritually powerful. When Jesus faces the trial at the end of his life they ask, "Are you the Son of God." And he replies, "You say that I am". In the story we read today we heard all these names applied to Jesus by his followers. Names he has perhaps accepted, but not given to himself by himself. At the end of his life he will beg for the burden of these names to be taken from him, because they are the names that end his life.

I'm not saying that anyone of us in this room needs to sacrifice themselves for their faith as Jesus did. I'm not calling on anyone to prepare their wills or be ready to defend the vulnerable with their bodies.

What I am saying is we are God's beloved. Named and called. What does that mean? In our heart of hearts how do we hold that knowledge? How might we embrace that name in a way that is comfortable, safe and authentic to who we are as a human being; Beloved and known by God? Whatever the answer is for you or for me, know it to be good, precious, real and true. May it be so.

### **Prayers of The People**, by Walter Brueggemann

On Epiphany day,  
 we are still the people walking.  
 We are still people in the dark,  
 and the darkness looms large around us,  
 beset as we are by fear,  
     anxiety,  
     brutality,  
     violence,  
     loss —  
 a dozen alienations that we cannot manage.

We are — we could be — people of your light.  
 So we pray for the light of your glorious presence  
     as we wait for your appearing;  
 we pray for the light of your wondrous grace  
     as we exhaust our coping capacity;  
 we pray for your gift of newness that  
     will override our weariness;  
 we pray that we may see and know and hear and trust  
     in your good rule.

That we may have energy, courage, and freedom to enact  
 your rule through the demands of this day.  
 We submit our day to you and to your rule,  
     with deep joy and high hope.