

“The Church - Life Together, Common Meal, and Prayers”

Jeremiah 18:1-8, Psalm 139:1-6, Acts 2:41-47

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It is about “New Beginnings”. There are so many words to describe the foundation of Christianity or cores in our Christian faith: Love, grace, faith and hope. But if you look at those values closely, God wants us to start over as a new creation. God said to the prophet Isaiah, “Behold, I am doing a new thing. I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Apostle Paul reminds us in second Corinthians, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” God has promised a new beginning and a new covenant with us through Jesus Christ in the New Testament era. When I was young, the creation story in the book of Genesis didn’t make sense to me. How could God create the world within six days? I tried to understand God’s mystery through the lens of science, but I was wrong. Now I see not only did He create this world, but he also continues to make new things in us. When we wake up in the morning and open our two eyes and we are able to get up, that’s another of God’s new creations! The Spirit of Genesis enables us to make a fresh start. We are a new creation of God’s continuing work. We are just grateful for God’s gracious favor, new beginnings for us!

I feel God’s changes everyday around us. The weather is changing. Summer is slowly going away, and fall is coming. Yesterday, when I drove to Roseville, I saw fallen leaves and it reminded me that God continues to make new beginnings. We have just commissioned our Sunday School teachers and the Chancel Choir. I want to thank them for their commitment. We presented Bibles to our third and fourth graders. I pray that God will make a new beginning for their spiritual journey. It was a powerful testimony to me when one of our members whose own child has received the Bible today, showed me her cherished Bible which she received it as a third grader. We planned this special service today to welcome all our church family back from to the new church season. It is a celebration of new beginnings! As we just celebrated Michele Louise Samcoff’s new birth with baptism, we are so excited for a new journey with Michele and her parents. God wants to continue to work in us and make new things happen in our lives. My own family has also good news to share with you. Youngjae, Jacob and I expect to meet our new baby early next year in March. Our due date is March 12. **Celebration time!**

Getting back to our Scripture, God has many different names and images in the Old Testament. Abraham called God as El Shaddai (God Almighty), Moses called God as Yahweh (Divine Warrior), and others called God Elohim or Adonai, Divinity and “Master” or “Lord”, but all names meant the same One God. Our first Scripture reading, the book of Jeremiah described God as the potter. What does a potter do with clay? Think of the metaphor. The potter molds and makes a new pot just as God reshapes us through his mercy and grace. God wanted to show Jeremiah that when the potter was working and his creation turned out badly, the potter would simply **start over** and use the same clay to make another pot. God’s message was to remind the Israelites that God would make a new beginning with them if they turn around and come back to God. I like the song, “Change My Heart oh God” as a personal response to repentance prayer and a wish that God creates a new beginning in me. Listen to the song:

“Change my heart oh God, Make it ever true.
Change my heart oh God, May I be like You.

You are the potter, I am the clay,
Mold me and make me, This is what I pray.”

Changing is not easy. In order to find new beginnings, you must be bold. In our second Scripture reading, David confessed to God saying, “O LORD, you have searched me and known me; you discern my thoughts from far away. It was you who formed my inward parts.” This is a most humble confession to God. David, the writer of this Psalm revealed his personal struggles and challenges to God. He wasn’t sure of his future, he prayed at his most vulnerable moment, and he admitted that God knew the right choice for him. So he took a moment to pray and remember God who created us and gave us gifts. His confession is simple; **“I am yours, O God.”**

The church is a special community or family that is called to do God’s creation work. The early Christian people were gathered as a community doing three things together as a token of body of Christ: Baptism, Bible study and the life sharing which includes sharing a common meal and praying for one another. This morning service is a great example of what the early Christian fellows did in their Christian faith. Our Sunday worship is not a time to keep the routine of our spiritual habit nor religious practice, but it is a great time for celebration. God wants to continue to work of creation in us and through our Fair Oaks United Methodist church. Amen.