

New Years Resolutions for What We Really Need

For here we are at the start of a new year - a time when we are drawn to take stock. Oftentimes, when we think about New Year's resolutions, we have a tendency to come at it from the angle of what are we giving up—eat fewer sweets, have a dry January, lose weight, reduce stress. I'm guilty of this, haven't recently realized that I'd like to cut a few words out of my vocabulary before my daughter starts parroting them. It's not necessarily a bad practice to examine what parts of your life aren't serving your goals, looking at the spaces where you aren't always your best self. But this year, I'd suggest taking a different tact and look instead at what is really needed to be *added*.

You see... if we look at sociological studies of our society we see a trend since the 1950s: people of all types are getting together less often. We aren't communing. It's not just the people aren't going to church because they're busy with the Scouts or book clubs or the Masons. People are not engaging in "society" in all facets. The Pandemic stole so much from us, rewiring society into an isolationism that is stoking a mental health crisis across the board. We are lonely. We are scared. The 24 hour terror-news cycle has created in us an existential ennui.

Ministers everywhere are asking themselves how religion can help. Religion... the word itself is the answer. It means "to bind together." The job of a religion is to bring people together. So - what if, this year, we each found two new ways to help with the binding? Things we can do to reach outside of our comfort zone and across to someone else, to nourish a greater good as we think about being our best selves. What if we looked at our roles as members of this church family as an opportunity to connect?

Traditionally, church "membership" means three things:

1. That you are giving financially as you are able
2. that you are finding ways for the church to serve (or nurture) your spiritual growth.
3. That you are finding ways to give of yourself and your talents to the service of the church.

Personally, it has been my experience that we encounter God in the deepest way when we are doing it together. And I believe that we are called by God to commit ourselves to that work of being a chosen family. So at this new year... at the end of this journey the Magi have made to find themselves kneeling to a newborn babe... let us look in ourselves. What gifts do we have to offer?

This Sunday at Peace & Justice Sunday, the Outreach and Response Team will have an insert in the bulletin asking that you consider what gifts you have to offer, and providing some ideas for you to consider of how you might fight the isolation of these times and resolve to add one or two things that might help us all encounter God this year!