

RENOVATION REALITIES

2016 Lenten Devotional
Foundry United Methodist Church

R RENOVATION A L T I T I E S



Lent is a time of spiritual renovation. This year, Foundry is *Under Construction*—and we are experiencing the early building phases of Mission Possible. Our reflections on the realities we confront in times of change find parallels in our current shared church experience. Some devotions discerned God's word in the dust, din, discovery, chaos, and ongoing challenges of life. Others speak to the four pillars of our church renovation effort: Plan, Pray, Give, and Build. We invite you to ponder each offering and perhaps allow it to illuminate some part of your journey.

Foundry 2016 Lenten Schedule

Lenten Sermon Series

RENOVATION REALITIES

Even the best-laid plans cannot anticipate all that life will bring. Hidden costs, surprises discovered along the way, difficult people, and other unknowns will present challenges to moving forward. Sometimes, the longed-for vision begins to seem out of reach. Our Lenten journey will confront us with the realities we face as we try to be and become more free, more whole, more Christ-like.

LENTEN WORSHIP SERVICES

Ash Wednesday, February 10	8:00 AM and 7:00 PM Clergy will offer imposition of ashes at both services.	
Imposition of ashes will also be offered from 7:30 AM–9:00 AM at 16th and U Street NW and anytime while the office is open.		
Wednesdays, February 17, 24, March 9, 16, 23	Mid-Week Lenten Services, 8:00 AM	
Sunday, February 14	“Why Renovate?”	Psalms 91:1-2, 9-16, Luke 4:1-13
Sunday, February 21	“Weekend Warrior Much?”	Psalms 27, Luke 13:31-35
Sunday, February 28	“Disaster & Disappointment: Discuss”	Psalms 63:1-8, Luke 13:1-9
Lenten Music Sunday March 6	“Pit or Potential?”	Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
Special Music: <i>Te Deum</i> settings by Forrest, Rutter & Verdi.		
Sunday, March 13	“What’s the Cost?”	Psalms 126, John 12:1-8
Saturday, March 19	Easter Egg Hunt at Stead Park More details to come.	
Palm Sunday, March 20	“Form and Function”	Philippians 2:1-11, Luke 19:28-48
Maundy Thursday, March 24	“Apprentices All”	1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Good Friday, March 25	“What It Takes”	John 18:1-19:42
Easter Sunday, March 27	“Divine Design”	John 20:1-18

*Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.*

—Charles Wesley

These words comprise the final stanza of *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*, a hymn that in many ways captures the heart of United Methodist spirituality and practice. The hymn is written (as many hymns are) as a prayer, asking God to dwell in us, to forgive and free us, to share with us the divine life, and to make us a “new creation.” The work of renovation is the work of making things new—the word’s origin is from the Latin *renovatus*, from *re-* + *novare* to make new.

While God’s grace is primary, the work of making things new is not up to God alone. We have a role to play as “co-creators.” That is, we make choices about what we do, where we go, how much we give of our time, talent, and treasure. Spiritual practices (or “means of grace” to use Wesleyan parlance) are the things we do to cooperate with what God wants to do in us and through us. Spiritual practices take many forms—active and passive, communal and solitary, taking something on and letting things go. There are always challenges, surprises, and opportunities to be met in the work of co-creation with God.

In the pages of this Lenten Devotional, we are all invited to ponder a variety of “renovation realities” and offered insight for our own journeys toward new creation. As we move through these holy days of Lent, allow the promise of God’s love—a love that excels all others—to inspire you to persevere “till we cast our crowns before [God], lost in wonder, love, and praise.”

Ginger Gaines-Cirelli
Senior Pastor

Renovation Discoveries

Lent is historically a time for clearing out, of preparing ourselves spiritually, emotionally, and physically for the celebration of Easter and our rising to new life with Christ. Many Christians take up a spiritual discipline for Lent that helps them focus on their relationship with God and the areas in their spiritual lives that need attention. Some people fast, others give up unhelpful habits or luxuries (chocolate?), and still others commit to daily prayer or devotions. Lent is a season of renovation, when we realign our lives with Christ's. We are encouraged to take a hard look at who we are and what we're doing, seeking to identify and reject the temptations that threaten to get us off-track with God, just as Jesus did in his forty days in the wilderness, upon which Lent is based.

The story of King Josiah's cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem and the discovery of the tablets of the law in II Chronicles 34 is, above all, a story of renovation. Josiah's predecessors had given the temple over to the worship of pagan deities; when Josiah (at age 18) ordered the temple cleared, priests discovered these tablets (part of the Jewish Torah) amid the rubble. What followed was a wholesale re-dedication of temple and nation to the worship of the true God, Yahweh. Spiritual cleansing and renewal followed directly upon physical clearing and renovation, and something new and vitally significant was discovered (or rediscovered) in the process—the Word of God.

Who knows what we will discover in our lives and as a church when we undertake a renovation? Lent reminds us of the spiritual importance of clearing out and making space, as Jesus did in the wilderness. It was, and is, the prelude to ministry.

Deryl Davis

The Beloved T-Shirt of God

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39 NASB

About a week into 2016 I had the urge to clean out my home, particularly my closet. Hours later, I had donations, discoveries, trash, and a new perspective.

I didn't clean because I had no more space, but because I wanted my space to be filled with only what I wanted around me. Even if I didn't have to see something every day, why was I keeping what wasn't useful or didn't make me happy? Things that once seemed important—so vital to own—were now merely something to add to the donation pile for someone else to enjoy. I'd changed since I brought that item into my home, and I no longer wished for that item to be part of my life.

We are constantly reinventing ourselves, trying on new identities and looks for size and fit. The leather jacket we loved one year may feel ridiculous the next year, and so we move on to something else. But sitting on the floor of my closet, sorting out what I did and did not want, I realized that God doesn't do that to us. However flawed and dinged up we are, God still loves us and keeps us close. We're that cozy t-shirt he can never get rid of, no matter how many stains or holes we have. He wants us, no matter what.

Beth Scott

Wesley's Perspective on Renovation

"...Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..."

Romans 5:20 NIV

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, laid out a unique theology. He called it practical divinity; we call it Wesleyan theology. Wesley shows us that God's prevenient grace, the grace that is working in our life before we realize, is a part of God's salvation, present and trying to restore us, to reconcile us with God. When something shifts our perspective and we acknowledge our need for Christ, in that we want to change (repent), justifying grace has convinced us according to Wesley. For some, this is a powerful moment. Next is sanctifying grace, which not only deepens our love of Christ; it helps us do the work of transformation into the likeness of Christ. This is how I see God making renovations in our lives.

Paul shared with the Romans his thoughts and his theology about Christ. In the fifth chapter, verse twenty shows me how much God works to bring us to the moment where we receive justifying grace, knowing we are forgiven and we are made right before God through Christ. More grace is given so we can better experience God's love. The renovations in my personal life aren't an everyday occurrence. Usually, I am brought to a point of realization that I need to make some changes. Maybe this is due to stressors, strained relationships, a sense of anxiety, or what have you. Something makes me realize I need to pause because I'm getting off course—drifting away from God. That is a great example of grace abounding all the more. Thank God too!

Prayer:

Thank you Lord for the grace you share with us. Thank you for the grace, not only for our family or community renovations, but most of all, for our personal renovations. Amen.

Rev. Leo Yates, Jr.

Risk

The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

Proverbs 27:12 NIV



“Progress always involves risks. You can’t steal second base and keep your foot on first.” —Frederick B. Wilcox

Prayer:

Life is full of risks. Thank you, God, for always being by our sides as we dream and explore. Amen.

Ta-Chen Wu

Give THIS Up!

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2 NIV

What are you giving up for Lent?

How often have we heard those words, addressed to us or overheard in conversation? While such conversations may be less prevalent in our secularized society, that query still exists in water cooler and carpool chatter. As a teacher, I hear elementary-aged voices comparing notes on Lent-inspired sacrifices of chocolate, soda, and assorted video devices. Pretty much uniformly, I hear an inventory of material “stuff”: “I’ll see your Dr. Pepper, and raise you six weeks’ worth of Skittles.” Recently, I have noted that Christian adults often cite similar sacrifices—tangible, consumable items that puff us up with pride when we temporarily abandon them. I have been hounded by the conviction that there must be a higher sacrificial calling that the almighty intends for us.

Here is my revelation: Perhaps we are meant to give up *giving up* this Lent...that what God wants most is for all of God’s Easter people to move beyond complacencies and excuses, and to get serious about being Christ in a hurting, hurtful world. This year, may we hear the clarion call of our God, to NOT give up on our world as beyond repair...or on ourselves as too busy or unfit to accept God’s fix-it challenge. By transforming our “giving up” into faithful “rising up,” we can truly make a difference throughout and beyond this season of preparation and change.

Prayer:

Call us, God, beyond our shallow sacrifices, to make a difference in your world—during Lent, at Easter, and always. Amen.

Mark Gruber-Lebowitz

Renovation: Joyful Chaos

Read: James 2:14-26

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

John 1:5 NSRV

Chaos, anxiety, frustration. As a veteran of several renovations these were the words that came to mind on learning of our devotional theme. Renovations involve messy, uncomfortable, and often frightening change. I once went to bed leaving my contractor working on my stairs only to fall into an open space later that night where he'd removed several steps and severely sprained my ankle. But I always had a full vision of the beauty, enjoyment and value of the finished product, and this overcame all the pain and discomfort.

Change is for many the greatest fear that we have. It augurs loss of control and being forced to adapt to conditions about which we're ignorant. Our tendency is to hunker down with like-minded members of our tribe and resist for the sake of resisting. Our world is in the grip of such chaos. In an era of ubiquitous sound bite news 'others' are always threatening our scarce resources and seeking to destroy our way of life. Through fearsome lens the 'others' become our enemies and their destruction our divinely sanctioned solution. Sadly, this response comes as much from faith communities as from secular society.

My understanding of faith was enlightened by Petersen's translation of the Book of James in The Message Bible. 'Do you suppose...that you can cut faith and works in two and not end up with a corpse (2:20)...faith and works are yoked partners...faith expresses itself in works (2:22). I realized faith cannot exist without work, and the work of faith is radical love.

For disciples of love, faith is acting on the belief that love is the big picture, seen dimly, but eternally hopeful and joyful, however chaotic and disturbing the present renovations may be.

Karl Marshall

Renovation Realities of Spirit, Faith, and Life

This past year Pat and I experienced some unplanned events in our lives. With surprise but reassurance, however, each of them has brought us distinct feelings of renovation as our faith helps us to manage them.

My bone deterioration from osteolysis and ensuing joint reconstruction was a challenge but also a benefit of the wonders of medical science. Healing from a fourth surgery in two decades was enhanced by good physical therapy and the love and encouragement I received from many Foundry friends and clergy. I'm thankful for this—and blessed to be able to walk again in comfort.

The death of our son Peter, an unexpected shock, has brought Pat and me closer to dealing with loss. We've come to realize that our recovery will be long-term, but it will be bearable. Again, it is so much so because of the support we've experienced from caring Foundry ministers and church members as well as from our family and friends. All of this guides us on our journey.

As the world moves on, and our commitment to living as a part of it, we've made a decision to “right-size” our lives by moving from our home of many years. We'll “relo” nearby later this year into more manageable space. And, like we feel with Foundry's Mission Possible now under construction, we're excited to create new blueprints for our lives, with the space needed to dwell, to re-charge, and to flourish with God's care.

As our son learned from his 6th grade Foundry Sunday School teacher years ago before departing to live overseas with his family, you “bloom where you are planted.”

Steve Telkins

Down-size and Breathe

The mighty oaks
have ended their tango of leaves,
making a space
for beholding a new thing.
Long have they considered
their state of letting go,
and the eye of the wind
succored their flight.

At times, my journeywork
seems still in its salad days
although the village of elderhood
has set out its welcome mat.
In the labyrinth of wisdom,
a secret vein whispers “change,”
“down-size” and “breathe.”
In a window of time
by way of the heart
a medley of songs breaks through.
I am packing up.
Breezes lean over to stroke my hand.

Prayer:

*God of life and love, thank you for shepherding my days. In your
light do we see light. Amen.*

Sunny Branner

Letting Go and Embracing Change

Of course, my friends, I really do not think that I have already won it; the one thing I do, however; is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead.

Philippians 3:13 GNV

Letting go can be difficult at times of change. With god's help and guidance, we know when it is time to let go of people, ideas, expectations, bad habits, false beliefs, and unhealthy relationships. Every day can be an opportunity to work toward change by shrugging off the baggage of the past and making an effort to turn things around.

Quiet time is precious and helpful for my letting go and renewal. I like to attend Dayspring Silent Retreat Center in Germantown, Maryland which offers quiet days from February through December. A leader opens the retreat with a brief meditation. Then we move into silence. Retreatants sit by the fire on a cold day, or sit on the front porch overlooking the meadows during the summer.

In silence I have learned we should be gentle on ourselves. We should try to find a way to make someone's day better by offering a smile to someone while passing, holding a door for a person and taking the time to be a good listener. Contributing to the well-being of others makes us feel better about our own challenges.

Prayer:

Thank you for guiding and watching over us through periods of uncertainty. Help us to continue to embrace change and to heed Isaiah 43:18 (GNV), "Do not cling to events of the past or dwell on what happened long ago." Guide us on our spiritual journey to move on, leave the past behind, and focus on today. Amen.

Joan Williams

Deconstruction Experiences for the Soul

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2 ESV

I have always loved retreats, especially Foundry's annual women's retreat. In the past, I would attend no less than two each year, adding the Stephen Ministries retreat to my list of must attend events.

These retreats represent a deconstruction of my active life for a weekend of pure joy. Normal activities are suspended for the shared pleasure of group prayers, scripture readings, hymn sings, and discussions about matters of the heart. Like-minded seekers can enjoy a laugh or a serious sidebar conversation, while those in need of play can engage their passions. The objective is to create a space where new thoughts about life, love, God and commitment can be explored and perhaps actuated.

Stepping away from the world, at least momentarily, is a complementary task of discernment. Wisdom is more easily acquired and accessed when the slowdown occurs, not when we are running the marathon.

Prayer:

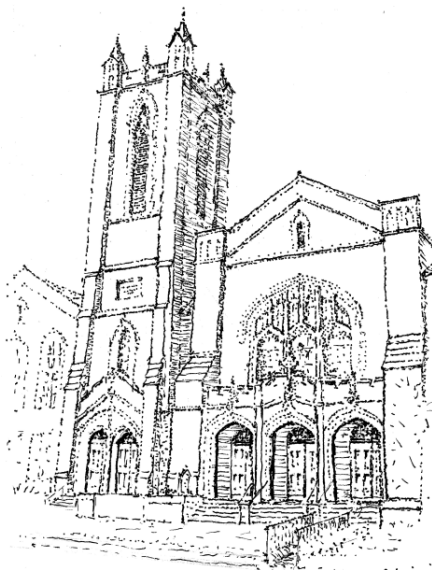
Dear God, the ravages of work and family often leave me exhausted. Restore the dead places and barren spots that leave me bewildered and sometimes aching. God help me to see your restoration and know that your grace is sufficient for me.

Paula Blair

A Heritage of Abiding Change

O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come ...

Hymn by Isaac Watts based on Psalm 90



© Joe Steller 2015

Foundry's current renovations reflect a rich legacy of change to its physical plant. On Henry Foxall's 1814 gift of land, our forebears built the first church, a simple brick structure, at the corner of 14th and G Streets NW. The church was remodeled in 1849 and then replaced in 1866 with an elaborate new one. Then, a congregational desire to worship in a quieter neighborhood raised our current building in 1904. Since then, the sanctuary's altar and chancel underwent dramatic renovations. An education wing was added in 1961. Our generation of Foundry members is now renovating our church home for a third century to better serve God through abiding programs and missions in response to ever-changing, challenging times.

Pray Watts' hymn lyrics:

*God is our shelter from the stormy blasts,
our guide while life shall last,
and our eternal home. Amen*

Joe Steller

Plan

This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.

Ezra 1:2 NIV

When Mission Possible—Foundry’s renovation plan to bring the building into the twenty-first century—began, the campaign centered around four stages: plan, pray, give, and build. Whether you are buying your first home, renovating a room, or trying to find a place to sleep safely for the night, planning can be overwhelming and stressful.

While our dream designs may be grand (as a fan of all things associated with home renovations, mine always are), God is thinking about how our church fits into our neighborhood, city, and the world, even when the construction costs and loan interest rates seem unaffordable. King Cyrus—a non-Israelite—announced God’s plan to restore the temple. He instructed God’s people in Babylonian captivity to return to Jerusalem, laden with valuable gifts and the temple articles stolen by King Nebuchadnezzar nearly 60 years prior, to fulfill God’s plans. God arranged everything: how the restoration would be financed with support from the church community and those outside the community; the order of renovations (the altar first and then the temple); the procurement and delivery of the wood from Lebanon; who would administer the reconstruction; and who would do the real work. Jeremiah had prophesied 70 years earlier, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” (Jeremiah 29:11)

God has a plan for Foundry—and the physical changes are only the beginning.

Oni K. Blair

Just Imagine

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

I John 5:14-15 NIV



“You can’t depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.”
—Mark Twain

Prayer:

In our prayers we often ask for the unlikely, the improbable and occasionally the impossible. Thank you for giving us what is right and just for us. Amen

Ta-Chen Wu

Finding My Way

Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life..."

John 14:6 SJV

Traveling solo to Spain was a unique experience for me. I'd always enjoyed company of another person, often depending on their direction through airport transfers. This time I was on my own.

When I deplaned at the London Heathrow Airport gate, I was faced with my first hurdle. How would I change terminals to find my connecting flight? The hallway connection board was confusing. The flight attendant told me "follow the purple line and overhead board instructions." I strode down the long, winding corridor, past information desks, downstairs, finally arriving at the waiting area. Boarding the bus, I discovered the 'underbelly' of life: cargo vans moving materials, construction sites, and shadowy tunnels leading to Terminal Two.

Collecting my belongings, I struggled up the escalator arriving at a waiting area maze, more tempting shops and eateries, and confusing gate postings. "Focus!" I told myself. Gate numbers posted 30 minutes ahead! Check airline, flight number, gate. "Fifteen minutes away?!" Speedily gathering my belongings again and heading out, I followed yellow signs toward a gate at terminal end. As I ran down the long corridor, I spotted a uniformed crew going my way. I called out "where is Gate 10?" "Follow me," the British Airways Captain said, "we're your crew!" We turned toward a hidden elevator, squeezed inside, and rapidly arrived on the second floor. The crew raced to prepare the cabin. I was greeted warmly as I boarded and took my seat.

Prayer:

Dear God: May you always say "follow me" and guide me down your enlightened path. Amen.

Diane Seeger

Paying Attention to the Convergence

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 NRSV

Last November, my husband Justin and I traveled with friends on a cruise in the Adriatic Sea. One evening, we wandered the ancient streets of Split, Croatia, on the Dalmatian coast. At the heart of that city, there is a small cathedral, which ironically was built for Emperor Diocletian, the last great Persecutor of Christians. For more than 15 centuries Christians have held Mass there daily. Not knowing any of that, three of us (Justin, myself and our friend Beth) saw the gate open and decided to peek inside. Surprisingly, we discovered two dozen people celebrating Mass. Five minutes later, Beth's husband wandered in, and then, two women from Denver who were part of our dinner group on the ship. We had randomly converged in Diocletian's tomb for Mass, in three uncoordinated moves. Few if any of the other 2,000 passengers on our ship were present. What were the odds of all six of us finding our way to Mass?

I shared this with my spiritual director. She pondered it with a startling gravity. We agreed that I needed to watch for the convergences in life: the unexpected and possibly God-anointed roads that bring people and ideas together, and bend the moral arc of things towards good.

In Washington, we love to design our lives, make our plans, and get to the top. Yet, we do not draw the real blueprints in Life. That is God's business—so we find ourselves (and others) showing up to the mystery of patterns and convergences we did not design!

“Pay attention to the convergence, Paul.”

Paul Nixon

Our Sure Foundation

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.”

Matthew 7:24-25 NRSV

It has been quite unsettling to first hear of the plans to reconfigure the layout of part of Foundry church’s building, and now to witness the demolition and tearing up of that structure. What has been so much part of my familiarity of the spaces where so much has happened, seems to have been eviscerated—in the chapel: a wedding of fellow members, memorial services, and prayer meetings; in the parlor: so many memorable luncheon meetings organized by the United Methodist Women, Saturday morning matinée screenings of films that we examined for their deeper message, many poignant talks on critical issues of the day, photo sessions for our members’ directory, and brides preparing there before taking their walk down the aisle; in fellowship hall: the companionship of, and sharing with fellow church members, the farewell ceremonies for former pastors, so many receptions enjoyed, and the painted panels of the history of Foundry, and that of John Wesley’s ministry leading to the origins of Methodism... .

Yet, despite these regrets, I realize that the building is nothing more than brick, stone and cement—if it was not built on Christ as its sure foundation. *That* is what really matters, whatever changes are made.

This site remains as the place where Wesley’s directive can be furthered, to “...do all the good you can, whenever you can, in all places you can... as long as you can.”

Laetitia Combrinck

The Only Constant

My father always used to say, “The only thing constant in this life is change.” These wise words have been a lifelong challenge. In fact, it took forever to find the courage necessary to take my first steps as a toddler. I like comfort and security. Why trade in the security of “*terra firma*” for the possibility of falling on one’s face? Well, in the first place, change is foisted upon us every day. For those of us who are grandparents, we know that the world of our grandchildren is far different from the one in which we grew up. We can either complain or adapt and learn.

Furthermore, if we are to be disciples of Jesus, we also need to be agents of change. At the very end of Matthew [28:20], Jesus commands his disciples “to obey everything that I have commanded of you.” What does Jesus command of disciples? He commands us to seek first the Kingdom (or in 21st century language “kin-dom”) of God in which the needs of the poor, the disenfranchised, the homeless and the sick are met. This means leaving our comfort zone. One thing I have learned in my long life is that when I have taken that scary step of changing what needs to be changed—whether it was starting preschools in the inner city, or taking leadership in an interfaith women’s organization after 9/11, or mentoring immigrant children in Gaithersburg—I have had my eyes opened in new ways and have grown. Jesus assures us that “Lo, I am with you always, even to end of the age.” Especially when I step into the unknown, Jesus is there with me. He is constant support in a changing world.

Jan Garman

God Renovates Us—It's a Good Thing

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.
And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a
heart of flesh.*

Ezekiel 36:26 NIV

In 1999, I felt God was calling me to the ministry. After some discernment, I entered the ministry process. Having deaf ministry as a specialization, I was offered a deaf ministry position in the Western North Carolina Conference in 2002. My move to North Carolina and my position were full of challenges. I faced many difficulties; however, I didn't realize at the time, God was using them to help make some spiritual and emotional renovations in my own life. These challenges in North Carolina shaped the kind of minister I was to become.

Ezekiel shares with Israel and Judah God's prophetic voice of how the Lord was going to give them a new heart, even a new spirit. In a sense, Ezekiel speaks to all of us, in that God renews our heart and renews our spirits as well. For me, my renewed heart and renewed spirit came about because of my difficulties. God used them to help change me so my faith would be deepened and I would put my trust in Him. In hind sight, I needed this.

If God is doing some renovations in your life, recognize that God will be doing something useful with them. Trust in God and anticipate what He has in store for you.

Prayer:

Lord, provide assurance to us that you remain ever so close during our challenges, difficulties, and renovations. Buffer them when we need it and give us strength and confidence throughout. Amen.

Rev. Leo Yates, Jr.

How Big is Your Renovation?

As we are reminded in II Chronicles 34, the boy King Josiah undertook the complete renovation of the Temple. During this massive project came the unexpected discovery of the long-lost Book of the Law. King Josiah set himself to the task of cleansing the land of idolatry and restoring his people to the God of his ancestor David. What a gift to the people of Israel!

My renovation experience has been far less dramatic yet perhaps no less disruptive to those around me. There were always competing priorities; my renovations were tied to relocation. Alongside the preparation of the old residence—painting, deep cleaning, repairing and replacing—I also had to attend to the tasks of moving. Josiah’s spiritual covenant (restoration) did not enter my deliberations as I was selling the old and purchasing the new home, dealing with new work assignments, and mothering anxious children. Matters of the soul had to wait until my life slowed down.

Looking back, however, several renovation lessons emerge:

- Advance thinking is always required to get a sense of what needs to be fixed in one’s current life and dream new possibilities for the future.
- Hopefulness must rule that the restoration will be beneficial to the community (family), even though we may be required to let go of some old things and old ways.
- Re-covenanting ourselves to God and family should always be a part of the process.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to let go of things that keep us from embracing your call. May we trust that you will lead us to unexpected outcomes that help advance the kingdom. Amen.

Paula Blair

Pray

With praise and thanksgiving, they sang to the LORD: He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.

Ezra 3:11a NIV

Of Mission Possible's plan, pray, give, and build stages, I find "pray" the hardest. I harbor suspicion around prayer meetings or corporate prayer for a pre-defined outcome. Perhaps I'm dubious of the sincerity of prayers that flow freely from the lips of extroverted folk. Maybe I'm uncomfortable with publicly putting my faith to the test. I prefer private communication with God to make my requests in confidence and without consequence! Christ said, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20) If God hears my solitary cry to stretch my family budget for a building fund contribution, then surely He hears a congregation calling out in chorus for success.

Before the Israelites—those returning from Babylonian captivity and the remnant left behind—began rebuilding the temple, they reconstructed the altar to commune with God through sacrifice and worship (Ezra 3:4-5). The entire congregation needed to be of one mind, collectively focused on and listening to God to carry out His will. And their communication with God didn't stop. Their prayers and praise continued throughout the reconstruction project, even when it was painful due to setbacks and the lingering grief of losing everything in captivity. Later, when they finally laid the temple foundation, their prayers were so emotional that "No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise." (Ezra 3:13)

Through community prayer and praise, we join together to thank God for His goodness, invite Him into our lives, and listen for His word, which reveals His enduring love and plans for us.

Oni K. Blair

Renewed by God's Unconditional Love

Several years ago, I was in a bad job situation. I wasn't sure what to do, but before I did anything, they fired me! This was one of the worst moments of my life.

My bosses were relatively kind, and said that I could stay in my office and use it for a month to job search. Every morning for that month I got up, got dressed, walked to "work," went into my office, closed the door, and cried. Then I read the New Testament for about an hour from the "Message" paraphrase. I found the epistles most helpful: it was as if St. Paul was talking right to me, as a father would.

I felt amazingly strong, refreshed, and confident. Even if the people who fired me didn't think I was very smart and couldn't perform, I knew that God loved me, absolutely and unconditionally. It was that assurance that helped me go through my contacts and schedule meetings and interviews.

Within three weeks, I got a job offer! That job involved important work with government agencies, and led to other positions that bolstered and heightened my 40-year career in educational research and administration.

Now I am retired, at least from office work. Each afternoon as I work in my neighborhood school, I am reminded that I am a child of God, loved unconditionally. Remembering that, I try and approach each child with the same attitude.

Ella Cleveland

Eat Pray Love

Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Eat Pray Love* (2007), shared her journey of self-discovery that brought her to global destinations—Italy, India, and Indonesia. One aspect of Gilbert’s search was spiritual vitality.

Gilbert looked to reinvent her life after feelings and experiences of failure. She was committed to changing her life by exploring food, prayer, and self-love. In her pursuit, Gilbert came to realize God’s presence within, which led to her transformation and joy. Her new friendships in each destination made such an impact, she found new life as she learned culture, spiritual practices, and self-love.

While unique, Gilbert’s experience is not necessarily new to Christian spirituality. Pursuing a deeper relationship with God is often found by being in the moment, like cooking or meditating or nurturing one’s self. All that leads to self-love, which increases the awareness of God’s love in us.

This journey reminds me of Isaiah’s prophecy to Israel in the 43rd chapter when speaking for the Lord.

*“Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness...”*
Isaiah 43:18-19

How often have we journeyed in our personal wilderness, looking and yearning for something new?

Gilbert reminds us that “There’s a crack (or cracks) in everyone...that’s how the light of God gets in.” Recognizing the light of God within humbles us and shows the need for renovating our spirit so we can be present to God who is there for us.

Prayer:

Thank you Lord for making each day new. When we forget what you are doing, send us signs so we recognize your light within us. Amen.

Rev. Leo Yates, Jr.

Blessings

But I say to you who are listening now to Me: [[a] in order to heed, make it a practice to] love your enemies, treat well (do good to, act nobly toward) those who detest you and pursue you with hatred, invoke blessings upon and pray for the happiness of those who curse you, implore God's blessing (favor) upon those who abuse you [who revile, reproach, disparage, and high-handedly misuse you]. To the one who strikes you on the [b] jaw or cheek, offer the other [c] jaw or cheek also; and from him who takes away your outer garment, do not withhold your undergarment as well.

Luke 6:27-29 AMPC

It seems all of one's life is a process of changing, whether I like it or not. At a silent retreat in 2010, one afternoon, I had memories surface concerning several persons who had abused me. The memories persisted. I began blessing each person. I used the name or, if I did not know the name, I substituted, person 1, etc.

So: Person 1, the Lord bless you and keep you. Person 1, The Lord smile upon you and give you grace. Person 1, The Lord raise his presence to you and give you peace.

The blessings seemed to take me from "fight or flight" mode into "rest and relax" mode. Perhaps after a few minutes, usually less than 15 minutes, a (or the) memory would return. I again blessed the person or persons individually. And I repeated the scenario for the rest of the day and into a few hours of night, until I fell asleep.

The next morning I was spent. However, the memories seemed to be kept at bay. I went into a thankful mood.

Prayer:

The Lord bless and keep me. The Lord smile upon me and give me grace. The Lord raise his presence to me and give me peace.

Paul Mulligan

Joy Restored

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Psalm 51:12 KJV

A few years ago a turning point in my life occurred while uttering these words for the very first time

“God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change
the courage to change the things I can
and the wisdom to know the difference.”

The Serenity Prayer began a rebuilding of my life, restoring an unbelievable joyous experience with the love of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. A huge part of my serenity is finding the courage to change the things that I can. Foundry gives me courage.

My Foundry family, my prayer for this Lenten season is: Extend your hand, that through you someone will feel the joy of God's salvation. Someone will find their courage. Someone will be freely upheld, granting them a spirit of love, compassion and open-mindedness for God's plan for us all.

John Harden

Know Thyself

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function...

Romans 12:4 NIV

My most precious antique sits in the closet tarnishing—not ticking or striking—just a silent paperweight. This happened because a clock “repairman” thought but ultimately could not fix my 100-year-old, hand-crafted, quarter repeater carriage clock. It had been working just fine until one night when some friends repeated it against its will.

Adults should know their limitations. My clock is proof that many do not. Problems are created when we don’t know what we are good at and what we are not. While everyone is capable of learning a new skill, not all will be masters of it. Only a person with a gift for something can understand the complexities of it—employing passion with aplomb.

As Foundry embarks upon its third century, we need to refresh, evolve, and grow with the times. Our physical building needs to reflect the trends for worship if the congregation is to remain relevant. And we need to also welcome new members that brighten our doorways.

So often you have heard the scripture about useful body parts. There is room for everyone at Foundry. Everyone has skills and characteristics to make a complete, well-rounded body—a healthy community. But when a foot thinks it is a mouth, we have a problem. We need to let the experts do their job. And, we must also know our limitations. When we believe we are an expert in an area, and we are not, we create trouble—breaking what is not broken and damaging what we think we can repair.

Perhaps it is the fault of the Master who makes it look so easy. But it is not.

“Know Thyself”—Socrates.

Bill McLeod

Flea Market Flip

And we all...are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV

I am addicted to *Flea Market Flip* and when I tune in and watch the half-hour TV program, my mind is jump started. I immediately want to find an out-of-date item and paint/polish/shine it, giving it a second life. My motivation is not to flip the item. I simply want to test my creative skills.

As with any creative endeavor, success brings great joy. The results are sometimes surprising, because during the process changes are made, some intentionally, some whimsically. Satisfaction reassures me that I am a creative thinker.

When a project fails, however, I feel disappointed, and no matter how spectacular my visions for objects were at the beginning, a few of them turn out to be ridiculous. Facing the fact that a project is beyond my abilities, for whatever reasons, is frustrating. I disappoint myself. From my attempts to renovate objects I have learned important lessons. The most important is discerning when to abandon a project and move on to the next.

In terms of my spiritual life, I see myself as God's flea market project, a piece of work to make current and functional. I am confident that God wants to improve me, to update me, to refine me. I am ready and waiting. Occasionally I am aware of changes that are taking place in my thinking. There are times, of course, when I resist, and fortunately, God does not abandon me. God guarantees me endless overhauls.

Prayer:

Okay, Lord, thank you for re-inventing, rejuvenating and keeping me useful. To you goes the glory for all the good I do. Amen.

Stephen Roberts

Pain & Comfort

Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16 NRSV

Last August 17 was a typical day since I retired on June 30. I had enjoyed my usual 4.5-mile run, a day working in the garden and time with my wife. Early in the next morning, I woke up to excruciating pain in my hip and down my left leg. The pain was a 10 out of 10; I could hardly walk. I thought I had broken my hip. What did I do? I called to Joanne and she took me to a nearby hospital, where the ER doctor indicated that I had sciatica and it would take weeks, if not months, to recover. This was not the way I wanted to start retirement.

Several months of prescriptions and epidurals have managed the pain so I can stand up, climb stairs, and do normal activities in reasonable comfort. Although the physical pain was unimaginable and some pain lingers, the emotional sting of losing my active life was more painful. I mourn that life as I knew it had changed.

I am grateful for the pain relief care from my family, doctors, physical therapist, and helpful suggestions from friends. More importantly I am grateful for their daily prayers, emotional comfort, and encouragement. My faith in God also has strengthened during this rough spot. I am grateful for His being there through people who help me navigate toward healing. As an “impatient patient,” I am learning to relax and trust God completely in new ways, remembering He never fails me. This vital healing and strengthening is comforting and prepares me for living the fullest life I can in my expected decades ahead.

Pray and meditate on the second Beatitude (Matthew 5:4):

Blessed are those that mourn for they shall be comforted.

Joe Steller

Be still and know that I am God

The wind chimes hanging from the branches of several trees were being buffeted by the wind as I turned the corner. I stopped, transfixed by the melodies I heard. My own symphony as I walked down the street.

Twilight was falling, the city changing from glass-windowed buildings reflecting lights across the street, red tail lights of traffic crawling through intersections, traffic cops barking directions to wayward pedestrians, and drivers trying to beat the lights. Motorcyclists rev up their engines and roar off. Runners ignore the cold while soothed by budding music. “Street Sense,” a vendor hawks, “hot off the press!”

In this cacophony of sounds I find excitement and peace in a stream of consciousness. All these people transitioning from work to evening activities. This is God’s world of chaos, each of us with our own unique niche carved out by our own interests, family circle, and friends. Let’s take a “selfie of our current lives: where we are now, future goals, and our pathway forward.

Prayer:

Dear God: In this chaotic world we live in, may we take time out in our day to listen to you, meditate on your guidance, and follow your path toward establishing our goals. Amen.

Diane Seeger

Why bother?

... Be transformed by the renewing of your mind...

Romans 12:2 NIV

A few months ago something gnawed at my psyche, a desire tugged at me, but it was elusive. Finally, clarity! It was time to discard a few things. Abundant living was taking up space—too much space. The time was right. Three categories: keep, donate, trash. Sounded easy. So many things. Prioritize!

How many pairs of socks does one person need? How long can unworn shirts, slacks, ties and jackets hang in closets? Outdated computers, monitors, printers, cables galore. Decisions had to be made. I walked and thought. Then I sat and thought. Finally it was—why bother? Forgettaboutit. Let things remain as they have been for years. Maybe next year. My simple prayer: bring back the good old days of benign indifference.

It didn't work. God did **not** answer that prayer. The time had come. Baby steps. Just begin, I thought. Begin with what you see, right now. Sorting the sock drawer, one pair at a time. Mission accomplished. What's next? Clothes closets. Discovering. Remembering. Deciding. Keeping is easiest, donating feels good, trashing is hard.

I developed a case of the big eyes. I was a rabid dog on a long leash. Things disappeared at an unexpected pace. The damp sponge of fate was rubbing out many of my possessions. The reward? Space opened up that had not been available for many years. Renovation became a reality. A burden was lifted.

My conclusion: purging is messy, dusty, painful, but it is time well spent. Today I can actually see the backs of closets and bottoms of drawers. Now when people tell me about their reasons for clinging to things, I forget to listen. When they ask, "Why bother?" I gently explain.

Prayer:

When I don't want to be bothered, Lord, by doing what should be done, please gnaw, tug and command me to get a move on. Amen.

Stephen Roberts

Give

According to their ability, they gave to the treasury for this work...

Ezra 2:69 NIV

After we planned and prayed to invite God into our building efforts, Foundry focused on giving to fund the church's renovations. As the pledges started to roll in, Mission Possible became a palpable, quantifiable project. I joined hundreds of others who stretched family budgets to voluntarily contribute. Then, the pledges slowed, costs started rising, and everything suddenly became stressful.

In the Book of Ezra, the Israelites faced a similar conundrum. When the exiled Israelites returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, those who were able gave freewill offerings (a voluntary contribution above the tithe) to build the second temple (Ezra 2:68-69). Their offerings of literally tons of gold and silver were a huge sacrifice for the community, but they were likely insufficient to cover the reconstruction costs. God stepped in and, through an act of grace, used Persian kings to order the payment of building expenses from the royal treasury and to endow the temple with precious articles. As the Israelites accumulated large sums to pay for the reconstruction, they attracted negative attention from jealous outsiders who wanted to take their own cut of the money. The outsiders even hired lobbyists and bribed officials! Undeterred, Ezra made clear that the money was used for the committed purpose. The administrators "gave money to the masons and carpenters" while providing for the foreigners hired to ship the timber from Lebanon to Israel (Ezra 3:7 NIV).

We, like the Israelites, must trust that God will provide and remain committed to using the offerings for their intended purpose. As the Mission Possible team has stated, "Giving is an act of faith, an expression of our commitment to our God and to our church."

Oni K. Blair

When No One Is Looking

So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you...so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:2-4 NRSV

How can we as individuals renovate our way of living to have global impact? The Greater Washington Interfaith Power & Light organization reminds us that Lent serves as a wake-up call. In their Lenten Carbon Fast calendar [www.gwipl.org], they suggest ways our daily choices can make big changes to huge challenges like climate change. The actions are unpretentious, almost invisible to the larger perspective of mission and service. Yet, each act can “reduce our production of climate pollution and help to preserve God’s great gift of Creation.” For example:

- Turn down your thermostat by at least one degree. Aim for 68 during the day, 60 at night. Always turn off your heat when you leave home.
- Bring reusable bags with you to get groceries. Leave them in your trunk for future trips.
- Make today’s journey more environmentally friendly. Combine trips. Carpool rather than drive solo. Walk, bike or take transit instead of driving.
- Help your kitchen fridge function efficiently by placing jugs of water inside. (Water retains cold better than air.) Pull out the fridge and scrub down the coils.
- Run your clothes washer only with full loads and use the cold/cold cycle. Cold water gets clothes just as clean as hot water but uses half the energy.
- Unplug appliances, phone chargers, and power strips when not in use. Many electronics draw power even when turned off.

Prayer:

Help me live in harmony with the rest of God’s Creation, especially when no one is looking. Through my small changes, let my household be part of a worldwide transformation.

Emily Wirzba
Foundry Green Team

What will I be today?

On January 1, 2016 I retired. That welcome event opens a new way of approaching each day. I have decided to start the day by asking not “What will I do today?” but “What will I be today?” This existential question opens a new line of thought for the next phase of life.

As I culled from hundreds of speeches and presentations as a faculty member, university administrator, and association executive a few print copies to keep. One was “What I Am Becoming as I Grow Up,” a plenary address at the annual meeting of university writing program administrators. Asked for that event to analyze my professional evolution, I found that I cared less about what I had done and more about how I had changed based on my activities. Who was I as a person as revealed by what I did as a professional?

On Facebook currently I am following a conversation about initial contact with a new acquaintance. Most people ask the person, “What do you do?” In the Facebook interchange some people object to that question, saying it assumes that the most important feature of a person is their work life. Would other questions point more directly to what people value in their own identity?

At Foundry currently we are moving to more year-round conscious consideration of stewardship. We might build in careful initial and periodic reflection about what we each want to be in relation to our church community and to our calling from God. Then we can decide at different life stages what we will do with our time, talent, and funds.

For myself, I will continue to ask, “What will I be today?” I’m eager to learn what I will reply.

Barbara Cambridge

Letting Go

The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?” Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Matthew 19:20-21

I wanted to focus this reflection on Zacchaeus, the tax collector who gave away half of all he owns in his conversion. But he gets to keep the other half. There is no indication that he quits his job or leaves his home or family. That attracted me because life is going well for me and I don't want to change everything. To stick with the remodel imagery: I don't want to tear down the walls I just want to slap a new coat of paint on them where they have gotten a little dirty.

But God put the story of the rich young man in my head. He was a good man—a follower of the rules. And he wants to be better, a lot like me. And Jesus won't let him tweak a relatively good life. Jesus calls him to a deeper relationship where he must let go of even the good things in his life for something better. I'll be honest I'm scared of this. I'm too comfortable.

I heard once “Hold all things not eternal loosely in the hand.” But when life is good we want to hold on tight. But then what will we miss out on?

Prayer:

Lord, You are always calling us to that which is better. You are not satisfied with comfortable; You want us to be complete. Help us not to be afraid of letting go to follow You.

Joanne Garlow

Build

So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

Ezra 6:14 NIV

Pushing ahead with the plans, prayers, and giving, we have finally reached the building stage of Mission Possible. The dust, yellow caution tape, and “out of order” signs that oddly seem promising now will become increasingly inconvenient and inevitably frustrating. We must prepare ourselves for a protracted construction period and the immense amount of work ahead. This project will continue for years, perhaps beyond your or my time at Foundry. The Israelites’ construction of the second temple lasted through several Persian kings, opposition from local and regional officials, and red tape involving a series of letters, executive orders, and stop work orders.

When they finally finished the temple, it wasn’t the end of the story. The Book of Ezra continues, documenting the rebuilding of the community as the exiles returned to Judah and the people returned to God. Strong leadership—secular and religious—was essential to guiding the Israelites through rebuilding the church facility and community. The Persian kings, though unlikely allies, repeatedly used legal mechanisms to permit the Israelites to build. Zechariah, the fiery prophet who foretold of Christ, urged the people to return to God so that God would return to them (Zechariah 1:3). And the LORD Almighty, through Haggai’s prophecy, declared, “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house...And in this place I will grant peace...” (Haggai 2:9).

May God bless our building and our leadership and grant us peace.

Oni K. Blair

Amazing Grace

At 16 I built a portable bar for the backseat of the car. Even then I knew my priorities. And alcohol remained my first priority for the next 15 years.

Our family history with Methodism traces all the way back to John Wesley, who baptized and later ordained a family member. While active in the church growing up, I left the Methodist church as a teenager vowing never to return.

After 15 years of drinking, I hit bottom and humbly asked the God of my non-understanding for help. One day at a time since, with the help of other recovering alcoholics, I've been sober.

Newly sober, I read a book, *Loving Someone Gay*. It was a short, simple positive book that helped me recover from the damage of growing up gay. I liked the book enough to buy multiple copies and hand out to friends. What I never told anyone is that I identified with the first story in the book—about a young man who couldn't get his life together, returned home, and told his family that he was gay. His family had him institutionalized, and being alone, he committed suicide.

A year later I re-read the book. Near the end of the book, the author wrote about his own journey and how he identified with the words of a spiritual. I read those words, and after a year of sobriety, identified not with the young man who committed suicide while all alone, but with the words of Amazing Grace, "...I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see."

After years of sobriety, I got involved with Foundry, eventually joined, and have continued my spiritual journey and healing as a gay man—and once again, a Methodist.

Anonymous

Brick by Brick

God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

Ephesians 2:19-22 MSG

I'm someone without a real home. I've lived in 12 different places in 15 years, and now I live mostly out of a suitcase for work travel and in a rental place or my rented apartment. I'd love to have a place of my own, but can't afford it in DC, a city with one of the highest housing costs in the nation. Don't get me wrong, I'm not poor, but sometimes I wonder if I'm just a vagabond. Without a 'real' home of my own I take comfort in the fact that the Old Testament folks lived for years in tents, and I have a roof, heat and hot water.

Although we are always looking at the physical, God cares more about building us, and building His kingdom. As it says in Ephesians above, He uses all of us, no matter who we are and how we got here, to build His temple. You and I are the brick by brick. Though I may not have a 'real' home in DC, I have a spiritual home, and I'm a building block in the temple of the Almighty.

Prayer:

*Dear God, we open ourselves to be a building block in your temple.
Help us vagabonds to be 'home' wherever we are.*

Anonymous

What holds it up?

When the church I was serving in Syracuse was doing its “Mission Possible,” the structural engineer showed me how he planned to support the new floor. Huge steel beams, like those we saw supporting the floor in Fellowship Hall, would be installed. And vertical support beams would run down to the ground level. The water table was a foot below the lower floor so huge cement pads were poured to support the beams.

Read Matthew 7:24-27. The passage tells about a person who built a house on rocks and another who built on sand. When unsure about our spiritual grounding, we are reluctant to leave our comfort zone. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. went to jail many times for leading non-violent protests against injustice. He was obviously standing on solid spiritual ground.

How do we strengthen our spiritual base? For me, it comes through an interaction of faith and works. I ask myself if I am doing “good things” for the right reasons, ones involving unconditional love undergirding King’s vision of Beloved Community. Living with awareness of this love leads to a spiritual grounding for me.

We developed an MLK-inspired project, Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative, where we involve residents of Asbury Methodist Village with children, youth, and families who live near Asbury’s campus. Many are Latino. A few weeks ago, federal agents deported one family just a few blocks away. Fifth graders told several mentors how they are afraid. Parents fear being returned to El Salvador or Honduras and the risks of being killed by gangs they fled. I feel a moral challenge to support these young students, no matter what happens. I hear Paul, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13 NRSV)

Hal Garman

The Joys of Construction

I sat in my office and the jackhammering reverberated so loud I felt like the walls were crashing all around. Dust particles and chemically pungent smells permeate the air. Temporary containment walls, plastic coverings, shoring posts, and makeshift passageways are the interior landscape. Gaping holes in the ceiling are ready to receive large ducts. Directional and warning signs crisscross the hallways. Tempers rise and fall. Ah, the joys of construction.

It's happening. Our space is being transformed so that we can be in better position to expand our reach, enrich welcoming and hospitality and enhance ministries that will grow us. We are preaching and teaching on these construction themes: Pardon our Dust. Pew Crashers. Coming Soon. Blue Prints. Renovation realities. Through my exhaustion and excitement, I think of Jesus. Really? Yes. Jesus was a carpenter by trade. I believe Jesus' best construction was working to transform the hearts and souls of his disciples.

During our time of construction, we have discovered some marvelous gems—beautiful antique hardwoods and elaborate tile flooring. We believe the tile floor in the narthex and bell tower lobby is the original 1904 floor. That which was covered is now revealed. The hope is the flooring can be restored to its natural beauty.

As we transform our space here, let us also yield ourselves to be transformed on the inside. In so doing, we invite Jesus to abate impurities, shore up faith and expand our hearts. Surely, tempers will again rise and fall. Ah, the joys of construction.

Prayer:

Gracious and loving God, we rejoice and give thanks for the transformation that is happening all around us. By your power you raised Jesus to shore up your church and to restore her natural beauty. So let it be. Amen.

Dawn Hand
Executive Pastor

Nothing is Impossible

He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Matthew 17:20 NIV



“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” —Francis of Assisi

Prayer:

I hold tight to my faith, God, which most of the time is as small as a mustard seed. Grant me the strength and courage to do impossible things. Amen.

Ta-Chen Wu

Our Constant Renovation

I will praise you; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are your works; and that my soul knows right well.

Psalm 139:14 AKJV

Our bodies are under constant renovation. Science can quantify how often and quickly the skin, blood, bones organs and other body parts regenerate new cells. Nicolas Wade describes this process in a 2005 New York Times Science article, “Your Body is Younger than you Think.” Wade’s opening lines are: “Whatever your age, your body is many years younger. In fact, even if you’re middle aged, most of you may be just 10 years old or less.”

These constant changes impart new vigor and vitality. However, the thought of the constant change in our lives, usually makes us want to resist and stop it. Fear and worry creep in. Anxiety or despair result. Wanting to catch our breath is a common response.

I take comfort in remembering what change God has intended for our bodies, He intends change for the wellbeing of our minds and spirits as well. Accordingly, I find that my daily devotionals, prayer, physical exercise and meditation enable me to better receive God’s intended resiliency to manage the constant challenges that my body, mind and spirit face. But first, I must trust and surrender my will to God’s so that His renewing energy will be able to flow freely and completely to me as He intended.

Pray and meditate on the Galatians 2:20 AKJV:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Joe Steller

Hope on the Journey

Finding the right solution to genetic mental health issues is an ongoing renovation project in my life. I was born with several genetic predispositions related to mental health issues, including Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Of the many forms of OCD, I have one of the most common: the inability to let go of obtrusive thoughts. In the early 90's a new family of drugs called SSRIs was developed to address conditions like OCD. After an extended period of reluctance and during a very debilitating onset of OCD, I agreed to start this new drug therapy. Initially the drug worked great. I remember asking my doctor if this is what being normal was like.

My sense of well-being continued for a few years, but it was an illusion. The drug masked reality. Its effect brought me to a point where I didn't care about anything. Against medical advice, I stopped the medication cold turkey. This led to a crash and in one month I lost 25 pounds. At the same time, I became aware of alternative therapy. Through trial and error, I found what helped and what didn't. Meditation, I learned, worked well for me. In combination with exercise, meditation has been transformative.

Along the way, I discovered many bits of wisdom. One of the greatest was from an Episcopal priest who I think understood my struggle. His advice was very simple. When those obtrusive thoughts overwhelm, just observe them. Say, "hello thought," and then, "goodbye thought," as you visualize the thought leaving. It sounds too easy, but this practice has had tremendous positive effect.

Prayer:

May this deeply personal part of my life inspire hope for others suffering similar conditions. Help us face our challenges. May we know hope always as we continue to grow on our lifetime journeys.

Andrew (Andy) Lee

Change

I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me!

2 Corinthians 11:41 NIV



Wi-jun-jon, Pigeon's Egg Head (The Light) Going To and Returning From Washington (1837-1839)
by George Catlin

This painting in glorious color hangs in the Catlin Gallery in the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Wi-jun-jon was an American Indian who traveled to Washington DC to meet President Andrew Jackson. He arrived “plumed and tinted...[and] dressed in his native costume, which was classic and exceedingly beautiful,” according to Catlin’s Letters and Notes, Volume 2, and returned home to the Northern Plains eighteen months later dressed in a US officer’s uniform and a top hat. His fellow tribesmen rejected his stories about the Capitol City as “ingenious fabrication of novelty and wonder.” Wi-jun-jon’s people did not approve of his transformation. They murdered him. He learned the hard way that change can have negative consequences.

Prayer:

Forgive our foolish mistakes, Lord. Amen.

Stephen Roberts

Untying the Knots

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Titus 3:5 ESV

“Let Jesus untie the knots” —seen on billboard, Eastern Shore

I’m not big on Bible billboards, but this one caught my attention and made me think: yes, I could use Jesus’ help untying some knots in my life. But what does that really mean, and how will Jesus do it? I thought about a scripture from Romans: Don’t be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. It would seem that most of these knots were indeed from me conforming to the world. I had taken on too much debt, spent too much time worrying about money, and spent too much time focusing on me, rather than on God’s work and the community.

It was time for me to renovate my thinking. I decided to ask the Holy Spirit to renew my mind, to frame my problems in the way He would see them, to untie the knots.

Meditation:

Holy Spirit, show us where the “knots” are in our life, transform and renew our minds, so that we can untie them together.

John Godshalk

A Four-Letter Word Called Fear

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

Luke 22:42 NIV

Too often when I’ve moved toward change for the better, fear formed impenetrable walls. What if I make a mistake? What if there’s not enough time or money? What if I’m just not good enough? With me, fear can become obscenely debilitating. It can overwhelm, even paralyze my ability to act and stamina needed to accomplish what I had set out to improve. I seek guidance.

At Gethsemane, Jesus agonized in prayer as he anticipated the end of His spiritual renovation of humankind on earth. Jesus asked God if there was another way. Was Jesus as terrified as I can imagine? It’s plausible that the Son of God incarnate would fear an impending horrific death. He was human. Yet, He chose to surrender to God’s will. He moved beyond anguish, and accepted the cross.

His example is extreme compared to any circumstance in my life, but still resonates. When fear is present, it need not be the four-letter expletive I’ve allowed myself to fight with, bury and deny. Instead, it is a signal, a call to be heeded, dealt with, and transcended as Jesus did.

I’ve resolved to walk with Jesus toward Easter’s renewal through Gethsemane, Good Friday, and all the fearfulness that comes my way. I’ll remember that God already has imbued me—all of us—with divine spirit. I’ll use that inner light to recognize and acknowledge fear and to seek in it that which my struggle needs me to know.

Prayer:

I will quake with fear, Lord. When I do, help me be still and know you’re there with me and in me. Amen.

Joanne Steller

On Being Transformed

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NRSV

As 2015 ended, I noted in my journal that being pain-free after back surgery in March was among the year's numerous blessings. And Hugh, my life partner of 50 years, was spared the worst indignities of Alzheimer's. Yet, 2015 was a year of great testing for my family. I had come close to losing my life. Then, in December, I lost Hugh.

What lessons did these experiences teach me? Prayer is life-giving. As I lay unconscious in hospital, several members of my school family stood around me praying with an ordained colleague leading us by phone. I also learned first-hand how love can be exchanged through greeting cards. What gratitude I have for my church family who cared for me during these two life-changing events!

I now identify closely with Foundry's transformation process. Walking around the building, I feel a sense of excited anticipation at the ways in which our church will grow and be a radiating presence for God. Similarly, I feel called to welcome growth in new ways of cultivating a closer relationship with God. This can take many forms: spending time in nature; being engaged in a physical activity, such as walking; or being steeped in sublime music, as was Hugh's preference. I am keenly aware that change is an inside job—an openness to the gradual remodeling of the human spirit by the Spirit of the Creator. Therefore, an appropriate resolution for me this year may be: to deepen my life of prayer and explore meditation.

Josiane Blackman

Mend the Walls

Cracked peeling stained plaster
Worn out
Walls bowed from leaky pipes in 402
Just to mention five passes 12 years ago
Ripping grass cloth rinsing paste with goop
Whitewashing black paint
This time I called Carlos and in two days

He recreated smooth ramparts pristine
Soothing colors of coastal fog and etiquette
A new style looks flat and cleans up well
Cobwebs gone

I want to be a new penny brilliant
Reflection of your love inside out
Top to bottom spilling out soaking earth
Renewed shined every once in a while
Seeking finding breathing giving
Living in Light

Sing it:

Fill us with your love show us how to live in you

Jeanette Barker

Under Construction

But He said to me, “my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV

My life has certainly been a journey with starts and stops and therefore is always under construction.

As a young person I was fearful to speak in public about anything. I was comfortable with my co-workers and children in the classroom. I could speak to persons one to one, never in large groups in public.

Gradually I grew to realize I needed to be an advocate for the children I worked with and that meant doing some speaking in groups and in public. I knew I had the information and I needed to share it. As I began to share, I realized that my fears and anxieties were self-imposed. God does not give one the spirit of fear. I became a parent trainer. As I trained parents and other trainers, my self-image improved. Over time— I realized God was changing me – not even I saw that coming. Now I talk all the time.

I have done different jobs in various settings, have heard from co-workers and heard from people I mentored, and I know my personal changes happened only because of my Contractor, God, who gave me gifts He needed me to share, then He directed me.

I say thanks to God for all He has done for me. I would not want to be scared or anxious again. The greatest thing is I am still under construction, God is not finished with me yet.

Prayer:

Dear God, fill your world with caring hearts and thoughtful minds that will work your wonders in each individual and in all the world. Help us remember to be patient with each other as we are all under construction.

Fay L. Allen

Knowing What to Do

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content...I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:11-13 ESV



With Fellowship Hall closed for renovation, how to stage post-service coffee hours became one of the many operational details that required adaptation. Posed with the challenge, Foundry's Sunday Morning Coffee Host Rosa Vega replied, "I know how to do this. Everything goes to Davenport!" Smaller coffee pots, including one Rosa had put aside years ago, replaced the unmovable urns. She came in earlier to set up and did at home tasks like ironing that she could no longer do at church. It was yet another big change, but then Rosa says, "Nothing has been the same" in her 23 years of service. "I don't think of inconvenience. This project is good for us, good for the whole community."

Prayer:

Lord, let us be content in times of change, knowing that we can do all things through You.

Joanne Steller

...Toward New Creation

Peaceful, but not passive

But I say to you who are listening now to Me: [[a] in order to heed, make it a practice to] love your enemies, treat well (do good to, act nobly toward) those who detest you and pursue you with hatred, Invoke blessings upon and pray for the happiness of those who curse you, implore God's blessing (favor) upon those who abuse you [who revile, reproach, disparage, and high-handedly misuse you]. To the one who strikes you on the [b] jaw or cheek, offer the other [c] jaw or cheek also; and from him who takes away your outer garment, do not withhold your undergarment as well.

Luke 6:27-29 AMPC

At the time that this gospel was originally written, if one did strike a person, it would usually be a person perceived to be of a lower social status than the “striker.” The “striker” would use the left (unclean) hand to strike the lower status person. By turning ones cheek to the “striker”, the abused person offers the cheek that would be struck by the right (clean) hand. The dynamic of the encounter is then drastically changed. If the abused is struck again as an equal, then the abused can retaliate as an equal. This passage may not be saying be passive to abuse. It may be indicating to become an equal and stop the abuse. The passage made sense to me once I heard this explanation.

Now what to do with the garment issue—may be a sense of humor?

Prayer:

The Lord bless me and keep me. The Lord smile upon me and give me grace and peace for all things.

Paul Mulligan

Metairie, Louisiana

“What shall I do, Lord?” I asked. “‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’”

Acts 22:10 NIV

Following Hurricane Katrina I was among those at Foundry who volunteered to clean and fix up homes in a devastated area. I knew I could paint. Ready, set, go! After the mission team arrived in Metairie, we quickly claimed our portion of a UMC classroom floor for sleeping. Alan Zabel, a team leader, called us together explaining that the homes where we would be working required complete gutting, new drywall, plaster, paint and flooring. Much had to be done before I would have a paintbrush in my hand.

I watched carefully as Alan talked and walked us through a crash course in dry wall. Our training concluded with hands on proficiency tests. My first few screws went much too deep. My best effort would probably require a little filler to cover the screw heads, but I could do it.

Off we went the next morning arriving bright and early at the assigned home. After brief introductions to the homeowners and a walk through the water-soaked front room, it was go time. My first task was to crawl under the house to jack up the support beams, a job I never imagined doing for myself, much less anyone else. From there I moved to drywall, plaster, vinyl flooring and, yes, painting.

At the end of the week I was physically and emotionally exhausted. Only two rooms in a small home sitting among tens of thousands of damaged homes had been restored. That was my new reality as I left Louisiana.

Prayer:

*You have a way of getting me into the darnedest places, Lord.
Thank you for giving me compassion enough to care, and strength
enough to support others in their times of need. Amen.*

Stephen Roberts

Be Ye Transformed

...Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...

Romans 12:2 KJV

Oxygen! It's the air we breathe, every breath we take necessary to carry on our existence. We take it for granted, till we can't. Pause for a moment and imagine a heavy oxygen tank strapped to your back, it's weight balanced by straps across your shoulders, slowing down every step. It restricts your lifestyle. Preparation is the key. Morning rituals before leaving for work, grocery shopping, or gym. Now a long green plastic cord follows your movements at home, constantly curling or getting caught on furniture. A health hazard if not aware of hidden dangers. Building activities into lifestyle becomes a creative process to keep life interesting...crossword puzzles, sharing current events, museum exhibits, theatre ushering duties, household tasks shared at home.

We anticipate transitions as we retire. Opportunities open up for volunteering at church, museum docents and, at last, we can fulfill our longings for travel to foreign countries! By adopting a healthy lifestyle and being physically active, we can achieve rewarding relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. May we welcome our changes, accepting the challenge of our next steps and decisions going forward.

Prayer:

*Dear God: Transform our lives through renewal of our minds,
united in your planned guidance in our lives. Amen.*

Diane Seeger

I Am the Potter; You Are the Clay



Spiritual renewal is not a solitary exercise. In the book of the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 18, we are reminded that God is the potter, and that we are the clay. God promised the exiles—and promises us—that He will continually reshape, build up, and replant us where we need to be.

God does reach out to us, but we also need to seek Him. As Jeremiah's letter to the exiles continues in chapters 29-31, God says,

“If with all your heart you truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me, thus says our God.”

(Listen to the tenor sing this on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUfyGNwbxYw>)

Prayer:

*Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.*

Ella Cleveland

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the authors and artists of this year's Lenten devotionals. They shared their creativity because they had something to say about the topic, and dared to share it with you. If you read something that resonated with you, please consider sharing your thoughts with them. It could very well lead to good conversation and ideally a few new friendships.

Foundry's Lenten Devotional is a congregation-wide ministry led by the members of the Practicing Spirituality Sunday school class under the direction of Pastor Dawn Hand. In the months preceding Lent, Practicing Spirituality class members held creative workshops, developed thought resources, invited fellow congregants to write, and helped incubate ideas and entries. Lead participants include Jeanette Barker, Sunny Branner, Deryl Davis, Stephen Roberts, Diane Seeger, Joanne Steller, Joe Steller, Joan Williams, and Leo Yates, Jr.

Submissions from 35 individuals were collected, edited, and compiled on very short deadlines. The results are published here and online at www.FoundryUMC.org. We are grateful to Carol Hammer for graphic design of this publication and to Kirsten Pelton for her ongoing assistance throughout the devotional ministry.

The cover photograph is by Ta-Chen Wu, inspired by the challenge and promise inherent in the 2016 devotional theme, "Renovation Realities."

Foundry's Practicing Spirituality class meets at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays (currently) in Room 203. Class is open to all who wish to explore ways to grow their relationships with God. You are welcome to stop by any Sunday and return as often as you wish.