

Call to Worship

This is the beginning of a new day! This is a day of new beginnings! **Let us resolve, as time revolves, to seize these moments for service in the name of Jesus.**

Behold, God makes all things new!

Prayer of Invocation

God of the Eternal Now, God in all times and this second, teach us patience, that we may dwell contentedly in the present moment where you dwell with us. Share your wisdom, that we may appreciate the lessons taught by the past, both our story, and the story of your people. Grant us hope, that we may look upon the approaching future as your abode, as the place where every tear will be wiped away. May we know in every time your purpose for our lives, as it is revealed. All is in your keeping. All will be well, in time and beyond time. This we pray, trusting in you, now and eternally. Amen.

The Word

Revelation 21:1-6

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, **"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them, he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."**

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." **Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.**

Living the Word

In the book "Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle" Ted Loder shares this prayer for New Year's Day: I Hold My Life Up To You Now

Patient God, the clock struck midnight and I partied with a strange sadness in my heart, confusion in my mind. Now, I ask you to gather me, for I realize the storms of time have scattered me, the furies of the year past have driven me, many sorrows have scarred me, many accomplishments have disappointed me, much activity has wearied me, and fear has spooked me into a hundred hiding places, one of which is pretended gaiety. I am sick of a string of "Have a nice day's." What I want is passionate days, wondrous days, dangerous days, blessed days, surprising days. What I want is you!

Patient God, this day teeters on the edge of waiting and things seem to slip away from me, as though everything was only memory and memory is unreliable. Help me not to let my life slip away from me. O God, I hold my life to you now, as much as I can, as high as I can, in this mysterious reach called prayer. Come close, lest I wobble and fall short. It is not days or years I seek from you, not infinity or enormity, but small things and moments and awareness, awareness that you are in what I am and in what I have been indifferent to. It is not new time, but new eyes, and new heart I seek, and you. Amen.

Maybe you relate to Ted Loder and his prayer, maybe just to parts of it, maybe not at all. I don't know how your New Year's evening or your last year went, but we have the opportunity to set it behind us and face the future, today and the days ahead with a new resolve. For each of us it will look different, as we are all on a unique life journey.

On or around January first each year I fill in all of the birthdays from the previous year's calendar to the new calendar. Let me tell you a calendar story: The date: May 19, 2005, I was driving my brand new PT Cruiser from the church where I worked during the week, home to Hayward. Think of your 'dream vehicle' – that is what my PT Cruiser was. I had researched and planned and saved to get it, and it was now mine. (Lesson number one: God doesn't get excited when we overly attach ourselves to earthly things.)

I was coming around the curve into a small village on the way home when I noticed a Big red Pick-up truck backing out of a driveway ahead of me, so I slowed down to a stop, and waited. We were on the beginning of Main Street, the 'main drag' of town. I could also see that the man driving the truck had a neck brace on. The truck began to move forward and I did likewise. We didn't go far before we met and passed another pick-up truck. That truck stopped in the middle of the street, and so the Big Red Pick-up, which had gone past the other truck, proceeded to stop, put his truck in reverse and back quickly, right into and over the front of my smaller, but new PT Cruiser.

The man got out of the Big Red Truck and began to use colorful language to express his dismay at what I had done. We looked, and other than still being connected over the top of my fender, his truck just had a scratch. My car on the other hand was a mess in the front. He then said to me, "It isn't my fault. I can't turn and see what is behind me, I have a neck brace." We each called 911 and waited 20 minutes for a deputy to arrive. During that time, the neighbors - his neighbors, all stopped by for a chat with him, as he continued to point to me and they shook their heads.

When the officer arrived, he told the officer that I ran into him. I also shared my side of the story. No one was ticketed, but I barely got my car the 20 miles home as the radiator was wounded. That drive home I was steaming. I now blamed every male on earth for what 'the Red Neck in the Red Truck' had done to my Pt Cruiser. God bless my dear husband who listened and took a railing for all men alive who have ever offended a woman. Worst of all my bitterness grew over time. The accident wasn't the problem, my attitude toward the accident became a problem. (Lesson number two: cars can be fixed, but so can attitudes...)

The next New Year when I went to mark the birthdays on the next years calendar, I also marked May 19 as "Redneck in the Red Truck Day." Bitterness hurts us more than any others. It can eat at our insides and harm us physically as well as emotionally and spiritually. Bitterness is like a dangerous virus of the spirit that can quickly spread to others. When May came, I had mostly forgotten about the accident, so when I turned the calendar and saw what I had written, I had to laugh. It had taken me a good part of a year to let go of the horrible feeling inside. It took me longer to repair myself, than it took to repair the car.

Jesus said: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, Love your enemies and that includes gentlemen that drive red pick-up trucks...now when I think of that day, I pray for him and laugh at my stubbornness to give it up to God...Having a 'new resolve' means to resolve your issues, the things that bind you, the things that keep you from living in God's grace; past issues, current issues, future issues.

In today's scripture, the Revelation of John foretells of the day when "the dwelling of God will be humanity" and human time will be brought to fruition by the work of God. God's desire for us is to resolve the things that keep us from living in a loving relationship with God and with others.

I invite you after the service to get a piece of paper and a pen. Then put on the paper whatever you might want to say to God. If it is a long story, maybe just a picture or symbol, God already knows what the story is. I could draw a truck from my story. God is also nudging you to find the new resolve. Writing it down in some way is for you to acknowledge you are ready to let go of it. Begin with anything you want to let go of from 2020 or before. Nothing is too big for you and your God.

Is there some muck or mire you have yourself in right now, that looks bottomless? Make a black dot on your slip and allow God to handle it. It may be that God is already sending people into your life to help you out and you just haven't been ready to receive the help.

If you have nothing to let go of, to put behind you, or that you aren't quite ready to release to God, I invite you to go another direction with your slip of paper. Write down the thing or things you are hoping for. Several years ago, I prayed often for my two sons to get jobs. That was the basic hope, though of course I really wanted them to have great pay and benefits, but even more so a job they would be contented in.

At New Years I finally realized that all of my prayer might be helping, but my worry wasn't. Their getting jobs was completely out of my hands, so I surrendered the worry to God. I was able to sleep better at night and they both were employed by the end of the next year. Of course, I have many more hopes for them, but I have had to put my boys, now men, in God's hands many times and trust that my prayers is the best I can do for them.

Take a minute or two right after the service to put something on your paper. There are no right or wrong answers. God already knows them, but is waiting for you to give them up and trust God enough to handle them. One of my new hopes is for this church, to continue to flourish. I don't even know how to define this, except to say that in 2021 we need to take stock of where we are and where we want to go as a church.

I am praying that we will renew be able to review the last 4 1/2 years including where we are in the MCCI prescriptions and where the church need to pick it up again to move forward, looking to see what God has planned for us in the future. I know that God brought me here for many reasons, but I know you are here with purpose also. Together, we can look back and prepare for the future, leaving behind anything of the past that we need to turn over to God, yet retaining the foundation that this church is built on as we move forward.

After the marks on the paper are done, destroy the paper: rip it up or burn the paper(carefully). It is then that the work has just begun. Being resolute about it may take a lot of processing and work; letting go of the things that keep us angry or worried or churning inside, is hard work. It is much easier to just bury them deep inside, to resurface when we want to multiply new angers or hurts within ourselves....

It is hard for us, especially in the midst of the feelings, to realize that we not only don't hurt the other by holding a grudge, but in fact we are hurting ourselves. God wants us to live blessed lives, but sometimes we go out of our way to un-bless ourselves. Maybe today you can begin to set some of the 'un-blessings' aside by making a new resolve with yourself and God.

These slips of paper are just symbolic of what we can do every day with our issues, and worries. There is a saying: "I don't tell **God** how **big** my **problems** are. I tell my **problems** how **big** my **God** is." God can help us overcome even the thoughts and bitterness and worries that sometimes feel like they will overwhelm us.

Yesterday, besides being the 2nd day of the new year was also the eighth day of Christmas, on which my true love sent Eight Maids A-Milking. One of the major themes of the fifteenth and sixteenth century English celebrations and parties during the Christmas holidays was food (not much has changed about that...). What is a feast or party without food? Especially foods that are not common and are reserved for special occasions. How many got enough special foods during Christmas, so far?

Until the advent of refrigeration, milk was not a common drink because it spoiled quickly. However, milk based products that did not spoil, such as cheese and when cooked, custard were prized during the holidays. The maids, of course, refer to the women who would milk the cows to obtain the milk in the first place. The term eight maids a-milking evokes images of the food, especially the special holiday foods, to be enjoyed at this festive time of year.

Much like milk, we will spoil if not taken care of properly. Christ came to show us a way to love instead of hating, and to be whole in body and spirit in our lives. Just like the many things that milk can be used for, we can live in many attitudes in our lives. Like the special foods, some of the better attitudes may take more effort and time to achieve.

As members of the 'Body of Christ' share in the carrying of each-others burdens through prayer, burdens that have may be placed by ourselves and others on our papers. Some we know about, some we don't...but God knows. Jesus said "Remember Me" that means that we know we can be forgiven of the stuff we have gotten ourselves into and the only way out is to surrender our hearts and souls to the one who saved us.

God created us, giving us free will to keep or let go. When we are hurt we need a healer. The one who created us, wants us to be healed. This morning let us be in the process of letting go of the attitudes and behaviors that harm us and harm others. We can start the year with a 'New Resolve.' In the days ahead, be brave enough if someone asks you if you made a New Years' Resolution to say: I am working on a new resolve with God. Take time once a day to revisit how things are going on your new resolve. Review the day with God before you go to sleep, and wake up ready to face a new day with a new resolve. For today, I invite you to put what you have listed in a fire to purify these requests and send them in smoke up to God.

Final Prayer - John Wesley wrote in the 1700s a covenant service with God, to help the people of his time re-commit themselves to God. We aren't going to do the whole service, but I invite you to join me in "A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition"

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.