

The Tie that Binds: Formation  
World Communion Sunday  
Stretched by Communion with You or Grimy Grace  
Isaiah 64:8-9; Jeremiah 18:1-4; and John 9:5  
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October 3, 2021

*That this how it is when we praise you. We join the angels in praise, and we keep our feet in time and place...awed to heaven, rooted in earth.*

*We are daily stretched between communion  
with you and our bodied lives, spent but alive, summoned and  
cherished but stretched between.  
From Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth by Walter Brueggemann*

God goes by many names and no names---I who I am. This Sunday, the first in our series The Tie that Binds, we are focused on how we are formed and reformed by God out of the earth and healed by Jesus with spit and mud. God and later Jesus works with elemental things to create and transform us.

First, we learn that Adam, 'mudperson' in Hebrew, was created out of mud and brought to life by God's own breath. And depending upon which Genesis story you go with, so was Eve his companion. From dust we were made and to dust we will return. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann calls this being "awed by heaven, rooted in earth." Finally, 14<sup>th</sup> century mystic Julian of Norwich says, "We are not just made by God, we are made of God." I invite you to contemplate or rest with this awareness that we are both and.

In our Isaiah reading we are reminded that God is our father or parent and we are clay. When God is mad at us, we use this to remind God that they made us. I think I have used this same logic with my parents when I used to say, "But you made me this way."

This bond of connection of deep love has been used or misused to often mean that literally we were created in the womb and thus we are killing one of God's children if we must end or abort this fetus. The emphasis here is more on the fetus in the womb than on what does it mean for us to be made by God's hand.

Yesterday I attended the Women's March in Rochester in my clerical collar. I volunteered to be a peacekeeper so also wore a yellow vest and marched along the perimeter of the march from MLK, Jr Park to the Federal Building keeping a sharp eye out for trouble and keeping people safe. Later I stood near the podium in case some of the 'Right to Life' folks decided to be disruptive. Many people thanked me for being there on behalf of the church. I spoke to many women my age and older lamenting we were still marching for the same ol' rights. I also spoke to young women carrying babies just like I did 35 years ago in Boston. I sent my daughter Colette a picture of a toddler in a stroller and reminded her I used to carry her in a snuggly with a button that said, "I am a baby for Choice." She sent back a message saying, "Thanks for choosing me. I love you." Then I met a pregnant woman who had written a message on her extended pregnant belly which said, "Abortion Saved My Life." So, of course I had to hear her story. She told me about losing her first child and almost dying from sepsis. The abortion saved her life so she could be a mother today.

Dear Ones, I invite you to contemplate the meaning of what it means to be made in God's likeness, to be the work of God's hands, not just formed in a woman's womb. What is our response to this enormous gift of life?

What does this have to do with being created from the earth? How can our hands become God's hands?

In our Jeremiah passage, we are reminded that God is still creating and recreating like a Potter. God the Potter can remake us when we become off center. It's important to note that God the Potter does not get another hunk of clay and start over. No, the Great Potter starts again with our mucky earthy selves. Isn't this good news?

Finally, in the Gospel of John we learn that Jesus can heal a blind man by mixing mud and spit together. Jesus, like his father, is ready to enter the muck of our lives and turn dirt into mud and mud into a sacrament. This then becomes a healing salve which once applied can then be washed off leading to restoration of sight. Dear Ones, how are you anointed by the dirt or mud in your life today? How are you rooted in the earth so you can be awed by heaven?

Dear Ones, life and healing happen in the muck and sludge of our ordinary lives. I invite you this World Communion Sunday to celebrate the fact that we are all created as mud people and that we can find Christ in elemental things like mud, bread, and wine. This is the tie that binds us to God our loving parent and Potter, and to Jesus, the Son, the healer, our redeemer. Blessed it be this grimy grace. Blessed it be this tie that binds us, roots us, and keeps us awed by heaven.