

Sunday September 8, 2019 - 10:00 a.m.

*Please stand if you are able

Prelude

Welcome

We Gather Around God's Word

Bells and Chimes Call To Worship:

Introit: "Change My Heart, O God"

***Call to Worship:** 🕊️

L: To take the clay of our lives, and shape disciples:

P: God calls us to the Potter's House

L: To receive and mend those who are broken from life experiences:

P: God calls us to the Potter's House

L: To love and heal those who are wounded from war:

P: God calls us to the Potter's House

L: To shelter all who are outcast and heavily burdened:

P: God calls us to the Potter's House

L: Let us enter this place of transformation:

P: And worship our God!

Prayer of Invocation: 🙏

L: Oh Great Potter, allow us to enter into your house to worship you.

All: We have come to lay the clay of our lives on your wheel so that we might be shaped and fashioned into vessels for your Spirit who

will mend those who suffer,

heal the sick,

and offer the outcast loving shelter.

Create in us the spirit to serve those

who are broken from laboring in life and war.

Bless us with a new attitude to serve you and your people. Amen

***Hymn: #59: "Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling"**

Passing God's Peace

*In the spirit of peace and the hope of unity,
let us offer each other a sign of Christ's peace!*

We Engage God's Word

Jeremiah 18:1-11 (NIV)

At the Potter's House

18 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." ³ So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me. ⁶ He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. ⁷ If at any time I

announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, 8 and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. 9 And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, 10 and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

11 “Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the Lord says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.’

Philemon 1-21(NIV)

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker— 2 also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home:

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

4 I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, 5 because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. 6 I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. 7 Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord’s people.

Paul’s Plea for Onesimus

8 Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, 9 yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus— 10 that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. 11 Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. 12 I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. 13 I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. 14 But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. 15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— 16 no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. 20 I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

Youth Moment

A Time of Reflection: On the Basis of Love

Command and Love

When I was in high school and college mom gave me pretty free rein of the use of the car but commanded that I not drink and drive. Often times my friends would encourage me to drink but I would tell them that wasn’t allowed if I wanted to use the car. They would then tell me my mom wouldn’t know. I would respond to them that I would know. You see Mom gave that command for protection of self and others. She had the authority to deny use of the car if I broke that command but desired compliance based on love. And to be honest I respected my mother and loved her and that is what guided my decision to follow her command even when experiencing peer pressure.

Paul Appeals to Philemon:

even though he can command it
he pleads the community to restore Onesimus to his household on Basis of love
to be true to who he was as a follower of Jesus

Not just as slave but as a brother

Offers to repay debt

Gives reference of transformation in Onesimus

Onesimus: evidence of wrong doing or laziness as referred to as worthless

not sure if sent away or ran away but clearly there was a problem

Slavery as bad as it was, was often times a matter of life and death

Provided bare minimum means of survival at the cost of hard labor

and great economic disparity.

While serving Paul in prison proved to be very valuable

Paul brought Philemon to faith in Christ

Now challenges Philemon to do the right thing based on that faith.

This Letter to Philemon challenges us today to be true to who we are
as followers of Christ.

What systems would fall if we embraced our faith

more fully that we already do?

Slavery still alive and well today:

in sweatshops, human trafficking, farm fields

Great economic disparity both within this country and beyond

What abuse of creation and animals happens at the expense

of supporting our lifestyles for the least cost?

Philip Gourevitch, 21st century

"Denouncing evil is a far cry from doing good."

(http://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_september_4_2016)

Unknown

"What should move us to action is human dignity: the inalienable dignity of the oppressed, but also the dignity of each of us. We lose dignity if we tolerate the intolerable."

(http://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_september_4_2016)

Edith (Edie) Rasell, Ph.D., shares these thoughts:

"Just like Philemon, each of us today is immersed in our culture's values and common practices. Many of these values and practices are consistent with our faith but others are not. Are there aspects of our lives--things we do and think--that with deeper reflection we would see as inconsistent with our call to be people of the Way? Do we live with too little deliberation, prayer, and discernment about our daily activities?"

(http://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_september_4_2016)

She goes on to help us see how we inadvertently participate in these injustices and challenges us to look at life through the eyes of faith as Paul challenged Philemon.

"..., let us examine our economy and our workplaces through the lens of our faith. We know that God's will is for each of us to live a life of wholeness. God's abundance is to be shared so all people live in the fullness of life. This means workers must be paid a living wage and be treated with dignity. All workers. No exceptions.

But in our economy and in our culture, some workers are much more valuable than others and some have very little value. We fail to look at each person and see a child of God endowed with infinite value. Instead we see the dropout, the formerly incarcerated person, the immigrant, the one who

didn't go to college, the person with a disability, the older and slowing-down person, the one who doesn't speak like me, or look like me, or act like me.

But the abuse and exploitation of these "others" impacts all of us, whether we choose to see it or not. Like many of us, I got up this morning, got dressed, ate an orange, and had a cup of coffee. During the first 30 minutes of my day I was not thinking about all the people in the United States and around the world whose efforts allowed me to blindly follow my typical morning pattern. I am largely unaware of my dependence on the people who:

- *made the clothes I put on (probably produced under sweatshop conditions),*
- *picked my orange (farm workers are among the most abused workers in the U.S.) and*
- *grew my coffee beans (were these fair-trade beans, grown by small farmers who are paid a fair price within a fair trade system that is supportive of their efforts to remain outside the exploitative web of multinational corporations?)."*

http://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_september_4_2016

Christopher Grundy, a UCC pastor and musician has a song called Clean White Paper that brings to light these injustices not only to people but to all of creation and how we'd rather not see them. He speaks of not wanting to see the child labor it took to make his shirt or hear of corporations seeking the lowest wage while the children are starving just so we don't have so much to pay. The Chorus speaks of just wanting the receipt with a smile and a thank you here's your change so we don't have to face how we are a part of the injustices that we so adamantly denounce. and then go to church on Sunday wearing the very items that are a part of the injustices we denounce and ask God's forgiveness.

May the challenge Paul gave to Philemon to be true to himself as a follower of Christ be the challenge we embrace this day. May we be guided by God's love and not by what is legal. Just because something is legal doesn't always make it right. May these scriptures and examples convict us in where we are living true to the Gospel to remain steadfast. May they also convict us to where we are straying from the Gospel and cause us to change our ways. In the Gospel of John Jesus says: "A new command I give **you**: Love one another. **As I have loved you**, so **you** must love one another. John 13:34 and "**As** the Father has **loved** me, so **have I loved you**. Now remain in my love. John 15:9 We have been challenged today, may we embrace the challenge set before us.

*Spirit of God, who dwells within our hearts,
teach us to feel and lean on your presence
for you are always nigh to those who call on you.
Wean us from sin and stoop to our weakness
so that you might help us to love
you, others and all of creation as we ought to love.
Amen.*

Special Music: by – Ernie Schmitt

We Respond to God's Word

Sharing Joys, Concerns, and Prayers for the World

We Are Sent Into the World

The Lord's Prayer – Sung

Church News

*Sending Hymn: #14 “How Can I Say Thanks”

Call to Offering: 🙏

As we leave this sanctuary, let us get excited and cheerfully share our gifts, tithes, and free will offerings, for God has blessed us. Offerings may be left in the offering Plates as you leave the sanctuary and sent into the world to be the servants of God, one another, and all of creation.

Prayer of Dedication: 🙏 (In Unison)

Gracious God we thank you for the opportunity to give our time, talent, and treasure for the building of your Kingdom on earth.

Bless every gift, tithe, and offering that's deposited into your Kingdom today; that they may be used to build your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven; we offer this prayer in your mighty name. Amen

Charge and Benediction

*Response:

GO NOW IN PEACE

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indicates these prayers have been taken from or adapted from a service written by LT Leticia Rouser, a chaplain in the United States Navy.

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