

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

September 7, 2025 • 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time • Communion

Jeremiah 18:1-11*"Rework the Clay"*

God can work with our brokenness. We should follow God's example.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If you don't have a particular item, fret not:

- a piece of white cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate with bread
- a cup with juice
- a glass or bowl of water
- a lighter/match
- a piece of modeling clay
- 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. Have enough elements for each person in your household.

Questions for the announcement loop*In preparing for Worship, consider the following:*

- What do you do if everything you thought you knew was wrong?
- Is God in a position to change the rules? Is God allowed to do so in your mind?
- What traditions you've grown up with have had to change?

(10am only) Introit*"As We Gather"* by Mike Fay and Tom Coomes**(10am only) Prelude:***"Better Is One Day"* arr. Victor Labenske**Opening Sentence****Jeremiah 18:5-6 (CEB)**

Then the LORD's word came to me "...Can't I deal with you like this potter...? Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in mine...!"

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 the Sanctuary.

Fired or Free?

One of the remarkable things about pottery is the process of creating it. You start out with a lump and water and a wheel and no guarantees. You begin with a vision and hope and no real way to predict the outcome, outside of years of experience. But as the pot takes shape and the potter does their thing, the possibility that the lump can be reworked remains until the pot is fired, that is, literally cooked into permanence. Until then the lump can be reshaped or even added to more clay in order to fulfill the dreams of the artisan. Is there room in your life for God to rework you? Is there room for God to take what didn't quite turn out right and cause it, cause you, to become more? As you move through the week, ask yourself, "Am I fire or free?" Are you still workable or should God give up on you? (hint: God's going to keep trying despite what you answer, so...)

Pumpkin Patch Is Coming!

Starting October 4th (less than a month away!) we will unload a literal truckload of pumpkins and other gourds. Once set up, we will be selling the lots in the hopes of not just raising funds but also raising awareness of our congregation. You can help! You can help unload. You can help run the sale by taking a shift or two (or five). You can post one of signs advertising the sale in your yard. Every small efforts adds up to a lot! You can sign up using the volunteer boards or contact Mandy Ealy for more information.

The Work of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee works at the behest of the congregation (and they're almost done!). They are seeking to empower and inform the right of the congregation in our system to elect its leadership. Elders Tammy Karnes, Sandy Muller and Carol Phillips are serving to provide us with a recommended slate of nominees. To aid them in their work, most principally, pray for them. Also, feel free to suggest names to them under these three conditions. First, ensure you have your suggested person's permission to submit their name. Second, make sure that they are, in fact, a member of the congregation. Third, and most important, prayerfully consider God's call on them to serve in this way.

The Story of Our Church Is Written in Our Connections

Whether we're talking about history or our ever-emerging present, God's goal has always been to connect us with God's Spirit and each other. A big way this happens is through our stories. *Linking Lives* is an

opportunity for folks to share their stories and in so doing help link us together with each other. Over the next 12 months, there will be opportunities for us to learn more about and, most importantly, *pray* for every family in our congregation. We will feature profiles and have times for personal prayer and chatting as well as bi-monthly opportunities for a podcast featuring faith stories (1st week of the

month) and/or burning faith questions or theology (3rd week of the month). Invitation letters have already started going out.

Thank you!

We are so grateful to everyone who helped bring Community Day to life! Thanks especially to Sean Cooper and the steering committee for putting together another successful event!



Letting It Go!

We carry so much. We are confronted with so much. We hold on to so much. Jesus' plain advice encourages us to let it all go because we can hold on to God instead. Rev. Emily Wilson will help facilitate our thoughts and encourage practical ways of taking on Jesus' way of living life at our churchwide retreat on September 27th, from 9am-3pm, at Caraway Conference Center. Youth and children will have a parallel retreat experience. The cost is \$28 per person or \$100 per family. The last day to sign up is Sept. 12. You can sign up online here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094FAEAD2AA2F49-57968303-letting> or call Sandy Muller. Lunch is included. Please leave dietary preferences, if any, in the comments or with Sandy.

We celebrate our September birthdays!

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!



(10am only) "Standing on the Promises" GTG #838

**Standing on the promises of Christ my King,
Through eternal ages let his praises ring;
Glory in the highest we will shout and sing,
Standing on the promises of God.**

**Standing, standing,
Standing on the promises of God my Savior;
Standing, standing,
I'm standing on the promises of God.**

God expects us to co-create.

In this moment, let us remain standing, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship. Let us be called to worship together...

(10am only) Call to Worship

Plans get made

The best materials are gathered

The best equipment is employed

Even passion and hope are poured in

But then things aren't quite right

Things don't go according to plan

So rather than just give up

God reworks the clay, God reworks us

Sing:

"Brethren, We Have Met to Worship" GTG #396

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

We can get ahead of ourselves presuming what God can or can't redeem, who God can really save or not. Only God can make that call. It's not good that we forget 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, everything we admire, everything we hope for, everything that we hold as ours, all their start with you. For all the ways we want people, situations, life itself to answer to us, help us never forget that we answer to you, always. Help us take better care of ourselves. Help us take better care each other. Help us take better care WITH each other, remembering that we were, all of us, given the gift of life by none other than you, O God. 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. And it is 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: When the temptation and tendency to overcomplicate God's will overtakes us, God's Word is given, accessible and ready. By God's Spirit, it can light up even the darkest recesses of our hearts and minds and show us something new. Let us be open to this gift of God and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "We've Come This Far by Faith" GTG #656

We've come this far by faith,

Leaning on the Lord,

Trusting in the holy Word;

God's never failed us yet.

O, can't turn around,

We've come this far by faith.

We've come this far by faith.

Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and our ongoing place in God's story...

Read: Jeremiah 18:1-11 (CEB)

The work of the Potter.

¹ Jeremiah received the LORD's word: ² Go down to the potter's house, and I'll give you instructions about what to do there. ³ So I went down to the potter's house; he was working on the potter's

wheel. ⁴ But the piece he was making was flawed while still in his hands, so the potter started on another, as seemed best to him. ⁵ Then the LORD's word came to me: ⁶ "House of Israel, can't I deal with you like this potter, declares the LORD? Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in mine, house of Israel! ⁷ At any time I may announce that I will dig up, pull down, and destroy a nation or kingdom; ⁸ but if that nation I warned turns from its evil, then I'll relent and not carry out the harm I intended for it. ⁹ At the same time, I may announce that I will build and plant a nation or kingdom; ¹⁰ but if that nation displeases and disobeys me, then I'll relent and not carry out the good I intended for it." ¹¹ Now say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem: This is what the LORD says: "I am a potter preparing a disaster for you; I'm working out a plan against you. So each one of you, turn from your evil ways; reform your ways and your actions."

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 broken object (like a plate or pot)
- Don't forget to wait for answers

"Tell the Truth"

- So this plate got broken. Let's not worry about WHO broke it for now. But what should I do about it?
- Should I put the pieces together and pretend like it's not broken?...
- Should I say someone broke it who didn't break it?...
- Should I just not say anything if someone asks me how it got broken?...
- The thing is, God wants us to tell the truth. When we tell the truth, the plate can get fixed or replaced. Maybe there will be trouble, but that is much less trouble than if we lie. When we lie, we don't break plates, we break people.
- So when you're around the people who care about you, ask them about times they had a hard time telling the truth.
- Don't forget to pray!

(10am only) Anthem:

"Better Is One Day" arr. Jay Rouse; Percussionist: Chason Alligood

Sermon: "Rework the Clay"

God can work with our brokenness. We should follow God's example.

What's the use!?!

One of the things about how crazy our world has become is the degree to which it can all feel inevitable, unavoidable.

"There's nothing we can do about greed..."

"Even Jesus said we'll always have poor people..."

"I can't fix everything..."

"The devil you know is better than..."

Y'all. God's antidote to greed is generosity. God's prescription for the poor is us being the blessings we're supposed to be. As it turns out, it's not our job to fix everything but to do what we can when we can as we can. And, seriously, don't you think it's better to just not keep devils as friends?

But as we struggle with the cruelties of this world, we can't help but wonder about our place in the grand scheme. We can't help but wonder if we CAN, in fact, avoid, upbraid, or otherwise mitigate the catastrophes, the losses, the obstacles.

One lie we're told early on is that amassing as much money as possible will definitely help. And why not think this? If I have enough money, I never have to worry about having car insurance, medical coverage, shelter or food, clothes, political access, security for my family. It's functionally a huge opiate of a promise because on one level everything I just mentioned is true. So away we go.

But how many friends have you bought over your lifetime? How many family members have you bought to round out your family tree? How much money do you need to have people in your life that will tell you the truth? How much will buy love, real love? Forgiveness? Gratitude? Kindness? Sometimes you can get approximations of those things until the money runs out.

I don't mean to be down on money. It is an unmistakably important aspect of our lives. We as leadership affirm that God replaced our roofs over the Education Building and Fellowship Hall. But God used insurance money to do it. I can affirm that God helped find our house and it is indeed a blessing beyond words. But the bank holding our mortgage wants more than prayers. Though the local schools are keen to serve our homeless children who make up a larger portion of the population than you may realize, they can feed them imaginary food. They have to use food that's bought in some fashion, even if it's given to them.

But there are some things built into us as human being that beyond price, beyond economic quantification. And Israel was struggling with the concept. In their efforts to be and sustain being a great nation, they looked to their wealth to protect them rather than the God that brought them to the Promised Land in the first place. They started seeing orphans and widows as dead weight on the community and made no bones about cheating at their scales. (For those of you may not know, when conducting a transaction, once the price was set you then literally weighed the expected currency; a lot of merchants were apparently cheating and using scales that landed them more money than they should have been getting. It *looked* legitimate because, I mean, we used a scale. But it wasn't. The defective scale was a lie and therefore the collective wealth of the nation was a lie, materially.) The prophets complained on a regular basis about those three things: how widows were treated, how orphans were regarded, and the economic cheating. God saw it all as a recipe for disaster, for the downfall of the nation. They warned of an ominous result: the Exile.

So by the time Jeremiah came on the scene (as a kid, I might add), he was not nearly the first or even original. At least in the sense that he was warning about the behaviors of the nation. And he faced *fierce* opposition. It wasn't polite, formal disagreements. The establishment religious leadership, the political rulers, the average person on the street not only told him to shut up over the years, they threw him in garbage, threatened his life, basically accused him of antisemitism and

acting against the interest of the nation. It was a mess. And Jeremiah wasn't oblivious to the objections or how it was affecting him:

*LORD, you enticed me, and I was taken in.
You were too strong for me, and you prevailed.
Now I'm laughed at all the time;
everyone mocks me.
Every time I open my mouth, I cry out
and say, "Violence and destruction!"
The LORD's word has brought me
nothing but insult and injury, constantly.
I thought, I'll forget him;
I'll no longer speak in his name.
But there's an intense fire in my heart,
trapped in my bones.
I'm drained trying to contain it...*
(Jeremiah 20:7-9)

What makes Jeremiah heroic was something he shares with every hero we can think of: that sense of willingness despite the personal cost.

Who does that sound like?

And so preach he did. In so doing, Jeremiah has the dubious distinction of being the prophet who warned of the Exile and it happened in his lifetime.

To understand what powerful shift the people were experiencing, imagine that we're sitting here, thinking everything's fine (I mean, not *fine*, but good as you can expect). Suddenly we're invaded by some occupying power. And not only are invaded, but we are rounded up and sent to other countries to live and work. New languages to engage. New customs. New geography. And you're coming into these places with nothing. Certainly not any money. What do you do?

Well...understandably, a lot of people blamed Jeremiah for their lot. I mean, would YOU have the patience for an "I told you so" sermon from some random preacher?

But then Jeremiah does something that none of his predecessors had. The fundamental understanding of LIFE was that they were the chosen people so long as they were in the Promised Land. Well, they weren't there anymore. How were they to

understand themselves? What are they supposed to do now?

Then God directs Jeremiah to observe the potter.

It may not seem like much. The potter was working, the pot didn't work out, so he started over. Big deal. But the implications for the life of the nation were history-making. Jeremiah's fundamental question to them (and frankly, to us) was simple: Where do you think God would rather live? In the hills of Gishon, Mount Horeb, the Jordan River, the Temple? Where would God like the Ark of the Covenant, the chest containing the 10 Commandments, to reside? In somebody's house? On top of a pillar? Maybe displayed at the local museum? Jeremiah's answer was both new and ancient. God wants to live in us. God would rather the 10 Commandments live in us! Therefore they didn't have to be in the Promised Land to be God's people. They just needed to be God's people.

The example of the Potter was God's way of saying that God hadn't given up on the *real* project. Because the real project wasn't the wealth of the nation. It wasn't the political or military power of the nation. One of the things Jesus ran into was a profound misunderstanding of what he had come to do. I think missing this lesson from Jeremiah was a huge reason why.

And I think missing Jeremiah's lesson trips us up now. One of the turns in interpretation I like to have fun with is the call of Moses. When Moses encounters the burning bush, God famously tells him to remove his shoes. Why? Because the ground on which he stands is holy ground. But what makes the ground holy? Was it a special tree? Did the sand there have healing powers? Were the rocks like magic? No, it was holy because Moses was there with God.

Y'all the liberation that Jeremiah preaches is that the Promised Land can be where ever God's people reside. And why not? Is God's grace more effective on the streets of Jerusalem as opposed to Mebane. I promise you, hard-won forgiveness is miraculous no matter *where* it happens. A child learning to have hope is priceless no matter where that happens. The blessings of God are good for

all seasons, all circumstances, all needs, all dreams. Y'all, WE are a part of the blessings of God. The lesson of the Potter and of Jeremiah means our sins, our violence, our waywardness, our cynicism, simply cannot have the last word: That's God's prerogative. And because God can work with our brokenness. We should follow God's example. Not only should we reevaluate how we deal with each other, we need to reconsider how we deal with ourselves. The grace of God means that we are clay not yet fired. Thank you, Jeremiah. Thank you, God.

Song of Reflection

"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" GTG# 353

Blanket Dedication

The Busy Bees and the Scouts of been putting together blankets to be given. Today we recognize their efforts and we bless as a congregation the blankets.

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

"Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling" arr. Robert D. Vandall

(10am only) Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below.**

Alleluia, Alleluia!

**Praise God above ye heavenly hosts;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.**

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Blessing

(text online only)

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.

Service of Communion

- Say: Let us first show we belong to a faith larger than ourselves. Let us say what we believe:

I believe in God's hopes–

That God created us for a reason,

That God chose people for a reason

That God fought for us for a reason

That God fought against us for a reason

That God called us out on our sins for a reason

That God made us partners with God for the building of the kingdom

That God created us for a purpose:

**We are clay that can be remade, reshaped
prophets, priests, teachers, students,
companions, travelers, historians, parents,
grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings and most
importantly children**

all tilling the earth

Now by God's grace,

God's love really does

change everything

and makes us people of God

because of Jesus Christ

Who was, who is, and is to come.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

- Say: The Lord be with you...and also with you. God invites us to the Table as we are, given who we are! God invites us to the Table even though we may think we don't belong. Yet God invites us, does NOT force us, because God still loves us. So let us answer together as one Church across time, across our homes, across our various situations, and eat and drink of what the Lord offers. Let us pray...

- *"I Love You, Lord" CEL #78*

I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice,

To worship you, O my soul, rejoice!

Take joy, my King, in what you hear:

May it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear.

- Creator God, We were made with the best of the best. You fashioned everything we appreciate about ourselves and each other. We've been given the best of the best. We have more than we can need and use: more space, more air, more sustenance, more love, than we could consume in a lifetime. Now, O Lord, help us live the best of the best life. Simply, help us live the way you wish.

- And please help us remember how we started. Help us remember well what you did. Knowing that you used the best of the best to make us and gave us your own Spirit to empower us, it makes sense that you would not give up on us. But as we celebrate your grace, let remember well the example of the Potter. Let us remember that we must make room for you to be God and for you to refashion us as you wish. Help us be open to the transformation you wish to make in us that the world around us might change as a result..
- 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, cravenness, 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.**
- (take the bread in your hands) On the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread and having blessed it he broke it, gave it to his disciples and said, "This is my Body given for you. As often as you eat of it, do this in remembrance of me." (break and eat some of the bread)
- (take the cup with juice in your hands) In the same manner he took the cup, and, having blessed it, he gave it to his disciples and said, "This cup represents the new covenant sealed by my blood for the forgiveness of many. All of you drink of it." (drink some of the juice)
- Say: As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim the Lord's saving death until He comes. These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

- The only proper response to the grace of God is gratitude. Let us pray together with the whole Church:
- **Pray: Thank you, God, for making us your kingdom. Help us live out that thanks by being a refuge to all you call us to. Thank you for including us at your Table. Help us do the same with ours. In the great name of Jesus Christ we pray this together. Amen.**

Hymn of Sending

(10am) "You Are My All in All" GTG#583

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

God can work with our brokenness. We should follow God's example.

(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!

Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Sing: *"May the God Hope Go with Us"* GTG #765

**May the God of hope go with us everyday,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing light and hope to every land and race.**

**Praying, let us work for peace;
Singing, share our joy with all;
Working, for a world that's new,
Faithful, when we hear Christ's call
I'm gonna live with the joy down in my heart!
(2X)**

(10am only) Postlude

"In Christ Alone (My Hope Is Found)" arr. Carol Tornquist
