

## Who are YOU? (Molded By God).

### **Jeremiah 18:1-11. Psalm Psalm 139: 1-4,13-15**

Part One: (Young and Young At Heart) – invite kids forward

If I asked you the question – “who are you” – how would you answer?

(wait for responses)

What if we asked someone a little older – who would like to ask someone the question?

(a child chooses an adult in congregation and asks the question, and wait for response)

SO:

- you might say your name;
- you might say what you do – if you’re a student, if you work or if you’re retired;
- you might say something about your family - if you are a brother or sister, or husband or wife;
- you might even say where you live.

These are all things that tell others something about us.

It’s like telling our story.

I wonder if any of us would also answer:

“I am a person of Faith; I am a believer in God; and I follow the way of Jesus Christ?”

Because our faith is part of who we are – and often, it is a very big part!

But what if I asked the question “Who are We ... as a church?” I wonder what answers we would have then?

What makes us a church?

(listen to answers from children and congregation)

You see being a church is so much more than just being a beautiful building. It is not about being stones made from bricks and mortar, instead, it is about being “living stones”.

When Peter was writing to the early Christians, he wrote a letter telling them:

*“Allow yourselves to be living stones, for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with Life.”* (1 Peter 2:5)

I wonder how we, here at Huron Shores, are allowing ourselves to be 'living stones'?

I think it is through all the ways that we serve God – all the ways that make this community of faith 'vibrant with life.'

Let's look at some of those ways.

I'm going to ask the children to read out some things that make us 'who we are' as a community of faith here. If they read something that fits you – please stand up.

(ask children) – do you think we might get everyone standing by the end?

(ask children/ someone to read the following statements)

### **(Questions)**

You see – everybody is standing!

I believe that all these things that we have mentioned, and probably some that I have forgotten – are all the different ways that make us "Who We Are" as a church. And for this, we give thanks.

Let us stay standing, as we remind ourselves that we are all blessed with the Peace of Christ:

May the Peace of Christ be with you (And also with you) – please greet your neighbours with the Peace of Christ.

- 1. Please stand up if you have ever been part of one of our small groups like Meditation, Bible Study, or Ukelele?**
- 2. Please stand up if you have ever attended or helped at a youth event as a leader or a student.**
- 3. Please stand up if you have ever painted something, worked on any plumbing or electrical things, or just fixed things at church.**
- 4. Please stand if you have ever watered or maintained the garden.**
- 5. Please stand up if you have ever sung in the choir for worship or special services.**
- 6. Please stand up if you have ever baked something for an event at our church.**
- 7. Please stand up if you have ever run the AV system at our church, or been a greeter at the door.**
- 8. Please stand up if you have ever read scripture or prayers during worship.**
- 9. Please stand up if you have ever brought a friend to worship.**
- 10. Please stand up if you have ever contributed to the Food bank.**
- 11. Please stand up if you have ever visited someone when they needed comfort or help.**
- 12. Please stand up if you have ever participated in a Free Store?**
- 13. Please stand up if you have ever attended an outreach event at Grand Bend Place?**
- 14. Please stand up if you enjoy the vibrant Spirit that is alive in this church.**

## **Part Two:**

Have you ever seen a potter work with a potter's wheel?

They make it look so easy!

When I was a little girl, I remember that I had a battery-operated potter's wheel. I had seen some potters at an art and craft show, and I thought that I could make wonderful pots just like them, and perhaps give them away as Christmas presents. So, I had asked for one as a birthday present. I was so excited when I got it. I set it up in the garage. I put on one of my dad's big shirts to cover my clothes, and I began to be a potter.

Well, you can imagine what happened!

The clay began to slip and slide all over the place. It was hard to keep it in the centre of the wheel. And then, if I went too fast, the clay began to fly off and all around the place, splattering the walls of the garage. I think I only used that wheel 3 or 4 times before I gave up.

And I didn't really try working with clay again until I was an adult, when I briefly attended a pottery class – I carefully shaped the clay with my fingers, and I even worked again on the potter's wheel.

And this is what I made! (show pots)

The image of the potter and the clay is an interesting image that Jeremiah uses when prophesizing to the tribe of Judah.

Jeremiah is speaking at a time when the people had turned away from God.

They were living under Babylonian rule. They were worshipping false idols.

Greed, power, and lies ruled the day.

In the first 35 chapters of Jeremiah the word 'sin' is repeated again and again. It is a time of doom and gloom. And Jeremiah is often referred to as the "weeping prophet", because he couldn't get the people to listen!

It is not that difficult to see similarities to the problems of our present day.

At this point of our scripture reading, Jeremiah is sharing the lessons that he learned from God, when he visited the potter's workshop.

Scholars believe that Jeremiah had spent time with the potters at Potsherd Gate in the valley of Ben Hinnom. It was an area where many potters would work on their craft, and archaeological digs have revealed what they believe to be a dump full of broken pottery.

But it is important to know that the Hebrew word for Potter is *yat-sar*, which means 'to form', as in the divine activity of creating.

At the beginning of Genesis:

*"God formed humans from the dust of the ground"* (Genesis 2:7)

So, when Jeremiah is talking about the Potter molding the clay – he is referring to God creating.

And it isn't difficult to recognize that the 'clay' is referring to the people of Judah.

In verse 4 we hear that:

*"the pot that the potter was shaping was marred"*(v4a), which in Hebrew means 'ruined'.

And the implication is that the fault was with the clay, not with the potter!

We know that the people of Judah had chosen to live their lives in ways that could be described as 'marred.'

Perhaps that can be said to be true about the way many choose to live their lives today too.

But in the middle of all this doom and gloom Jeremiah preaches hope.

He reminds them that the potter can:

*"form the clay into another pot, shaping it as seems best to him."* (v4b)

He reminds them that God can turn their lives around!

That they are in God's hand.

Verse 6 tells us:

*"Like the clay in the hand of the potter, so you are in my hand."* (v6b)

We are in God's hands too.

Psalms 139 offers us the welcome assurance that God is with us and knows us beyond our comprehension.

God knows 'who we are.'

It reminds us that each of us are wonderfully formed by God:

*"intricately woven in the mystery of clay."*

We might feel that sometimes we are not the best pots.

Perhaps the choices that we make in life are not the best.

Perhaps we are sometimes too greedy?

Perhaps we are sometimes too self-absorbed?

Perhaps sometimes we don't speak nicely about others, maybe we even gossip and spread rumors.

And if we honestly describe "who are we?", we might say that we are 'marred'.

We might wish that sometimes we thought and acted differently.

But the good news is that God can remold us. God can form us.

In our time of young and young at heart, we heard how the gifts and service of the people of Huron Shores forms us as a community of faith.

The scripture today, reminds us how we are each formed by God, like a potter forming something from clay.

I wonder what it would look like if we each made something out of clay, or playdough, that says something about us?

Something that answers the question: 'Who Are You?'

You picked up some playdough as you came in.

As Gavin and Blair share with us the song' "Change My Heart O God." – I invite you each to create something out of the 'clay'.

Something that says 'Who Are You?' – how has God shaped you?

Perhaps we might shape:

a smile,

or a helping hand,

or a loving heart,

or a hockey stick,

or a golf club,

or a cake,

or a musical note,

- the possibilities are endless.

Or perhaps you might choose to form something that reminds you of how you are willing to open to allow God to shape you.

Remember, God promises that:

*"we can be formed into something that seems best to God"* (v4b).

If you are at home on zoom, maybe grab a piece a paper and draw an image of how you are formed, or wish to be shaped.

We will sing the song 3 or 4 times through. (sing song)

When we allow God to be the potter of our lives, when we allow ourselves to be molded and shaped, then amazing things can and do happen.

I invite you to now come forward and place your creations on the table, as Gavin plays *'I surrender all!'*- (Gavin plays)

What wonderful images! Let us continue to remember that God can be the potter of our lives. Amen.

**(VU 400) Lord, listen to your children praying, Lord, send your Spirit in this place;  
Lord, listen to your children praying, Send us power, send us love, send us grace! (repeated)**

Divine Potter, we marvel at how you created and molded your world, but we also know that we have made cracks and marred your creation. We pray for places around the world where greed and power have caused violence and bloodshed. We pray for places around the world that suffer from floods, fires, draughts, and other ecological disasters caused by our careless stewardship of the world. And we pray for all human life that is treated with prejudice due to skin colour, sexual orientation, religion, age, or ability – remind us daily that you created us all equally.

*Divine Potter, may we be molded into who you intend us to be. VU400*

Jesus, gentle healer. When we feel broken and marred, your love can make us feel whole again. I invite you now to name aloud, or type in the chat box, anyone who is grieving, is sick, or who is struggling in anyway and needs prayer. (*Barbara Ciseski grieving her sister. .... family of Peter McBoyle as he moves into hospice ..for all students returning to school*) Surround all those we have named aloud and in our hearts with the healing power of your love, and help us to always reach out with compassion.

*Divine Potter, may we be molded into who you intend us to be. VU400*

Eternal Spirit, we give thanks for how you have molded this vibrant community of faith at Huron Shores, forming us into 'living stones'. We pray that you continue to unite us as we return to our gathering space, as we prepare for our Season of Creation, and as we start up new programs. And in our personal journeys of faith, may we each allow ourselves to be shaped and formed by your spirit, and may we always be reassured that your hand is on us.

*Divine Potter, may we be molded into who you intend us to be. VU400*

We pray in the name of the Holy One, Holy Three, Holy Divine. Amen.