

Dear friends in Christ,

As we turn the page on another calendar year, many of us find ourselves reflecting on where we've been and where we hope God will lead us next. New Year's celebrations always seem to hold a mixture of gratitude, grief, hope, and uncertainty. We remember joys and blessings received. We also carry with us the sorrows, disappointments, and unfinished prayers that remain.

The Bible doesn't mention "New Year's resolutions" the way we talk about them today, but it does have a great deal to say about *new beginnings*. Scripture reminds us that God is constantly at work renewing, restoring, and reshaping our lives.

Paul writes, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Notice Paul doesn't say we make ourselves new. It is God who renews us. God is the One who takes ordinary lives — with all their rough edges — and breathes new life into them.

And in Lamentations we hear this promise: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases... God's mercies are new every morning." Every morning — not just January 1st. Every day is a day for grace to start its work again.

So while resolutions can be good — healthier habits, deeper relationships, more intentional prayer — the heart of the Christian life isn't about our striving. It's about our *remaining rooted in Christ*, and letting His love shape our lives from the inside out.

As we begin this new year together as a congregation, my prayer is that we will:

- Slow down enough to notice God's presence
- Practice gratitude regularly
- Seek reconciliation where relationships have strained
- Care for our neighbors generously
- Worship, learn, and serve with joy

And when we fall short — because we will — we rest in grace, dust ourselves off, and begin again.

In my own life and ministry, I'm asking God to help me grow in kindness, patience, and trust. I want to listen more deeply, pray more faithfully, and keep pointing — again and again — to the hope we have in Jesus Christ. I also look forward to the ways God will continue to work through our congregation in the coming months ahead.

Friends, whatever this year brings, we do not face it alone. Christ walks beside us. The Holy Spirit strengthens us. And God's mercy meets us every morning.

May this year be filled with spiritual renewal, laughter shared, tears companioned, and faith strengthened.

Blessings and peace to you in the name of Jesus — yesterday, today, and forever.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Will