

Many people make New Year's Resolutions. For years I was one of them. I have been keeping a journal (although not always very faithfully) since I was in high school and for many years I would write down several resolutions on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day. They never made much difference in the way I lived my life. And, at least while I was in college and seminary, those resolutions almost always seemed to be the same if not fairly similar.

For the last few years I have tried to set goals for the coming year. A quick google search reveals that people have different ideas about whether goals or resolutions are more effective. Some think a goal is simply a hope while a resolution involves actually making plans so that you can accomplish those goals. Others think a resolution is no more than a wish that you'd like to see happen while "a goal is something you keep in front of you every day."

Whether you set goals or make resolutions is up to you. What do you want to see happen or perhaps what do you plan to make happen in 2017? Here are some of the goals I have set for myself.

Last year I was able to worship with 36 churches and I meet with the sessions or PNC's and attended anniversaries or other events with 11 other congregations. That means I was in 47 different churches in the presbytery in the 11 months I was on the job. This year I'd like to be in 50 different churches. That may be a stretch but then goals should stretch you. My overall goal is to worship with every church in this presbytery eventually. This goal will help me get there, although I realize that there's going to be some, and maybe a lot, of repetition from year to year. If you'd like me to preach, attend an event, a session meeting, or meet with your PNC, just let me know. I'll be there if my schedule permits.

Last year I was able to visit with 21 pastors in the presbytery. I don't think I'm going to be able to double that, but maybe I can visit with 35 pastors in 2017. Again, there will be some repetition but that's OK.

Last year I read 16 books. Most years I do better than that. The lower number for 2016 probably reflects the transition as well as the tumult involved with moving. I think there was more of that than I realized and more than I thought there would be. This year should be more settled. I hope to read at least 30 books.

In 2017 I want to do some significant continuing education. Last year I attended General Assembly, the Polity Conference, and the Board of Pensions Regional Benefits Consultation. While there are certainly aspects of Continuing Education to these events, they are more job related or work related events. I learn a lot at them and I enjoy them but they don't necessarily push me or challenge me or help me so that I can help the churches or pastors of this presbytery. One of the things that sadden me is the realization that many pastors don't take any continuing education even though they have a continuing education allowance. I don't want to fall into that trap. I want and I need to keep learning.

My goals for the presbytery in 2017 would be to revise the presbytery manual. I would also like to see us put the presbytery directory on-line so that it will be more readily accessible and so that it can be regularly updated. I would also like to see us plan at least a year ahead for our presbytery meetings. Finally, I would like to see us move toward becoming a paperless presbytery. I realize that we are never going to get there completely and that's OK. Nevertheless I think we can send more communications out electronically. That's something our new Director of Communications/Office Manager Amy Robinson will be working on, to see who prefers to receive communications by email and who prefers to receive hard copies of any communications we send out. We will respect and we will work with people who prefer to have hard copies of everything. Some people though prefer to receive communications by email. I think we can save money as well as staff time by moving in this direction.

What are your goals (or resolutions) for 2017?