

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN

(Traditional & Online Service) (Green)

January 25, 2026 • Third Weekend in Ordinary Time

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

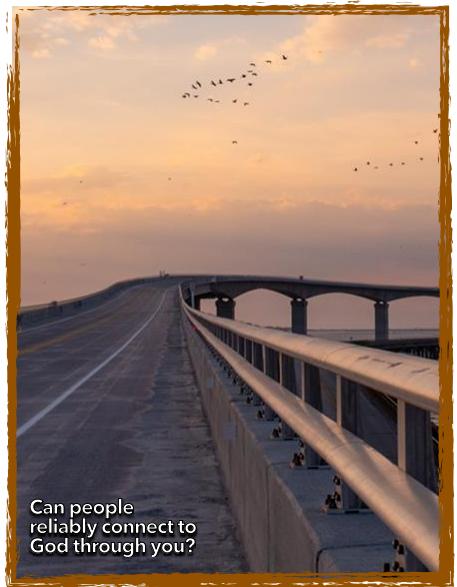
"Tribal Faith"

Faith requires *healthy* division and *divine* unity.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If an items unavailable, fret not:

- a piece of **green** cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl with water
- a lighter/match
- a chain or rope
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week



For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you.

Questions for the announcement loop

In preparing for Worship, consider the following:

- What kind of bridge are you between people?
- Can people reliably connect to God through you?
- If God wanted us to be together so much, why did God make us individuals? Why not make us a hive mind?
- Whose team are you on (spiritually, interpersonally)?

Opening Sentence

1 Corinthians 1:18 (CEB)

"The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed. But it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved." —Paul

Welcome to this service of Worship, We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the buildings other than this Sanctuary.

More Than a Link

You've perhaps heard it said: don't be the weak link in the chain. And it's understandable. A chain's ability to hold disparate bodies together can be defeated, no matter how strong the other links are, if the one link breaks. But a chain does more than point out weakness. The links in the chain provide bridges to the strengths of each other. Link One is just as dependent on the strength of Link Seventy-Eight as is Link Seventy-Seven. The chain doesn't work without them *all*. As you move through the week, consider, what kind of link are you to the strengths of your fellow humanity? How are you demonstrating not just your own strength and gifts and blessings, but that of those around you? And in thinking about the chain of time, what kind of link are you to the strength of generations?

Save the Date!

Our church by-laws and our Book of Order requires that we have an Annual Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to review the previous year (2025) and look ahead to the next. As a part of this meeting, the Administrative Life Committee wishes to help our understanding of how our finances work as well as introduce the operating budget for 2026. We will also review the Annual Report. In preparation for that, all committees and groups and affiliates are encouraged to make

submissions (pictures, articles, summaries) by January 28th. You can make submissions by email (info@hawfieldschurch.org), by mail (2115 South NC Hwy 119, Mebane), by phone (336-578-2811), or by text message (336-524-1234). As always, the last part of our agenda is acting on the terms of call for the Pastor. The Session has set Sunday, February 8th immediately following the morning worship service in the Sanctuary as the meeting time and place. Please make your submissions and plan to attend.

So, About the Weather...

With the varying weather reports, it's important to remember how our Inclement Weather Policy works. First and foremost, use your judgement. Be mindful of any warnings and advice from our own emergency services. Outside of that, you can find updates to the church's schedule show up on our website, Facebook page, Instagram, email blasts, on our digital outdoor sign, and on the following newscasts: Spectrum News, Fox 8 (WGHP), and News Channel 2 (WFMY). Schedule change decisions will be made as soon as reasonably feasible.

We Already Have to Talk about Lent

Ash Wednesday is coming soon (February 18th). In preparation for the season of Lent and our theme, "Light for the Journey", we're in need of a few items if you have them to share. First, we will need mirrors of all shapes and sizes starting February 15th. Please mark the back of your mirror with your name and phone number if you share one with us. The second thing we need are your thoughts! As you are willing to share, take 5 minutes to gaze at yourself in the mirror (set a timer!) and then write a paragraph of what you think you see in the reflection. Your reflections can, of course, be anonymous and we won't share them without your express permission.

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) Gathering Song

"He Came Down" GTG #137

He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love;
Hallelujah forevermore. (2X)

(10am only) Prelude:

"Near to the Heart of God" arr. Melody Bober

Faith requires healthy division and divine unity.

In this moment, let us stand, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship together, making use of the *Call to Worship* that is before you...

(10am only) Call to Worship

Who's side are you on?

We should care about ourselves

Who's side are you on?

We should care about others

Who's side are you on?

We should care about all that God has created

Who's side are you on?

We should care about what God cares about

Sing:

"Let Us Build a House (All Are Welcome)" GTG #301

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

We sometimes allow apathy to guide our thoughts and actions. We allow it to justify tribalism. It's not good that we do that. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: God Who Loves, we have to admit we take this for granted about you: you love us. But we take that further and sometimes ignore that you love others, especially those we don't. Help us get closer to what love should mean for us. Rather than walls of anger or bitterness or divide, let us instead be bridges of compassion, of forgiveness, of divine communion. You chose to stay connected to us despite everything we've done and will do. Help us do that with each other. May we come to reflect your generosity as enthusiastically as we receive it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

The Peace of Christ be with you

And also with you.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning
It is now and ever shall be
World without end: Amen, amen.**

Reading of Scripture

Say: God's Word is a gift. And good gifts are meant to be opened. Our hearts and minds are gifts. And good gifts are meant to be opened. God offers to help us open our presents by God's own Spirit. Let us take God up on that offer and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "Break Thou the Bread of Life (verse 2)"
GTG #460

**Bless thou the truth, dear Lord, now unto me,
As thou didst bless the bread by Galilee.
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall.
And I shall find my peace, my all in all.**

The disciples didn't just appear through some incantation. They were people with lives, a whole history of choices, invited into another life. Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and our ongoing place in God's story...

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (CEB)

Paul challenges the divisions in the church.

¹⁰ Now I encourage you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Agree with each other and don't be divided into rival groups. Instead, be restored with the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹ My brothers and sisters, Chloe's people gave me some information about you, that you're fighting with each other. ¹² What I mean is this: that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," "I belong to Apollos," "I belong to Cephas," "I belong to Christ." ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized in Paul's name? ¹⁴ Thank God that I didn't baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so that nobody can say that you were baptized in my name! ¹⁶ Oh, I baptized the house of Stephanas too. Otherwise, I don't know if I baptized anyone else. ¹⁷ Christ didn't send me to baptize but to preach the good

news. And Christ didn't send me to preach the good news with clever words so that Christ's cross won't be emptied of its meaning.

¹⁸ The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed. But it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved.

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- a picture of a bridge or a toy example; paper plates or some other makeshift stepping stones (prearranged)
- Make space for questions if you get them "Here to There"
- We're going to play a game. It's called "Lava" and for this game we have to get from one side to the other without touching the lava. To do that, you have to walk only on these lava stones (the plates)...Ready? (as they do it, you might consider removing one or more plates to increase the difficulty)
- When you take lava stones away, it gets harder and harder to get to the other side. But what if had so many that you couldn't even SEE the lava? The big people word for that is (show the picture or toy) "bridge."
- Our faith can be like that. Our faith is better than lava stones because it is a bridge for us to God.
- So when you're around the people who care about you, ask them what bridges they use to get close to God.
- Don't forget to pray!

(10am only) Anthem:

"Glory to God in the Highest" by Jay Althouse

"Tribal Faith"

Faith requires healthy division and divine unity.

So let's just go straight at the challenge: what is **unity**? Does unity mean we're on the same team? Wearing the same clothes? Spouting the same ideas? Voting the same, eating the same, living out the same values? What is the defining characteristic of unity? Is it conformity?

Homogeneity? Some kind of groupthink? How well whatever's important to you is identical to that quality in someone else?

And yet Creation itself teaches us the truth: there are limits to having unity like that. **Bengal tigers** are easily recognizable, to be sure. But they each have unique stripes. The Seven Sisters is an easily identified range in the Blue Ridge. But they are each individual mountains. A school can have its colors, its mascot, its structure, all pointing to a uniform identity. But no matter what year you point to, each year has its own blend of administrators, teachers, support staff and students, all are individuals as distinct as paper is from rock and scissors. A church might be made up of two or three people gathered or thousands. It just doesn't matter what size you're talking about, it's still made up of individuals.

And so when the Bible calls for unity, it is *not* calling for the end of our individuality. In fact, our individuality is something God is greatly counting on, as should we. But **God holds in tension the idea that we are not only individuals but we are also a community of faith.** That we cannot have one without the other.

Yet there's a reason that oil and water don't mix... right? Unless it's in a cake. Okay well metal and bone are not at all the same, but they can together make it possible for a person to walk (hip replacement, knee replacement, shoulder enhancement, foot apparatus,...). Fine, but in reality, contradictions are the enemy of peace and unity, aren't they? Controversy and arguments are not the sign of a healthy marriage or a church, right? If we're unified, shouldn't it all be easy, smooth, and without emotional blemish?

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (CEB) **Paul challenges the divisions in the church.**

I remember precisely growing up thinking that denominations were against God's will for the Church. In fact, I thought our collective job as Christians was to resolve these divisions in order to be living out God's true intention for our faith: for us to be ONE Body. As I matured, I also remember realizing that, while I still think our divisions are

wrong, I can't be a Christian all by myself. Love has to be demonstrated, that is, toward another person. We all know someone who loves *themselves* too much. But in order to observe the rule—"Love your neighbor as yourself"—at some point we have to talk about a community. That means throwing our lot in with *somebody*. And like every human since the Garden of Eden, we formed groups, collectives, **tribes**.

And why not? The reality is it's easier to row a massive ship, move a piano, change a social norm, when you do it as a group. I don't imagine an aircraft carrier would work very well if it only had one person to run it. And not just operationally, *historically*. Just last week we talked about the archaeology of our beliefs. What would we really know if the generations before hadn't passed their knowledge on to us? Preserved it for us?

And so, of course, the church in Corinth was divided into camps. Under duress and attack from the Roman authorities, Jewish authorities, area businesses, and more, the Community was desperate to feel security, safety, some kind of stable. So what did they do? they turned to their identity. Sure, we're all Christians. But what KIND of Christians?

It might be time to take a minute and talk about brands. Whether you're talking about cars, breakfast cereal, sports teams, banks, windshield repair shops, Internet Service providers, social media, news organizations, TVs, intelligence agencies, governing systems, economic systems, political parties, countries, even genders ("Are you a man's man?..."), there seems to be a brand for everything. The whole idea of a brand has its roots, not in community building, but in economics. It was a way of saying to whom something (or someone) belonged. That's what made the question about paying taxes so important when Jesus was confronted with it. And his answer went right to the root of what Paul is trying to get at with the Corinthians:

"Show me the coin used to pay the tax." And they brought [Jesus] a denarion. "Whose [brand] and inscription is this?" he asked.
"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

It's not a question of which team you're on, what tribe you're a part of, what brand we embrace. Don't get me wrong: who you decide to partner with, to join, can have great consequences, of course. It matters a great deal if I choose to be part of one group or another. It's even more consequential when I don't have a choice in how I'm branded.

But here, when Paul is talking about identity, it only matters to whom you belong. So do you belong to Christ or not? That's the question before the Corinthians and that's the question before us.

And notice, it's not a question of uniformity. It's a question of unity. Part of what every dictatorship gets wrong is it presumes that community means uniformity with the dictator's whims. That's simply not community. If Paul (or Apollos, or Peter, or anybody else) presumed the Corinthian church needed to practice exactly as they dictated, then they missed the plot. The Church doesn't belong to any one person. It only ever belongs to God. And so all other claims on us should all short of this.

Again, it's not because our particular brand or tribe doesn't matter. They certainly do. But belonging to God should characterize and codify everything about us, including our tribe. Our identity then shouldn't be what separates us from one another. Our identity in Christ should be a bridge.

The beautiful simplicity of a bridge is that it has one job: to get us from one side to the other. The bridge itself doesn't change what's on either side of it. But its presence means that not only can we see the other side, we can actually get there. We are not God. And God made us as individuals. All the bridge of our faith says is that we are meant to be together. Not obliterated.

What do you think happens if everyone suddenly decides that, instead of Jesus Christ, they actually belong to Paul's brand? What do they do when Paul gets it wrong? (For anyone keeping score, Paul's ministry began with him getting it wrong.) What happens if we base our faith on anything

other than Christ's love and mercy and justice? We end up with something watered down, or, worse, simply not Christ. And the bonus in all of that is we lose our God-given sense of self.

Paul goes on to write in 1 Corinthians (and several other letters, actually) about how important it is that we be a body in distinct parts. That God's responsible for our individuality and the call on us to be a community. Faith requires healthy division and divine unity. To be clear, I don't pretend to know how it's all supposed to work. I don't pretend to have the answer to what it ultimately means to belong to God. But I trust the Spirit at work in me and in you.

My family in Christ, may it be so. Amen.

Song of Reflection

"This Is My Song" GTG #340

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

(10am only) Offertory

"Write Thy Name Upon My Heart" by Sally DeFord;
Soloist: Noah Melton

(10am only) Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above ye heavenly hosts;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Blessing

(text is for the *ONLINE* service)

Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us. And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt, Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we are meant to be emerge. In the great name of Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.

Prayers of the People

- Say: God doesn't just hear our prayers. God answers. Let us pray...

- "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" GTG#465

**What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.
O what peace we often forfeit;
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.**

- Holy God, you made us, each of us. You determined from the depths of your own love and mercy what gifts, what sensibilities, what strengths, what weaknesses, what needs we would all possess. Help us honor your image in us. Help us honor you. Let us appreciate the craft you took in forming us and in owning up to making us. In so many ways, we are not acting according to specs. But with Christ you are honoring a warranty that we truly be your children. God, please let that be true.
- Not just true actually (though, it is) but true manifestly: in our thoughts, in our actions, in our desires, in our hopes, in our words, even in what we take and and take in. Fill us with your Spirit, Lord. Fill us with your Word. Fill us with your dreams and the drive to fulfill them. No matter what the world throws at us, no matter how sensible the crazy might seem to us, may the foolishness of your Gospel be the only wisdom we embrace.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a harvest of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Teach us to live lives weeding out apathy, selfishness, craveness, callousness, and evil. We pray this not only for ourselves, but for so many that we can name... (take time to name your own prayers)
- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn of Sending

(10am) "Though I May Speak (The Gift of Love)"
GTG #693

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Faith requires healthy division and divine unity.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: "God Be With You Till We Meet Again"

**God be with you till we meet again;
Loving counsels guide, uphold you,
May the Shepherd's care unfold you;
God be with you till we meet again.
Till we meet, till we meet,
till we meet at Jesus' feet.
Till we meet, till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again.**

(10am only) Postlude

"I Could Sing of Your Love Forever"
arr. Carol Tornquist