

SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

ReForming



AS YOU BEGIN...

Thank you for your desire to join a host of others in our congregation to serve as faithful prayer partners for our beloved Colonial Church, for the ReForming process in which we are engaged, and especially for the ReForming Visioning Team which will now be meeting over the next few months. We deeply appreciate your willingness to commit to a consistent time of prayer on behalf of those involved in this important work and we trust that you, too, will be blessed as you offer to serve in this powerful way.

This guide was lovingly prepared for you as an aid to your prayer time. In it, you will find a specific prayer for the visioning team along with the list of their names, a small sampling of verses and questions from scripture, prayers, readings, suggestions for various types of prayer, and several devotional readings for your consideration. We hope you use these offerings as you desire to help give shape and meaning to your prayer experience.

Please note that spiritual guides are available at your request to lead groups through a prayer experience using this booklet. Contact Moderator Cindy Stone for information. cls-1@comcast.net



As a way to transition from the schedule and concerns of your daily life into a time of quiet prayer, we invite you to take a few moments to simply rest, to breathe, to gently release into God's care all of the details of your day, and to welcome your mind, body and spirit into a time of sacred reflection. You may also choose to use the following prayer as an opening blessing-

Lord, for a few moments before we begin, let us be still. The cares and concerns of our day, which can so easily overwhelm us, are lifted from our shoulders to yours in stillness. The power and gentleness of your presence are sensed in stillness. The vastness of your love is felt in stillness. The promise of our faith, that your Holy Spirit will guide us both today and always, is known in stillness. We remember we are yours, the flock of your pasture, the clay in your hands, in stillness—and we find peace. AMEN.

-author unknown



PRAY FOR OUR VISIONING TEAM...

Lord, hear our prayer that:

- ♥ the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit surrounds the team.
- ♥ those values that express the Colonial community endure
- ♥ new values important to the future are revealed and upheld
- ♥ the gifts and the reasons for the calling of Visioning Team members blossom forth in their work
- ♥ the congregation finds ways to use the giftings of all our members, helping us to grow in Christ
- ♥ we are firm in doing God's will and all that we do brings glory to God as we embrace any necessary changes
- ♥ each member is like a rock, helping to build a foundation that will be inspired and Holy Spirit led

MEMBERS OF THE VISIONING TEAM:

Tim Anderson	Daniel Harrell	Carter Sample
Mike Barton	Lauren Haveman	John Seaberg
Lorelei Bergman	Sarah Jones	Jim Silburn
Jenny Buckland	Jeff Lindsay	Elaine Sloan Moen
Steve Coleman	Dwayne Lowman	Marissa Stark
Kristin Dybdal	Bruce Mooty	Lance Steinke
Mary Fisher	Pat Peterson	Rick Treece
Kristin Geer	Jason Phillips	Carol Wachter
Lauren Hansen	Dick Primuth	Sara Wilhelm Garbers
		Marie Wonders



SCRIPTURE VERSES...

“For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken.” *Psalms 62:1-2*

“O Lord, let us not conform to the ways of this world, but transform us by your Holy Spirit; renew us mind and heart that we may discern and do your will for us, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” *Romans 12:1-2*

“Be still and know that I am God.” *Psalms 46:10*

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” *John 15:5*

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight.” *Proverbs 3:5-6*

“This is what the Lord says: Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.” *Jeremiah 6:16*

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” *Isaiah 43:19*

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: ...a time to plant and a time to uproot, ... a time to tear down and a time to build, ... a time to be silent and a time to speak...” *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

“But now, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you our potter. And all of us are the work of your hand.” *Isaiah 64:8*



QUESTIONS OF JESUS FROM SCRIPTURE...

“What is it you want me to do for you?” *Mark 10:36*

“Why were you searching for me?” *Luke 2:49*

“What are you looking for?” *John 1:38*

“Do you want to be made well?” *John 5:6*

“Will you lay down your life for me?” *John 13:38*

“Do you love me?” *John 21:17*



READINGS...

Gracious and Holy God, give us wisdom to perceive you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate on you, and a life to proclaim you; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our savior. Amen.

~*Saint Benedict*

As swimmers dare
to lie face to the sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace.

~*Denise Levertov*

Join your hands gently; let the world be placed beyond their reach, beyond their itch always to be doing; exempt from speech this little space thus formed between your going and your slow return—this still enclosure with its own high walls: join your hands gently, so, no lovelier way than this of letting go.

~*Jean M. Watt*

Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.

-Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart. Try to
love the questions themselves. Do not now seek the answers,
which cannot be given because you would not be able to live
them. The point is to live everything. Live the question now.
Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along
some distant day into the answers.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

To wait open-endedly is
an enormously radical attitude toward life.

It is trusting that something will happen to us
that is far beyond our own imaginings.

It is giving up control over our future
and letting God define our life.

It is living with the conviction
that God molds us according to God's love
and not according to our fear.

The spiritual life is a life in which we wait,
actively present to the moment,
expecting that new things will happen to us,
new things that are far beyond
our own imagination or prediction.

That, indeed, is a very radical stance toward life
in a world preoccupied with control.

-Henri J. M. Nouwen

Simple faithfulness in prayer gives the Spirit of God a real chance to work in us, to help us be renewed in God's hands and be conformed to God's will. During these sacred times, we can be touched in deep, hidden, and tender places. We can become more fully aware of the divine presence and more open to God's guidance as we are led to new places of love.

-Henri J. M. Nouwen

My Lord God-

I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

~Thomas Merton

Let Your God Love You

Be silent,
be still,
alone, empty
before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows and understands.
God loves you with an enormous love,
wanting only to look upon you with love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.
Let your God
love you.

~Edwina Gateley



OTHER WAYS TO PRAY...

Pray that God's presence, power, and provision fill Colonial Church and all who are involved in this Visioning process today and in the days to come.

Lift up the leadership from Colonial and the TAG consulting group who are guiding this experience.

Prayerfully read the names of each of the people on the Visioning Team. (see listing on page 2)

Ask God to deepen our trust in him and in each other as we seek to become all he intends us to be.

Pray the Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into trial, but deliver us from the evil one.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.

Pray a simple breath prayer saying (or singing)
"Spirit of the living God" on the in breath, and
"Fall afresh on me (us)" on the out breath.

Find an image or symbol of God as rock, shepherd, potter and put it in a prominent place where it can serve as a focal point for you and deepen your sense of how God is with us in the ReForming process.

Take them with you!

Take your prayers, hopes, dreams and questions about what it means for you and Colonial to be ReFormed with you... walk them, run them, whisper them, shout them, have coffee with them, journal them, share them . . .



DEVOTIONAL READINGS...

What follows is a selection of devotional readings written by members of our congregation. These readings focus on two of the key images we have been working with thus far in our ReForming process - God as Rock and God as Potter.

Before you begin, you may want to enter into a few moments of silence. While quieting in this way can be uncomfortable for some, we encourage you to allow for this time of transition from your daily life to your time of prayer. At the beginning you may want to enter the stillness for just a few moments and then gradually extend this time as you are comfortable.

You are welcome to use these readings in any order. Once you have made your selection, you may read the scripture passage silently or aloud - more than once if you wish. Then read the reflection and notice your reactions. If you are alone, you may choose to journal your responses. If you are in a group, members can share their responses. Finally, you may close with a spontaneous prayer or use the one that is provided.



GOD IS OUR ROCK

1 Samuel 2:1-4

Hannah prayed and said,

¹ *“My heart exults in the LORD
my strength is exalted in my God.
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in my victory.*

² *There is no Holy One like the LORD,
no one besides you;
there is no **Rock** like our God.*

³ *Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.*

⁴ *The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.*

(Hannah’s entire song is found in 1 Sam 2:1-10)

HANNAH’S SONG

The story of Samuel’s life begins with the touching scene of Hannah, a wife of Elkanah, pleading with God to allow her to bear a son because she was barren. Hannah made a vow to God that if he would allow her to bear a son, she would give the boy to the service of God all the days of his life. God answered Hannah’s prayer and she bore a son, calling him Samuel, which means “because I have asked for him from the Lord”.

Hannah’s song speaks of God’s holiness, knowledge, power and judgment. Hannah sang that there is no one like the Lord, no **Rock** like our God. In spite of – or perhaps because of – her barrenness, Hannah built her life on the solid **Rock** that is our God.

Samuel must have heard Hannah’s praise. He learned at her knee about the attributes of the God she loved, qualities she valued. Generation to generation, we pass along what we value. Take a few minutes to make a list of the values most important to you. If you have children, how have you shared your values? How do you uphold these values in your daily work or leisure?

Think, too, about the values we hold as a congregation. What qualities and convictions make Colonial uniquely Colonial? How do we share those values throughout our community? With our brothers and sisters in Christ, and with all the children, “for they belong to us as well?”

PRAYER

Oh Lord, you are our **Rock**. You are strong and full of knowledge. You guard and protect your faithful children. You turn the world upside down, exalting the lowly and bringing low the mighty. All we have and all we are comes from you. Thank you for instilling in us the values that express the community of Colonial, and for bringing new values that will be important to our future you are calling us to next. On the solid foundation of the **Rock** we build our future, and we entrust it and ourselves to you. AMEN.

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GOD IS OUR ROCK

I Samuel 3:8-10, 15-18

⁸ *The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy.* ⁹ *Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.* ¹⁰ *Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."*

¹⁵ *Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.* ¹⁶ *But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am."* ¹⁷ *Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you."* ¹⁸ *So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."*

(The entire story can be found in I Samuel 3:1-21)

ARE YOU LISTENING?

Hannah kept her vow, and gave her son Samuel to God's service. Samuel was placed under the care and training of Eli, Israel's priest and judge. It was during this time, when Samuel was still a child, that God began to speak to him. Samuel's first message from God was quite sobering. Samuel was to announce to Eli God's punishment on Eli's two wayward sons, who were abusing their priestly authority and desecrating the sacrificial offerings.

God's message to Eli was that he is the **Rock**. His values are unchanging. We can build our lives on them. Unlike us so often, Eli was willing - even eager - to hear a word from the Lord, even when the message was hard to hear. Even when it meant that those he loved were called out for punishment. Eli loved God more.

God called to Samuel - three times. The first two times that God spoke to Samuel, the boy thought he heard the voice of Eli. The third time God spoke, Eli understood and instructed Samuel to say, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

How often are we so busy that we don't slow down enough to truly listen for God? How can we learn to recognize his voice? It took Samuel a couple of times to recognize God's voice, and only with help did he know how to respond. Consider taking 10 minutes for the next few days, find a quiet place without distractions and think on Samuel's response. "Here I am." It took Samuel several attempts, so be patient with yourself. God will come.

PRAYER

Here am I, Lord. Here are we. Help us want to listen for your voice. Help us make the time and space to hear you. Give us ears to hear like Samuel, a yearning for you like Hannah, and a willingness to hear your words like Eli. Help us to hear what you have next for us. Thank you that you are our unchanging **Rock**, a solid foundation upon which we can base our lives. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS



GOD IS OUR ROCK

I Samuel 8:1-8

When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. ³ Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, ⁵ and said to him, “you are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.” ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to govern us.” Samuel prayed to the LORD, ⁷ and the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. ⁸ Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. ⁹ Now then, listen to their voice; only—you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”

(The entire story can be found in I Samuel 8:1-22.)

CHANGE COMES

In Samuel 8, Samuel is an older man whose sons have turned against him for their own personal gain. The elders of Israel are demanding a king so they would be like all the other nations. Samuel is saddened that the Israelites did not recognize God as their King. God told Samuel to give them a king, but revealed to Samuel the problems that having a king would bring and told him to relate this information to the Israelites.

What an incredible amount of change! It could not have been easy for Samuel. Where did he go to find the strength and courage to deal with so much? We can only believe that his courage came from deep prayer, listening and a lifetime of reliance on God his **Rock**. He knew that God was in control.

Just as Samuel was confronted with tremendous change, he was being formed – re-formed - by God for the benefit of the Israelites. His prayer was not much different than our prayer these days for ourselves and our church. Have you prepared your heart for what God has for us next? Personally, for our community and for the world?

PRAYER

When everything around us is shifting, Lord, and we don't know where to turn, remind us that you are our **Rock**. Solid and unchanging, you are the foundation for our lives, individually and as a congregation. O Lord, let us not conform to the ways of this world, but transform us by your Holy Spirit; renew us mind and heart that we may discern and do your Will for us what is good and acceptable and perfect. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS



GOD IS OUR ROCK

I Samuel 3:19-21

¹⁹ *As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.*

²¹ *The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.*

I Samuel 10:1

Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his [Saul's] head, and kissed him; he said, "The LORD has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around.

I Samuel 16:11-13

¹¹ *Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.*

TRUE TO HIS CALLING

Samuel had dedicated his life to God, serving as a judge, a prophet and a teacher. How must Samuel have felt about being replaced by a king, something he knew was not God's best for Israel? And yet Samuel obeyed. He knew his calling and remained steadfast in his dedication to the **Rock** upon which he had built his life.

Have you answered your call? Have you heard God's call for this season of your life? Do you see how God has created you and made you an integral part of what he has next for Colonial? All of us have gifts and talents only we can give to our God and the community in which he has placed us. Here are some ways to seek that calling.

- ***Begin with prayer.*** God promises to give wisdom to any who ask for it. “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given unto him” (James 1:5).
- ***Look for passion.*** Where are the desires of your heart and the passion in your life? Where does this passion intersect with the needs of our community and our world? “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Mathew 6:21)
- ***Ask others.*** Their wisdom and guidance may surprise you.
- ***Try them!*** There is a danger in doing only those things that are comfortable or serving only in the ways in which we think we are most talented. By attempting something different, we allow God to reveal new insights to us.
- ***Keep trying!*** Continue to serve God and keep searching for his calling in your life.

PRAYER

Oh Lord, you have made each of us in your image. And you have made Colonial a unique part of your body. Help us recognize the gifts you have given us, individually and as a community, and the ways in which you would have us use them for your glory in what you are calling us to next. Give us, we pray, the strength and courage to see our calling and to follow it. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS



GOD IS OUR ROCK

1 Samuel 2:2

*There is no holy God like the Lord. There is no God but you.
There is no **Rock** like our God.*

2 Samuel 22:2

*He said: "The LORD is my **rock**, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my **Rock**, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—from violent people you save me.*

2 Samuel 22:47

*"The LORD lives! Praise be to my **Rock**! Exalted be my God, the **Rock**, my Savior!*

I AM YOUR ROCK

Rock is defined as a relatively hard, naturally occurring mineral material forming part of the surface of the earth. It can consist of a single mineral or of several minerals that are either tightly compacted or held together in a mineral matrix. Genesis 1:2 tells us that God created the heavens and the earth. Rock has been with us since the beginning.

Take a few moments and picture a rock. Maybe you can envision a landscape that includes some rocks. Maybe you have visited some beautiful hills that have unusual outcroppings of rock. Think about the years that it might have taken to form that rock. All the hardships it might have endured in being formed. The elements of nature that brought its beauty to life.

Rock is dependable and solid, unmoving and unchanging. It's easy to see why God's people through the ages have seen God as their **Rock**.

- Hannah said there is no Rock like our God.
- Hannah's promise to give her son as a servant of God was rock solid
- Samuel's faith in God was tested many times and in many ways, yet he never failed to trust in God his Rock.

- David, whom Samuel anointed as the second King, responded to God's goodness in delivering him from his enemies and hardships by giving thanksgiving and praise to my **Rock**.

In what ways has God been your **Rock**? The solid, sure foundation for your life? How has he been that in the life of our church? What joy it is to know that God is with us, solid and dependable, as we move into the future he is calling us to next.

PRAYER

Oh Lord, you are the Rock of our salvation, and we are filled with joy and gratitude. Teach us individually and as a congregation to lean on the Rock even more completely, trusting in your loving and unchanging care. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS



GOD IS OUR ROCK

Romans 12:1-2

O Lord, let us not conform to the ways of this world, but transform us by your Holy Spirit; renew us mind and heart that we may discern and do your will for us what is good and acceptable and perfect. Amen.

Psalms 62:1-2

*He alone is my **rock** and my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken.*

YOUR ROCK

What memories do you have that include rocks? Skipping rocks on a northern lake? Leaning against a sun-warmed rock, reading a favorite book? Using a rock for support as you catch your breath after a long uphill climb? Marveling at the grandeur of God's creation?

What comes to mind when you think of God as your **Rock**? That time when God was the one solid thing when your world fell apart. When everything around you was swirling, you had a steady place to put your feet. When God, solid and unchanging, gave you the strength to do what was right when it was really, really hard.

And how has God been the **Rock** for Colonial? In good times and hard times, times of greater and fewer resources, more members or fewer, God has been our solid, constant, sure foundation.

God has been our solid **Rock** in the past, and he will continue to be faithful and unchanging in all that he is calling us to next. Individually and collectively, we can bet our lives on it. Praise God!

PRAYER

What an amazing God you are! Rock solid, you are the foundation for our very lives. We have no words to express our gratitude. We love you, Lord, and we lean on you. Thank you for always being there. AMEN.

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GOD IS OUR POTTER

Psalm 2:7-9

I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “you are my son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

You can read this entire coronation song in Psalm 2:1-12.

POTTER PRINCES: ROYAL MAKERS AND BREAKERS

Psalm 2 is a royal psalm, a declaration recited at King David’s coronation and then at his successors’ ascensions to the throne of Israel. It follows a pattern typical of the ancient Near East: (a) The Psalmist recounts the human habit of rebelling against God, the King of Kings, as though all that humans have is *not* God’s gracious gift (2:1-3). (b) God responds by insisting, in no uncertain terms, that humans act under his authority, not by their own (2:4-6). (c) Human power derives from God’s because humans are the King’s royal children (2:7-9). (d) Therefore, humans would be wise to yield to God and take refuge in him (2:10-12).

Psalm 2 refers first to David, with whom God reiterates his covenant, telling him, “you are my royal son as sure as I created you.” This means David inherits, not just his own people’s kingdom, but all that belongs to his Father, the King of Kings, that is, the whole world. If that’s not amazing enough, David also inherits a rod of iron, signifying the authority and power of God the Potter. Because the King of Kings is a creator, his heir is also a maker, with the sense to know when and how to use the vessels he’s made and when, instead, they need to be crushed to dust and remixed with clay to form new, stronger vessels.

Revelation 12:5 references Psalm 2, claiming that Jesus is God’s ultimate inheriting son, who rules the whole world with an iron rod. In its own amazing twist, Revelation 12 invites the rest of us “covenant children” to share in Jesus’ death and so in his resurrection authority and power.

As a result, we can find ourselves in these verses. How are you like the vessels above? Which of your own circumstances come to mind when you think of yourself as: (a) a broken pot, ready for recycling, (b) God's own inheritance, (c) subject to God's authority? And how are you like the one being crowned? What does it mean to you that: (a) you are God's royal child, (b) your power comes from the King of Kings himself, (c) you inherit from God the right and responsibility to create, to use, and/or to "dash in pieces" for recycling the resources within your sphere/s of authority?

As you turn to God, what human habit of rebelling against God do you repent from? What gracious gift of God do you acknowledge and give thanks for? Which of your responsibilities do you release to God because your authority and power derive from him and not from yourself? How will you submit to God? How can you take refuge in him?

PRAYER

Lord King, we are your royal children, as sure as you created us. From you, we've inherited a beautiful, difficult world. Our authority and power derive from you, and so we submit our spheres of responsibility within and on behalf of Colonial Church to you. Grant us, as individuals and as a community, your own Potter's sense to create, to use or to recycle all the resources you have given us by your grace. We act our trust that Psalm 2 is true. We take refuge in you. AMEN.

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GOD IS OUR POTTER

Jeremiah 18:2-6

² “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” ³ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me. ⁶ He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.

WE ARE POTS

When we think of ourselves as clay in God’s hands, we may naturally desire to be a well-turned pot or bowl that will reflect God’s creative handiwork. But often when we are pressed down and worn thin by the cares of the world, we end up feeling spoiled, not a desirable or holy product. However, the healing news is that God *deeply desires* to shape us into another vessel that is equally unique. Re-formed by God.

When you think of God as the potter in your life, what image or word comes to mind?

When have you despaired of ever being worthwhile or even willing to be part of God’s re-shaping because of being broken or marred or weak?

How has God gently and without judgment shaped you, re-formed you into the unique shape that God has chosen for you?

PRAYER

God, we are the work of your hands. Even when we feel broken and worn out, you are our creator and re-creator. Teach us to revel in the glory of our creation – our formation and re-formation – in your image. Each uniquely fashioned, each valued beyond price. Help us understand and appreciate how you have formed and are re-forming Colonial. We are grateful beyond words for the way you love us all. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS



GOD IS OUR POTTER

Isaiah 64:8b

We are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

CHANGING THE ORDER

Changing the order slightly, read each line of this verse slowly, pausing to take in whatever meaning or memory emerges for you in each line. Express gratitude for any insights, meaning, or reassurance you receive.

you

you are

you are our

you are our potter

you are our potter and

you are our potter and we

you are our potter and we are

you are our potter and we are the

you are our potter and we are the clay

We are all the work of your hand

What was the most significant line for you and why?

What does it mean to you to be the work of God's hand? For all of us to be the work of God's hand?

PRAYER

You are our God. You have created us in your image, forming and re-forming us as you choose. Individually and as a congregation, we are the clay pots the potter has designed. Just as a potter delights in his or her work, you find joy and beauty in us, the work of your hand. Help us to see ourselves, each other and our congregation as you see us - unique, beautiful and infinitely valuable. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS



GOD IS OUR POTTER

Isaiah 64:8

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are our potter. We are all the work of your hand.

Isaiah 61:1

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

THE POTTER – CREATOR AND HEALER

Do you know kintsugi?

Kintsugi is the centuries-old Japanese art of fixing broken pottery with a special lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver or platinum. Beautiful seams of precious metal glint in the cracks of ceramic ware. This repair method celebrates each piece's history by emphasizing its fractures and breaks instead of hiding or disguising them. The gold-filled cracks of a once-broken item are a testament to its history. In kintsugi, the repaired piece is deemed even more beautiful than the original, revitalizing it with new life.

And so it is with us. We all have been dealt blows that have broken us in one way or another. Our church has been battered and broken through the years as well. Much in our culture teaches us to hide our battle wounds and scars, telling the world that we're "Just fine!" when, in reality, we're falling apart.

How different would our lives be if we lived in terms of kintsugi? If we recognized that our flaws and our scars make us truly lovely? What would our life together be like if our congregation saw our past challenges and trials as an integral part of what makes Colonial this uniquely beautiful part of the body of Christ? God is our creator, the potter who shaped us, individually and as a congregation. He's also the kintsugi artisan, finding beauty in

the broken pottery that we are and using what is most precious - love and his very self - to put us back together, one piece at a time.

PRAYER

Lord, give us eyes to see you as both the potter and the kintsugi artisan. Teach us to recognize in ourselves, each other and our congregation both the exquisite original pottery and the pieces made new with kintsugi- the beauty in our brokenness. As we walk toward our future together, give us eyes to see and ears to hear all that you are calling us to next, something more beautiful than ever before. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS

GOD IS OUR POTTER

Isaiah 64:8

“We’re the clay and you’re our potter.”

BEGIN BY FINDING A QUIET PLACE

Begin by finding a quiet place where you can settle in a way that fosters deep peace and relaxation. Allow time for your mind to empty, your breathing to calm, and your spirit to open.

When you are ready, start by envisioning a fresh, cool, moist piece of clay in the palm of your hand. Notice its color, shape, size, and how it feels as you hold it. *Imagine that this clay represents you and all those who comprise the Colonial community as we move through the ReForming process. Imagine that your hands are actually the hands of God.*

Next, in your mind’s eye, begin to knead the clay and feel it warm and soften in your hands. Take time to shape the clay in whatever way seems best to you; you may choose to roll and lengthen it, then to flatten it, next to mold it into a shape or recognizable object. Continue to work and rework the clay in your hands for as long as you’d like. As you do this, notice the imprint of your fingers all over the clay. *Pause to consider how you and our entire community are the clay. How can we best situate ourselves in God’s loving hands and best cooperate with this process of being shaped and reshaped as he seeks to bring us to our fullest expression? What can we learn from the clay that could be applied to our part in the ReForming process? What might help and hinder our process of becoming?*

Now imagine that you have finally decided on exactly what you want to create, and you engage that process with great intention, passion and precision. With each passing moment, your creation becomes more refined, real, and beautiful. you delight both in the process of creation and in your slowly emerging creation. As you complete your work, you feel a deep sense of joy and anticipation. *For a few moments, reflect on our ReForming process from God’s perspective? What might his greatest hopes be for us, both individually and as a community, as we move*

through this ReForming experience and discover his call for us? What kinds of sacred imprints might God most hope to leave on us, might God most want us known for? What image or symbol best captures who we are called to be, how we are called to look as we move forth from our reforming?

As you are led, slowly bring your time of prayer to a close by giving thanks to God for what has been revealed. you may also choose to journal about what you discovered, draw what you envisioned, or even get your own piece of clay to work with over the next several weeks! Consider taking your sense of what it means for you to be clay in the potter's hands into all your involvements with and conversations about Reforming at Colonial.

PRAYER

God, you have made us in your image, as the potter works with clay. And yet, you call us, your simple pots, to be co-creators with you, partnering with you for the bringing of your kingdom. We are awed by this privilege, and humbled by your trust. Help us, personally and collectively, to walk in your ways, all the days of our lives. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS



GOD IS OUR POTTER

Isaiah 29:15-16

¹⁵ *Ha! You who hide a plan too deep for the LORD, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, “Who sees us? Who knows us?”*

¹⁶ *You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay? Shall the thing made say of its maker, “He did not make me”; or the thing formed say of the one who formed it, “He has no understanding”?*

Isaiah 64:8

Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

ALL IN GOD’S HANDS

Potters have long been making pots. The value to human culture is undeniable: practically, we get cups, bowls, water pitchers, storage jars, cooking pots and coffins for the dead; but artistically and religiously too, archaeology has uncovered temples and palaces adorned with decorative clay artifacts that conveyed high social status to those who possessed them. Pottery continues to serve and delight our senses as both function and art, providing joy and beauty as well as a comforting container for good coffee.

At the same time any clay vessel or cup—for all its fundamental beauty and usefulness—is fundamentally fragile with no say as to its form or function. Clay is fully subject to the potter’s mercy. As such, potters and clay pots work throughout Scripture as a simile for our relationship as clay creatures to our Creator.

That we are finite, sinful and fragile, prone to wander, is terribly hard to accept. Humility must be pressed hard into our hard hearts. We hold onto our sin, refashioned as virtue. Long-suffering faith impatiently clutches a desire for control. We cannot wait for the Lord nor abide his will. We forget we are dust

and to dust we return. Who are we to be saved or loved? We are prodigal children and deformed lumps of wet dirt.

And yet from a gospel point of view, this is both good news and our hope. As Isaiah declares, God our Potter is the Lord our Father. As the work of his hands, we are lovingly formed and reformed for beauty and purpose, with passion and pleasure. Any god can make something good out of the exceptional and the extraordinary. It is our God who makes something out of nothing.

That something out of nothing includes a renewed mind and heart, a reformation of character that fully enfolds God's good and perfect will. Perfect does not mean flawless, but fulfillment of purpose—a pot doing what we are crafted to do. A water jar is perfect when it carries water. A church is perfect when it carries out worship and service with love and long-suffering.

PRAYER

O Lord, we are the work of your hands. Mold us and reform us in accordance with your will, and keep us pliable, that as change comes, we would trust you for all your purpose. Our true joy is found when we finally do that for which we were made. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS



GOD IS OUR POTTER

2 Corinthians 4:5-7

⁵For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

JARS OF CLAY

Self-made and assured, Paul had been a first-rate Pharisee, successful and strong, he needed nobody's grace. On his way to Damascus to kill a few heretics, "a great light from heaven" stopped Paul in his tracks. He probably assumed God was spotlighting him for being such a good person. But the spotlight turned out to be the hot light of Jesus—that blinded Paul on account of his arrogance. Prestige had been his poison, walling him off from the God he pretended to serve. Jesus exposed his spiritual deficiency as a spiritual necessity. Presuming God's favor, Paul did as he pleased and gave glory to himself, refashioning his sin as a virtue. And Jesus broke him for it.

Out of this brokenness, filled with the Spirit, Paul found his purpose and power. The Lord always prefers broken pots to porcelain perfection—even to the point of being broken himself. "We always carry in our body the death of Jesus," Paul finally realized, "so that the life of Jesus may be seen in us." The greatest heroes of the Bible were always damaged goods: Moses was a murderer, Noah a drunk, Jonah a racist, Jacob a liar, Rebekah a conniver, Rahab a prostitute, Naomi an opportunist; Elijah burned out, Jeremiah was depressed, Mary wanted Jesus committed, Peter denied ever knowing Jesus, Judas betrayed him and Paul was a self-righteous prig.

To be sure, there is brokenness we bring onto ourselves. But even in pieces, we are not cursed or unlovable or worthless. On

the contrary, in Christ, to be broken is to be ripe for redemption by a crucified Savior whose body was broken for us. The late Catholic mystic Henri Nouwen, greatly regarded by Christians of every stripe, went so far as to equate being broken with being blessed. “In a strange way,” he wrote, “the spiritual life isn’t ‘useful’ or ‘successful.’ But it is meant to be fruitful. And fruitfulness comes out of brokenness.” I know this is true. And truth sets us free.

In this ReForming season for our church—catalyzed in part by the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther’s 95 Theses nailed to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany—let the spirit hammer onto our own hearts how God loves us because he loves us—there is nothing we do to deserve it. Christ empties himself out on the cross for our sake. Filled with his spirit to overflowing, we can now pour out ourselves for God and others.

PRAYER

Make us, break us, fill us and use us as your vessels O Lord. May our lives demonstrate the power of your redemption in us, and give to us and our world the true hope that is fully ours in Christ. AMEN.

REFLECTIONS

— + — AS YOU CONCLUDE . . .

Take a few moments to thank God for your time together and for the privilege of offering prayer support for the Visioning Team.

Listen carefully for and journal about any words of guidance or encouragement God may want to share with you.

Gently place all of your requests into God's vast and loving care.

O Lord, let us not conform to the ways of this world, but transform us by your Holy Spirit; renew us mind and heart that we may discern and do your Will for us what is good and acceptable and perfect. Amen. Romans 12:1-2



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