



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Become a part of God's family at First UMC

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Vision: Hamilton First: A growing extended family sharing Christ's love
in the heart of the city.

Mission: To Know Christ and Make Him Known in the World

December 28, 2011

Dear Friends:

Are you excited about another year? Or are you being grumpy about another year? I would equate being grumpy about the new year as the equivalent of the Ebenezer Scrooge of Christmas.

We have every reason to be excited that it is a new year. In fact being excited can be an act of faith. Each new year, each new day represent a new gift of grace and love from God. It is being given life for one more day, one more day to serve God.

I understand that the bones may not feel as strong as before or the muscles as flexible, but we have bones and muscles. We also have spirit, heart and soul. These never get old, or never have to. God gives us renewal of spirit each day. God gives us new opportunities to live out our faith each day. As I say day, I also mean year.

Each new year offers us new possibilities of what will happen, be it good or bad. However, each year promises to be full of God. Regardless of what happens to us, God will be with us.

What I have said is all that needs said, but may not be convincing. I can hear arguments against being joyful about a new day or year. "But I hurt," you might say. "True." You may hurt and each day is a trial. Does that make us different from people who have come before us or will come after us? Think of the folks crossing the great plains in a covered wagon. Talk about effort. Sleeping on the ground, pushing the wagon when it got stuck, loading and unloading supplies needed to cook or eat. It cost them a lot. Who knows what it will be like for people in the future, but they will have hard times too.

Think of the trail of tears, where the Cherokee Indians were forced from North Carolina to Oklahoma without enough provisions. People were sick and died, walking to a new place where their mountains were gone and flat land, almost desert land, lay ahead. Do you know who went with them willingly? The circuit riders from the Methodist church. That is why we to this day have a Oklahoma Indian Conference of the UM Church.

My point is, that life can be hard. Not that God makes it hard, but that it just is hard. When it gets hard, as in many other times in our life, we can do one of two things. Our choices are to celebrate life or to complain. I believe that we are called to celebrate because life is full of God. There is not a step I can take that God does not go with me. There is not a thought that I can have that God does not share. There is not an action that I made that God does not see. There is not a breath that I take that does not involve God's spirit. Everywhere, there is God.

"But I do not want to celebrate. I just do not feel like it." Yes, that is true for all of us at specific times. What I find is that even if you do not want to celebrate, if you find something to give thanks for, you feel better. The more you give thanks, the better you feel because then you recognize how God is in the equation. The more you pray, the better you feel, because God is in the equation.

As your pastor, what I am saying is that God is the source of our good will. God, who came and lived among us in Jesus, knows all our trials and temptations. God knows all our faults and sins and loves us still. If that is not a reason for celebrating, then I do not know what is. It is 2012. Celebrate the new year and in the process you celebrate your faith.

Have a great walk with God this year. I will walk with you, too.

Grace, love and peace

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy".

Rev. Peggy

HAPPY NEW YEAR!