



# the Source

*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...*

Did you make any resolutions this year? Even those who don't do so really do at least reflect on the change of date and wonder about what lies ahead.

January, of course, takes its name from Janus, the Roman god of doorways and beginnings, pictured with two faces, one to the past and one to the future. That's what happens at the new year. We reflect on the past year: the successes and the *shoulda's*, and missed opportunities. And we look ahead pledging ourselves to do even better for being a year wiser.

The Christian faith calls this *repentance* and *conversion*. Jesus joined John in preaching "Repent!" as the first step of following God. Turn toward the Kingdom...find a better way, which is right at hand. Turn away from the unimportant, worthless, destructive ways of the world of sin; and discover a new, holy way to live.

So here we are at the start of 2017, a new year! As we look back, we will likely discover times and deeds of which we aren't so proud. But Jesus' call to repent also includes pardon. The past is over. You are forgiven. Move forward!

Which leads us to looking ahead. Isaiah reminds Israel (and us) that God is always doing *new things*. Jesus saw the rock in Peter, which was not immediately evident to others. And God envisions great deeds from each of us – so much that the Holy Spirit is promised as a companion and strength on our way through life.

This transition moment to a new year is the time to meditate on how we will spend 2017 being more obedient to the call of Christ, living more holy lives. The Church is both the school and the cheering section for any who will respond to the invitation Jesus offered constantly: "Follow me!"

— Dr. John Clifford, Retired Clergy-in-Residence

## A Family Affair

What is your favorite and least favorite season of the year? Why? Take turns sharing both with your family. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 together as a family. In this scripture, we learn that there is a season for everything. Even your least favorite season has its time and purpose.

Maybe you are in a fun season of your life now: you are happy, you were just invited to a birthday party, or you got a new pet! Maybe you are in a sad season of your life now: maybe someone you love died or you just found out you are moving to a new school, away from your friends.

Seasons change. A new year can bring changes that we may not expect, good and bad. Through the change, we can be confident that God will not change. His love for us is constant. God wants to be in relationship with us through all seasons. Do you remember to look for him in difficult times? As we enter a new year, brainstorm with your family. How will each of you stay in touch with God in all seasons?

*Dear God, thank you for your presence with us in good times and in bad. Help us to feel your unchanging love for us each day. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

— Jennifer Hall, Director of Children's Ministry

Consider  
the Source  
Isaiah 43:16-21

On joining the United Methodist Church, we make some promises about our belonging to the congregation: to support it with "our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness."

## Monday: Our Prayers – Matthew 6:5-15

Do you make time for daily prayer? Do you wonder what direction to take your meditations? In "Connections" each week is a list of prayer needs.

- Will you include these people in your prayers?
- Consider also the various programs – children, youth, adults – taking place in our church, and pray for each of them. And of course, our world needs all the prayers we can give.

## Tuesday: Our Presence – Acts 2:41-42

A year ago, after riots in Baltimore, a Major League baseball game was played in an empty stadium. How odd that felt! The fans are important! Projects go faster when enough people are available. Worship takes on energy and excitement as the group grows. We make excuses for our absences (we know they matter!) But we also lose something in our absence. We are denying ourselves the fellowship of friends and the "teaching of the disciples."

- This week – join the congregation in worship and find other places to connect, to be part of a group.

## Wednesday: Our Gifts – Romans 12:1-8

We have just had a promising pledge drive, which is what we usually think of immediately when we mention "our gifts." (Did you make a pledge? It's not too late!) But we have far more to give. We can give our time and presence in teaching or working with youth and children. There are all those quiet behind-the-scenes ways to give.

- Even if you have pledged, consider all the other gifts you might have to share.

## Thursday: Our Service – Luke 10:29-37

Using our many gifts of self is certainly "service"; but we also think of going beyond our immediate neighborhood to serve. Traditionally this has been "mission" as we are called to follow John Wesley's admonition that "the world is [our] parish."

- How might you push your comfort zone a bit to serve in Christ's name in the year ahead? Is Mission Panama for you?
- Is there another way to reach out to the world? Round Rock Serving Center, perhaps? Drive a Senior?

## Friday: Our Witness – Acts 1:8

This is a fairly new addition to our mantra of vows. I used to maintain that if our prayers, presence, gifts and service were evident, that would be an excellent witness. But sometimes we also need to echo St. Francis' word to his friars to witness by their lives, but "use words if necessary!" We do need to be able to tell our story in words as well.

- Who will you tell about what Christ has meant to you? Consider what unique word you have to share!

Begin the new year on in a positive way. We'll see you in worship next Sunday!