

“Formed”

Remember when potter Kathy Blossom made a presentation while working at her wheel on our Potter Sunday last year? Her message was and our focus today is about how we are formed by God as a potter forms clay. As the Divine Potter, God works to enable us to be transformed from flawed, self-destructive creatures into New Creatures in Christ, who are in a New Relationship with God. Yes, the Creator forms us into New Beings, who belong to God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Do you recognize God’s efforts to form you – change you into a New Creature in Christ?

How are you being formed by God? The creations made by a potter are the result of working clay. Although we have a lot in common with clay, God’s Transforming Power, which forms us, is not the mere manipulation of our physical bodies. Instead, it is God’s Agape Love and the Holy Spirit – the Divine Parent’s Constant Loving Presence, which enables and empowers us to live the New Life in Christ in the New Relationship with God and with all people. Indeed, as Jesus explained in John 3:16, ***“For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.”*** In other words, the Divine Parent’s Agape Love for all of humanity was so great, God sent the Only Son to embody the Divine’s Invitation for us to believe in and trust God’s Forgiveness and Agape Love for us. Jesus does that, so we will live out the New Relationship with God and with everyone else – following the Son of God’s example – living the New Life in Christ! God confirmed forming us when saying through the Prophet Jeremiah in **verse 6b**, ***“You are in My hands just like clay in the potter’s hands.”***

Let’s take a few moments to focus on how we are like clay in God’s Hands. I have asked Margaret to pass out small containers of Play-Doh and small plates. While she is passing them out, let me share with you your assignment for the remainder of this sermon. When you have received your Play-Doh, take it out of the container and work it **to form something, which symbolizes how you see our Divine Parent has formed or is forming you to be an expression of God’s Agape Love – a Child of God**, who is being transformed to live the New Life in Christ in the New Relationship with God and with all people. You can use the small plate as a platform for your creation. At the conclusion of this Worship Celebration, we will be asked to join in an experience which may require you to leave where you are currently seated. I suggest that at time you briefly leave your Play-Doh creation at your seat and return to pick it up after that concluding activity.

God is constantly present in the Holy Spirit to form us into New Creatures in Christ. As I mentioned on Pentecost, Confirmation Sunday, our Confirmands are required to include an example of how they have experienced the Presence of God – the Holy Spirit in their Personal Statements of Belief. As you work with your Play-Doh, **meditate on how you have come to recognize God was or is Present with you and how through that experience you have been more fully formed into a New Creature in Christ** – the Child of God our Divine Parent is calling you to be in the New Life in Christ and the New Relationship with God and other people. Let your Play-Doh creation be an expression of how God has formed or is forming you into that New Creature in Christ.

To help each of us recognize and think about one of those times when we have experienced God’s Transforming and Loving Presence, let me share with you a couple of times I have experienced the Holy Spirit. When I was attending the Texas Conference of Churches Youth Conference at a Camp Brownwood in 1968, I had a rather dramatic experience. Everyone was looking up **into the night sky** – star gazing as we laid down in a grassy area. I was already seriously considering going into the ministry and in retrospect, God’s Presence that evening confirmed I was being called to become an

Ordained Minister. While looking up into the sky, I noticed a young lady nearby was very upset and I began to talk to her about why she was unhappy. As our conversation continued, I was still looking up at the stars, and I shared with her how she is important and loved by God. While all that was happening, I started seeing myself from above talking with the distraught young lady. I was counseling her, even though I did not know what to say. I believe the Holy Spirit – God’s Agape Love was comforting her through my words.

Before I share with you a second experience of the Holy Spirit – the Presence of God – the Divine Parent’s Agape Love – *“The Tie That Binds”*, how are you doing with your creation of your Play-Doh symbol of how God has changed or is changing you – formed you into the New Creature in Christ Jesus and our Divine Parent are calling you to be? Maybe my second example of the experience of the Holy Spirit will be more helpful for your Play-Doh creation.

One summer, while I was a seminary student at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, I went through a three month full time CPE – Clinical Pastoral Experience Training as a Chaplain Intern at Deaconess Hospital in St. Louis. Part of that training was visiting hospital patients. Sometimes such visits were a bit trying and I had to write a verbatim of what happened and what was said at each visit. For example, every once in a while, a patient did not want to be comforted, so it seemed like I was not very helpful to them during my visits. Another component of this CPE Training was to discuss our experiences with the other Chaplain Interns and the CPE Director. The critiques were sometimes very uncomfortable and even brutal. At the conclusion of this three month program, we went through a self-evaluation process. We were each to take some clay and make a sculpture, which was to symbolize where we were in our growth through the CPE program. When we presented our sculptures, we were to provide an interpretation of its symbolism and the narrative of our self-evaluation. The sculpture I made with my clay was a cave with a **bird** coming out of it. I interpreted my sculpture to indicate that I was then able to take flight and be an instrument of the Love of Christ toward others. As I made that sculpture and shared my interpretation of it with the other Chaplain Interns and the CPE Director, I realized God’s Presence – the Holy Spirit had formed me, so I could minister effectively and faithfully to others in need of God’s Agape Love.

Each of us has God constantly present with us! We are all in the process of being formed by God to live in the New Relationship with God and all people – to live the New Life of Agape Love. As we are better able to recognize God is with us in the Holy Spirit and is forming us – enabling us to be New Creatures in Christ, we become more effective in our Christian Discipleship – in our everyday living of the Christian Life – the New Life in Christ. Everyone, who belongs to Jesus Christ and our Divine Parent is going through the process of being formed by God through God’s Holy Spirit and following Jesus Christ. This is clearly the case for our Graduates and for our Children and Youth. How is your Play-Doh creation going? Is it symbolizing how God’s Presence with you is forming you to be more fruitful in your Discipleship?

Remember, we are being formed by God’s Agape Love – *“The Tie That Binds”* us all in Christian Love – God’s Agape Love shown in God’s Son and our Savior, Jesus the Christ! Remain open to God’s Presence – to the Holy Spirit – to God’s Agape Love forming you into the New Creature in Christ, who lives the New Life in Christ in the New Relationship with God and all people. Take your creation home and each time you see it, **remember God’s Agape Loving Presence is always with you in the Holy Spirit – it is *“The Tie That Binds”!*** Amen.