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**Sunday, 4th September 2022**

**Proper 18 | Ordinary 23**

**The Rev’d Jonnie Hill**

**Call to Worship**

The eternal God,

who is beyond us, yet within us

calls us, and the whole of creation

into the divine dance

of mutual delight and self-giving love,

now, and in each moment of every day.

So, may we delight now in our worship of the living God. Amen.

**Prayer of Approach**

Creator God,

at the very beginning,

you formed humankind from the clay of the earth

and breathed your life into our inmost parts.

In Jesus,

you revealed your truest likeness

loving, healing and forgiving

– showing us all we can be when we put love first.

Your Spirit,

like a potter at the wheel,

continues your artistic work today,

shaping and moulding our clay-like form

prompting and drawing us

ever more toward love and beauty, justice and peace.

As we gather,

may we centre ourselves in you,

may we be drawn into the great mystery and wonder

of your Holy Trinity,

may we be refreshed and renewed

as we encounter divine presence here in our midst. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession**

Holy One,

fearfully and wonderfully made as we are,

we struggle to live from the truth

of our infinite worth in your sight.

*Short silence*

We have failed in the cause of self-giving love,

valuing our own comfort and security

above that of the common good.

*Short silence*

We have ravaged our beautiful earth,

trading the integrity of creation

for material goods and wealth.

*Short silence*

We have judged harshly,

excluding those who do not fit

our predetermined and partial expectations.

Forgive us.

*Short silence*

God of grace and new beginnings,

heal us,

make us whole,

free us to live ever more in the likeness of Christ

we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Friends,

let us proclaim good news to one another.

In Christ we are forgiven,

thanks be to God.

Amen.

**Prayer of Illumination**

Spirit of God,

present now in each of us,

bring forth truth

from ancient words spoken and heard,

as we seek to follow in the way of Christ

the eternal living Word. Amen.

**Readings**

*Jeremiah 18:1-11* | *Psalm – 139:1-6, 13-18*

**Sermon Notes**

*Jeremiah 18:1-11*

God chooses to speak to Jeremiah through what would have been a very every day sight – seeing a potter at work. Are we open to encountering God in our everyday lives, and if so, how can we cultivate a spirituality that enables us to encounter God in the ordinary?

The potter needs to rework and remould the clay, and this speaks of the 'House of Israel's' need to be renewed. How might this speak into the lives of our church communities? Are we open to the Spirit leading us to work out our faith in new or different ways? How can a church community make sure it is open to God' remoulding?

The second half of the passage (verse 6 - 11) offers a disturbing insight into how those in Jeremiah's time made sense of what was happening around them believing that God used war and oppression to teach people a lesson (the lesson being that they should choose good). But, in the gospel stories of Jesus we are confronted with a God who is willing to suffer for love, rather than to cause suffering. What messages about God' love and judgement have we been told? Do we live in fear of God, or do we live in the fullness of God? This might not be a straightforward sermon, and may require a good commentary.

*Psalm 139: 1 - 6, 13 - 18*

This Psalm offers us the opportunity to remind people that they are created by God and loved by God. How could working through each line of this Psalm be used to comfort and nurture the faith of those listening? Maybe the sermon could be offered as a guided meditation or Lectio Divina?

Psalms such as this can offer great comfort to people of faith. However, there is a lot of suffering and hardship in our world right now. This Psalm could easily be used as a platitude, rather than offering actual hope. How could we make sense of this Psalm so it offers something to those who are suffering and may feel disconnected from God? Verses 18 and 19 may provide a way forward with this sermon.

Verse 14 is a well-known verse which speaks of the nature of humanity – that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. How could this theological truth be preached in order to help those who feel bad about themselves see the reality of who they are in God? The Psalm does not say that only people of faith are 'fearfully and wonderfully made' but 'all' God's works. How can we remind others that they are wonderful works of God, and treat them as such?

**Affirmation of Faith**

We are not alone, we live in God’s world.

 We believe in God:
  who has created and is creating,
    who has come in Jesus,
        the Word made flesh,
        to reconcile and make new,
    who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
  to celebrate God’s presence,
     to live with respect in Creation,
  to love and serve others,
     to seek justice and resist evil,
    to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.
We are not alone. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*‘A new Creed’ from the United Church of Canada*

**Offertory Prayer**

Just as we are called to love, because God loved us first, so too are we called to give,

because God has given first.

Generous God, as we acknowledge that all we have is from you,

accept our gifts of money, and the gift of our lives,

so that we might be instruments of love, justice and peace

– kingdom builders in Christ’s name,

and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession**

Loving God,

your triune nature is relationship,

and you have created us for loving relationship

with you and with one another.

Help us always to see your image reflected in every human face,

that as we seek the good of our neighbour,

we also express our love for you.

*Short silence*

There is much happening in our world that concerns us

and which we bring to you in prayer:

*Short silence*

the armed conflict in places like Ukraine and Yemen

displaced people who have already lost everything

*Short silence*

the cost-of-living crisis raising food prices

impacting those across our world who can least afford it

*Short silence*

rising fuel prices

with the threat of a very cold winter for some

*Short silence*

God, not only do we cry out

for justice and fairness,

equity and enough for all people

– we pray also that you would show us,

how we might be agents

for the kind of change our world needs.

Grant us boldness and courage,

as we seek to live out the call of the Gospel,

and follow in the way of Jesus,

our guide and our goal. Amen.

**Blessing**

May the God who is faithful uplift you this day

May the God who assures freedom accompany you on the way

May the God who above all else seeks love enfold you always.

And the blessing of God,

Creator, Christ and Spirit

be with you and all whom you love,

this day and always. Amen.

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| **Hymn** | **RS** | **StF** | **CH4** | **MP** |
| Faithful One, So Unchanging |  | 628 |  |  |
| O God, You Search Me and You Know Me |  | 728 | 97 |  |
| O God Our Help in Ages Past | 705 | 132 | 161 | 498 |
| O Lord All the World Belongs To You | 90 |  |  |  |
| Lord, You Have Searched and Known My Ways | 70 |  |  |  |
| Have You Heard God’s Voice, Has Your Heart Been Stirred? |  | 662 |  |  |
| O Jesus, I Have Promised | 509 | 563 | 644 | 501 |
| Sometimes A Light Surprises  | 595 |  |  |  |
| *Key:* *RS = Rejoice and Sing, StF = Singing the Faith, CH4 = Church Hymnary 4, MP = Mission Praise* |