

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN**(Traditional & Online Service) (Green)**

July 19, 2026 • 16th Weekend in Ordinary Time

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43*"The Harvest Is God's Call"*

Separation is not the answer, not even when it comes to weeds.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If an item is 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 gardening tool
- 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 weeds are growing with you?
- Does God's farming strategy work for you?
- What do you think is God's top priority for changing the world?
- What do you think is God's top priority for changing you?

Opening Sentence**Matthew 13:29-30 (CEB)**

But the landowner said, 'No, because if you gather the weeds, you'll pull up the wheat along with them. Let both grow side by side until the harvest.'

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, living that Christian life...

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.

Jesus Is Coming! Look Busy!

One of the problems with end times theology is the extent to which people try to out-guess God. Lots of energy gets spent trying to pin down the

moment, the time, date, and place the rapture happens, Jesus returns, and everyone not in the club gets theirs. But if the parable we're digging into is any indication, God is satisfied handling the sowing, the harvesting, even the weeding. Our job, our sole job, is to grow. And not just in numbers. We are to grow in those things that cannot be quantified: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. So as you move through the week, be thinking about the end times. Zero in on what God requires. And put your energy into growing your faith, not trying to beat a deadline you can't control or can't possibly anticipate.

Shelter Means More Than Ever

In winters past, we have experienced cold shelters being established because exposure to the elements could be deadly. This sometimes took the form of people opening up their homes. With temperatures this summer reaching into the upper 90's, even 100's, the same dangers are present. This is especially true when well water runs dry (as it has for some of our folks) or the A/C or electricity fails (as it has for some of our folks). Be ready for your home to be a shelter. Find out who might be in need and then take steps to address it. Thanks to



God's grace, sharing can be an easily accessible, life-giving response.

Youth Conferences Are in Motion

This week, our youth began their journeys with our denomination's youth conferences. They are *not* vacations. Each of them (the Massanetta Middle School Conference and the Montreat Youth Conference (for High Schoolers) tries to model a holistic approach to faith formation. In other words, they try to take seriously the advice to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. Even you aren't a direct participant, you have a role to play in their journeys. First, and most importantly, you can be praying for them. Praying they gain new understanding, wrestle well with the Scriptures, and hear God's call on their lives. Pray that they encounter the Christ. You can also make opportunities to share your own faith with our youth: write cards, send texts to our youth director to pass on (you shouldn't text them alone), and of course add to the youth fund that sends them on these experiences.

Nominating Begins

Per the election, your Nominating Committee for the Class of 2028 Elders is James Johnson, Caroline Massey and Dwayne Straughn. Their job is to recommend a slate to the congregation for their consideration in electing the next Class. You may make suggestions to them. Bear in mind anyone suggested must be a member of the congregation, someone you've prayerfully considered and willing to have their name submitted. You may email them directly at nominating@hawfieldschurch.org.

Cross Dedication

Next Sunday, July 26th, at 9:30am, we will dedicate the Cross installed in the courtyard of our buildings. We are grateful for the gifts that made this possible and look forward to celebrating this enduring symbol of our faith.

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) Gathering Song

"This is the Day" CEL #209

**This is the day, this the day
that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made;**

**We will rejoice, we will rejoice
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day
that the Lord has made.**

(10am only) Prelude:

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" arr. Mike Springer

Separation is not the answer, not even when it comes to weeds.

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

(10am only) Call to Worship

In those moments we find ourselves intolerant

Teach us to grow, O Lord

In those moments we find ourselves weary of well-doing

Teach us to endure, O Lord

In those moments the tide seems to turn against us

Teach us to trust your Spirit, O Lord

Sing:

"We Are Called to be God's People" CEL #415

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

We imagine ourselves the farmers when we are the ones being planted. We shouldn't 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: Creator God, the current climate is hot. We are hot with rage. Hot with dissatisfaction. Hot with dissonance. Hot with confusion. Hot with denials. Hot with reaching our limits and camels with too many straws. Hot with things not going according to plan. Hot with spinning wheels, backwards steps, and just plain exhaustion. We need your water of life. We need your seeds of grace. We need you, Lord, more than ever. Break the fever of our sins and help us recover

into people worth saving. 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 confirmation of what God has promised all along: to be with us. Taking in God's Word is a chance for us to be with God. God offers to make that happen through the power of God's Spirit. Let us take God up on that offer and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus"

CEL #581

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,

just to take Him at His word,

Just to rest upon His promise,

just to know: "Thus saith the Lord."

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!

How I've proved Him o'er and o'er!

Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!

O for grace to trust Him more!

Jesus used parables to share the very secrets of Heaven. But he also made space to explain them along the way. God's goal was and is understanding and interpretation, not mystery. Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and for our place in God's grace...

Read: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (CEB)

Parable of the Weeds and Wheat.

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like someone who planted good seed in his field. ²⁵ While people were sleeping, an enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat

and went away. ²⁶ When the stalks sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ "The servants of the landowner came and said to him, 'Master, didn't you plant good seed in your field? Then how is it that it has weeds?'

²⁸ "'An enemy has done this,' he answered.

"The servants said to him, 'Do you want us to go and gather them?'

²⁹ "But the landowner said, 'No, because if you gather the weeds, you'll pull up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow side by side until the harvest. And at harvest time I'll say to the harvesters, 'First gather the weeds and tie them together in bundles to be burned. But bring the wheat into my barn.'"

³⁶ Jesus left the crowds and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

³⁷ Jesus replied, "The one who plants the good seed is the Human One. ³⁸ The field is the world. And the good seeds are the followers of the kingdom. But the weeds are the followers of the evil one. ³⁹ The enemy who planted them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the present age. The harvesters are the angels. ⁴⁰ Just as people gather weeds and burn them in the fire, so it will be at the end of the present age. ⁴¹ The Human One will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that cause people to fall away and all people who sin. ⁴² He will throw them into a burning furnace. People there will be weeping and grinding their teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. Those who have ears should hear."

Jeremiah was despised as a prophet because he told truths the people didn't want to hear. Listen further to the Word of God to us all and for our place in God's grace...

Read: Jeremiah 29:4-7 (CEB)

God demands growth.

⁴ The LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims to all the exiles I have carried off from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and settle down; cultivate gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Get married and have children; then help your sons find wives and your daughters find

husbands in order that they too may have children. Increase in number there so that you don't dwindle away. ⁷ Promote the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because your future depends on its welfare.

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!

(10am only) Anthem:

"We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder"
arr. Carol Tornquist; Soloist: David Ealy

"The Harvest Is God's Call"

Separation is not the answer, not even when it comes to weeds.

When we lived in Idaho, our house had a fairly large garden out back. Rows upon rows of green beans, corn, even collards. But for all of our efforts, the weeds just kept coming. Week after week, row after row, we'd get rid of them and they would just return. My siblings and I just got tired of it and asked, "Why won't they just stay gone!?"

But the things you wish would grow—wealth, health, joy, accomplishments, accolades, celebratory successes, even peace—also grow alongside ruin, disease, despair, failures, criticisms, infamy, even war. Talking with someone the other day about balance, and the trend that still pervades our thinking sometimes that it is somehow our life's desire, I realized that *imbalance* is what we really desire. Not as many bad guys as there are good guys. Not as much danger as there is safety. Not as much pain as there is comfort. Not as much hate as there is love. Not as many weeds as there are crops and flowers.

But the reality of our existence might be unsettling. God seems to think we need to live with the weeds. At least for now.

Read: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (CEB)
Parable of the Weeds and Wheat.

When Jesus gives his parable, I imagine the disciples and others going back and forth about the meaning.

"Oh, you KNOW the weeds have got to be the Romans..."

"No, no, the weeds are the idiots among us."

"Listen, the weeds have to be Gentiles because you know Jews have to be the wheat."

"Well, his story made ME think of my good-for-nothing nephew who is definitely the weed in our family..."

"Well, you're all wrong: he's just talking about farming."

Same story heard. A slew of interpretations. Some more plausible than others but all confusing nevertheless. So they do the one thing that we should *all* be doing: they consult the source.

Whenever we as church leadership, as a congregation, as individual Christians, try to discern and interpret God's will, it is shameful the degree to which we fail to actually engage *God* about what GOD wants. We can feel so sure about what WE think is right, what WE think should happen, what we believe is possible, that we fail to actually ask the question, "Is this really what God wants?" Am I sure my view is truly God's view?

The disciples go to Jesus privately. They're going to get to the bottom of this. Jesus will set the record straight on who was right and then the others could eat crow. Then they learn they all had it wrong.

Before we talk about what they got wrong, we should talk about why that happened. Why they heard Jesus but somehow didn't listen. Why they got the message but somehow forgot how to read. Why they wrestled with the truth and somehow believed something else.

When we think about life, we, understandably, tend to think about it in terms of ourselves. "Why is this happening to me?" "What's in it for me?" "What do I get out of this deal?" Growing up, I experienced several churches that taught that God loves me so much that, if I were the only person on earth, Jesus would have still died for me. While I don't doubt at

all God's love for me being this intense, this goes against the plain language of Scripture: "For God so loved the *world*..."

Even for the ones who might have thought that Jesus' ministry was meant only for the Jews, they are missing the point of every single one of God's blessings. God is in it for us *all*, the whole community. Not just segments.

That myopia on the part of those listening to Jesus that day caused them to miss what had been evident since Creation: The good of the whole. The good for all, not just some.

So when Jesus talks about the wheat and the weeds, he's NOT talking about people you might not like versus people you do like. He's not talking about people with whom you agree versus people with whom you disagree. He's talking about the Kingdom. Everything, everyONE, God is working toward. A redemption that includes any of us necessarily must include others, even those distasteful to us.

Take the language that Jesus uses here. We read "devil" and miss that the word literally means "deceiver." Makes it easy to miss that the devil, sometimes, the one doing the deceiving, is *us*. We deceive ourselves when we think that there's no way WE might be the weeds: when we fail to pursue God's will, when we stop short of furthering our faith, when we presume that we have nothing to change, including our minds. If we already know everything we need to know, what do we need God for?

But Jesus sets the record straight with his explanation. He challenges them all to look past their own goals and concerns and to imagine God's own dreams for them

GOD is the one who plants the seeds. Maybe that feels obvious. But think back to the number of times you, me or any of us have felt and acted as though WE were the ones doing the planting. That it is all up to us. That we have to come up with the plan, the resources, the rationale, the vision. You know: that WE are in charge.

Some years ago we had a wedding in our sanctuary. When the room was reset, the flags up front were in the wrong place. As the choir entered the loft and I walked into the chancel to get ready, a congregation member yelled from the place where he was waiting, "The flags are out of place!"

I looked. "Yes, they are."

"Well FIX it!"

"YOU fix it."

"You work for US."

I stepped down from the chancel and said with much more bravado than I was feeling, "No, Sir. That is not correct. You, Me, and everyone in here are working for Christ. Now if you want the flags back in place, get up and help me move them."

Suffice it to say, he didn't get up but one of our youth did. And she and I made the switch and then we all got on with the service.

The reason for telling you that story is not to try and highlight who was right or who was wrong. It's to point out a lesson that God has been trying to teach us from the very beginning. God alone is in charge. It was a lesson all of us, including me and the guy yelling at me, needed to hear.

But the very next thing Jesus says widens the picture suddenly. *The field is the world*. The World. Everyone and everywhere. Not Canada or Fuji. Not the state of Israel or the United States. The world! I can guarantee that the disciples and the others listening weren't thinking that way. They assumed Jesus was talking about local stuff. Local economics, local politics, local culture. Maybe even their home life. But the stakes of what he was talking about, the stakes of redemption always, is the world.

When ever we're thinking about a blood drive, what we do in worship, a prayer we offer, a tithe we give, the yard sale, the pumpkin patch, whatever it is we decide to do with the Manse, our relationship with the Civitans, what we might do with the idea of selling land to the Childcare Center, whether or not to welcome all the changes coming to our neighborhoods, or our own Christian walks, the

stakes for God are the world. We have to see beyond ourselves.

And then Jesus brings it home. VERY close to home. The seeds are the followers of the kingdom. The weeds are followers of the evil one.

Yikes.

That's me. Both...things...are me. I have been and often am a follower of Christ. And every time I come against God's will, fail to pray, forget who's really in charge, every time I think I know better than God, I am a weed, a follower of the evil one.

It's no wonder that I end up confused sometimes.

But God's grace means the seed and weed at war in us can be overcome. That the challenges that come our way and the forces that come against us can not only be defeated, but overwhelmed. God is the OG farmer and is the real one calling the shots on us and our futures. No matter where we find ourselves.

Take, for example, the Exile. It was not just an inconvenience. It was a trauma against the entire nation. Imagine for a moment that everything you now know and understand gets uprooted and you are literally transported to a land with which you are unfamiliar and you know is hostile to you (they just conquered you). When the people were made to leave the Promised Land, they weren't just displaced. They felt like God had abandoned them to their fate.

Jeremiah had been warning about the Exile (as did the other prophets). He just happened to be the one where the Exile happened in his lifetime. So you can imagine how they felt about him. But for Jeremiah, God wasn't done. There was more to say.

Read: Jeremiah 29:4-7 (CEB)
God demands growth.

Grow where you're planted. Even in Babylon. Even among enemies. Grow, even in unexpected ways in unexpected places. God's will with us is what it has always been.

But we have to be careful. A metaphor, an analogy, a parable, has limits. You can only carry the imagery but so far. What are we to make of God's demands of us now? I dare say our weeds nowadays represent those things that frighten us, those things that concern us, those things that are even distasteful to us. And our instinct is to remove, to distance, to separate. But God pushes us to embrace instead. Separation is not the answer, not even when it comes to weeds. Growing is the answer. That's why our mission statement as a church says what it does: Build disciples, Grow in faith, Share Christ with All. May God's harvest prevail. Amen.

Song of Reflection

"Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!" GTG #839

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

"A Jubilant Song" by Victor C. Johnson

Duet: Erin and Morgan Layfield

(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...
- "Cares Chorus" CEL #627
I cast all my cares upon You.
I lay all my burdens down at Your feet.

**And anytime that I don't know what to do,
I will cast all my cares upon You.**

- Creator God, we suppose even saying that is a profession of faith. You are the one who started it all. You are the one with the plan. You are the one who inspires, who motivates, who blesses. Help us pay closer attention, then, to what you want for us and for the community in which you've planted us. Help us to observe what you've empowered us to do and then do it. Help, Holy God, to grow.
- We have so much for which to be thankful. Thank you for not giving up on us when we are acting like weeds. Thank you for trusting that we can actually be the seeds you intended, for our homes, for Mebane, for our state, for the world. Even as you don't give up on us, help us not to give up on your dreams for us. Even when your will takes us to places strange to us, help us to grow where we're planted. And the may the harvest be realized: your will be done, Lord.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, of apathy, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead... (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) "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" CEL #602

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Separation is not the answer, not even when it comes to weeds.

(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!

Song of Benediction:

"I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" GTG #700

**I'm gonna live so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!**

**I'm gonna live so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!**

Postlude: "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" arr. Victor Labenske

Congregational Meeting Notice

The Session, after much prayer, deliberation and work, formally endorses the offer letter from the Childcare Center for the purchase of land from the church that was attached to the email sent out on 7/13/2026.

This means further work, of course, on specific details for the transaction itself, but what the congregation is being asked to do is act on the motion to approve the sale in general terms. The meeting will take place Sunday, August 23rd, immediately following the morning worship service in the Sanctuary.

To further facilitate the conversation, a forum is taking place Sunday, July 19th, immediately following the morning worship service for questions, answers and a presentation by the Childcare Center on their future plans. To make the meeting as useful as possible, please do submit materials and questions ahead of time you think should be considered. But bear in mind that there is no substitute for your in-person deliberation.

Further instructions for the meeting on the 23rd will follow, but the Session strongly encourages folks to attend and participate in the forum. What

questions or clarifying remains will be addressed on the 23rd.

Suffice it to say, this is a huge historical moment in the life of our church and that of the Center. It is a moment and decision worthy of our prayers and careful discernment.

Remember, the forum is next Sunday, July 19th, following the morning worship service. The congregational meeting is August 23rd, following the morning worship service. Pray well and we look forward to seeing you at both gatherings.