

PASTOR'S PAGE



As you receive this article, we will be on the threshold of the new year. You may not realize it, but January 1st as the beginning of the new year has Christian origins. Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 introduced the Gregorian calendar as a correction to the Julian calendar. It shortens the average year by 0.0075 days to stop the drift of the calendar with respect to the equinoxes when day and night are of equal length (about September 22 and March 20).

Have you ever taken a moment to think about why people like New Year's Eve celebrations so much? It is certainly one of the more festive holidays, but it's also a holiday that we do not spend a lot of effort preparing for unless we're hosting a gathering of some sort. We are all coming off a very busy season of preparation for Christmas. Many, if not most of us, are a little burned out from the holiday season that has run the full month from Thanksgiving to Christmas. The coming of the New Year provides a laid-back and welcome break from all the holiday business.

As you look back over the events of the past year, it is probably a mixed bag. Some good things happened. Some bad things happened. You learned some things that you need to know, and experienced some things that you would like to forget. There were probably also a good number of challenges and obstacles that you faced. More than likely you grew and accomplished some noteworthy things.

With the coming of the new year there is a sense of newness, freshness, potential and hope. We put the past year with its challenges and accomplishments, and victories and defeats behind us. A whole new year lies ahead of us and there is a transition of sorts in life.

It is believed by most scholars that the book of Isaiah was written by three authors. The book is seen as a collection of prophetic writings that could potentially span a couple of hundred years. The northern kingdom of Israel had already been conquered and carried into captivity by the Assyrians. Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel, was particularly vulnerable to conquest. The Babylonians were becoming stronger and would eventually replace the Assyrians as the dominant force in the region, only to be displaced by the Persians at a later date.

So try to imagine the context of the writing of Isaiah. The southern kingdom was under constant military threat and the risk of political upheaval dominated the whole region. Everyone was rightfully nervous and fearful about what had and might happen. People yearned for the days when Israel was a world power, and they yearned for someone to make Israel great again.

It was in those jittery uncertain times that the prophecies of Isaiah were made. As people looked back, they saw calamity, and as they looked forward, they saw even more. They were tired, beaten and abused with little hope. The message was relatively straightforward - Salvation is in the hands of the Lord.

I don't know what the past year has been like for you, but as we look toward the new year the advice Isaiah gives to the people of Judah is good advice for us. **"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 and streams in the wasteland."** (Isaiah 43:18-20, NIV)

Each of our circumstances are different, but our common humanity also makes our circumstances much the same. The new year is for each of us a new beginning of sorts, even though the specifics vary. Whether the new year looks bright and full of potential, or if it is faced with a sense of dread, the Lord is with us and our hope is in the Lord. So as you celebrate the new year, never forget that our real sense of hope is not in our own abilities or those of another human being. Our hope is in the Lord.

I wish each of you a very happy new year.

Blessings,
Pastor Mike



SUMC Grace Points

January 2019

WORSHIP:

- A big thank you to all of the staff and volunteers who have made worship so meaningful during 2018. We look forward to our worship gatherings in 2019.
- Taking Down the Greens takes place January 7th at 6pm. We need several people to help with this event. Dinner will be provided.
- Those who purchased Poinsettias may take them home after services on December 23rd, or after the Christmas Eve service they attend.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:

- Cherub and Joyful Noise choirs will both be resuming soon and will begin ministering to the congregation on a Sunday each month.
- Crossroads Sunday School will be having a lot of fun with new curriculums planned as well as bringing back old favorites like music and letter writing for Sunday school.
- Coming January 27, 2019 from 5 - 7 pm: CABIN FEVER MUSIC JAM. This is our Newest, FREE, Community Event! Join us for a casual, laid back, indoor concert featuring our band CONTACT! Soup & sandwiches will be served and there will be activities for kids. Everything takes place in our multipurpose room. Come and enjoy a FREE night out of the house on us!

YOUTH MINISTRY:

- We had a great time helping with Breakfast with Santa and Parents Time Out.
- Sum Teens wrapped up our year with some caroling and a holiday party.
- Over Christmas break we will meet Sunday, December 30th for a laid-back night to eat some leftover Christmas goodies and watch a movie.
- Our regular schedule will resume with Bible Study and Youth Group on Sunday January 6th and our first Thursday worship will be January 10th.
- The first outing of 2019 will be to Winter Jam in downtown Columbus on January 19th. Cost is \$5 and you can bring a friend.

ADULT MINISTRY/OUTREACH:

- Disciple II will begin Wednesday, January 23rd from 5-7pm with Donna Baker.
- CABLE Classes will resume in January. Deb Layton will lead, "Life in the Spirit" starting Monday, January 28th at 7pm; and Pastor Mike will lead "Making Disciples" beginning January 9 at 6:30pm.
- Harold Downing will offer an apologetics class to parents and their teens. The day and time will be announced.
- In December, The Gathering made ornaments for the UMW Christmas party. We will be taking the rest of December to be with our families, but will begin meeting again for short devotions, snacks and fellowship on January 10th during the children's choir times.
- Angel Cabs is our ministry that provides transportation for those in our congregation to and from appointments. This ministry is a very vital link for many. We are in need of 2 people who can make a commitment to be a volunteer driver. Please contact Val Kirkpatrick or Monica Swank.