

Jeff's Jottings

Happy New Year

January 5, 2018

By Jeff Japinga
Executive Presbyterian

Happy New Year. The calendar has turned to 2018, and typically with it, our focus likewise turns to the year ahead. That process for me has been interrupted this week with whatever crud is making the rounds in Minnesota. So I am postponing the future until next week.

That doesn't mean I haven't been thinking about it; I have been, quite a lot, and I'm sure you have been too, both looking back and looking forward. In that, I learn from others, my thoughts shaped in part by the wisdom of others, famous and not so much. One of the most striking new-year reflections I've read is from a former student of mine, PC(USA) pastor the Rev. Dr. Shelly White Wood. I share a portion of what she wrote with you here, in hopes it may prompt your own intentional thinking about your own commitments, as it continues to do for me. I find in Shelly's words my own hope that, this year, I can be even half as brave as she, and equally as faithful.

2017 was not a year I would like to relive ...

As I sit here on this frigid morning, looking out at 2018, I know I don't want the same story replayed. Yet, I feel a little hesitant to commit to a new story, only to find that a year from now, I will let myself down.

I think what I hope for in 2018 is that I'm brave. When my friend Sara was dying earlier this year, she was in that Thin Place between heaven and earth and she saw Jesus. He was right there. She told me that Jesus told her that she was brave. — And she was. — I'm sure she still is.

I would like to be brave like Sara. I would like to be brave enough to write, without fear or worry of retaliation. I would like to be brave enough to preach the Gospel, without hesitation. I would like to be brave enough to have boundaries of good health and wholeness. I would like to be brave

enough to say yes and say no. I would like to be brave enough to travel to truly impact the lives of the oppressed and to go where God wants me to go and say what God wants me to say and do what God wants me to do. I would like to be brave enough to walk people to the gate of heaven, again and again and again and assure them that they too are brave. I would like to be brave enough to advocate for the church.

2017 knocked the wind out of me.

I enter this new year on tender hoofs.

Happy New Year, my friends. May we all enter it bravely, albeit on tender hoofs.