

## “We Were Made for This”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden  
for 1<sup>st</sup> UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, July 21, 2024

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ website or by clicking this link and finding the date of the worship service in which it appears:

<https://www.christianworldmedia.com/wordstream/fumcgj/search>

*Scripture Text: Jeremiah 18:1-6 [The Message]*

### OPENING

We begin a new worship series today that I hope will allow you to remember back to the days when a tub of Play-Doh could spark your imagination and all things felt possible!

Many people describe life as a journey. As people of faith, we are invited to describe life as a *spiritual* journey. As people of distinctly Christian faith, we are invited to describe life as unfolding under the watchful eye and guiding presence of the Holy Spirit Who is constantly drawing us toward God and godliness as our means of experiencing and interpreting life.

And one of the things that we all encounter in life is change. In fact, if there is one thing that is most consistent in our experience of life, it is change. And so, we're taking the next four weeks in worship to explore different aspects of this essentially common experience and asking how our Christian faith might

give us resources not just to cope with it but to thrive in it.

Because, let's face it, very few of us like change – unless we happen to be the ones seeking to bring it about. We experience self-initiated change as growth; many around us experience it as threat! At least in the short term.

Do you remember what happens when Play-Doh is exposed to the light and air of the world? It gets cracked and dry and becomes less malleable – less formable, less changeable – doesn't it?

In the same way, as we are exposed to the light and air of the world – the experiences of life – the Play-Doh of our lives gets cracked and dry and less malleable. We become suspicious of change as we start to believe that “the way things are” is best.

But often “what is” crumbles over time, and if we look closely at what God set in motion, we find that change is actually the most constant part of life.

Change is inevitable and actually necessary for animating our spirits so that we might find *renewed purpose* throughout our entire lives. And so, change can be something we embrace rather than resist.

### SERMON THOUGHTS

If I were a betting man, I would wager that very few of you know who Art Clokey was. But I would also wager that nearly everyone in worship this morning knows this character whom Anna introduced to us in

her Children's Message. (\*Short movie clip of the opening sequence of **Gumby**.\*)

(\*A quick presentation of Art Clokey as Gumby's creator and Art's pioneering of the craft of "stop-motion animation" in the development of this iconic character, along with his sidekick Pokey, and the series that shaped the values of post-WWII generations of children.\*)

Creating stories and film by moving clay pieces one tiny little step at a time is a wonderful way to describe the process of the movement of change – it cannot happen all at once. There is a process, and sometimes it can feel painstakingly slow.

But, like the Gumby and Pokey series that remained popular long after their production years – 1956-1969 along with two movies, one in 1988 and another in 1995! – the lessons we can learn from cooperating with God as we experience, navigate, and interpret change in our lives can have lasting value and effect for us. That, my friends, is Good News!

### TO THE SCRIPTURES – Jeremiah

The biblical metaphor used by Jeremiah to plead for a change in the hearts, minds, and behaviors of the people of his time was clay. God is like a potter at the wheel, shaping us. We can resist or we can "go with it" – discovering more about God's possibilities for us. And even when we have "mishaps" in the midst of change – make an unfortunate choice or mess up in some way – God is continually re-shaping us again

and again and again. As long as we stay malleable in the hands of the Creator, change will not break us. And THIS is Good News, as well!

### CONCLUSION

In the year ahead, we are going to be experiencing a lot of change. Wouldn't you rather have spent some time thinking about it, anticipating it, preparing for it through the lens of our Christian faith, rather than responding to it with reactivity? That's what this series is about, and the starting point is simply this:

Our faith, the Scriptures, and our experience of God in our lives tells us is that not only CAN we survive change, we were MADE for it! God created us, fashioned us, and equipped us with the tools necessary to "go with" it and to be enlarged by it, and to find renewed purpose in it. And that is Good News, indeed!

I'd like to invite us to close this time by praying the prayer that will be on the screens in front of you. We'll begin with a few moments of silence...

Holy and Living God,  
when we have hesitated to reach out,  
when we have stayed rigid, not opening to adjusting our  
own lives to allow more freedom for others,  
forgive us and remind us that we are forgiven.

When we have refused to make room  
for the changes of time, and judged others unkindly  
for their differing ways of thinking and being,  
forgive us and remind us that we are forgiven.

When we have forgotten that we are your creation,  
fashioned and made for changing the world for the better,  
forgive us and remind us that we are forgiven.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who came to change  
our hearts for good...Amen.

Generosity Celebration & Offering  
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