

The Jamieson Journal

January 2011

Ways to start off the New Year

According to historians, the celebration of the New Year is the oldest holiday. Ancient Babylonians first observed it in the spring about 4,000 years ago. In 153 B.C., the Roman Senate declared January 1 as New Year's Day.

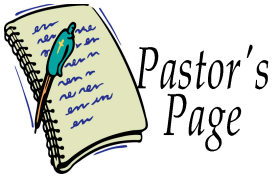
The early church started to hold religious observances that coincided with pagan celebrations. Some denominations still mark Christ's circumcision on New Year's.

The tradition of making resolutions dates back to the Babylonians, who often promised to return borrowed farm equipment. Using a baby to symbolize rebirth and the new year dates back to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians.

Modern-day New Year's customs often focus on prosperity. In Spain, people eat 12 grapes at midnight, hoping to have 12 happy months to come. The Dutch eat donuts because another year has come full circle.

One of the best ways to start off the New Year is by spending time in prayer. Look back on God's many blessings during the completed year and ask for his guidance in the one to come. Also consider starting the tradition of reading or rereading "Three Simple Rules" by Rueben P. Job and making the resolution to follow the rules.

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A friend of mine shared the following story with me the other week and I was quite touched by it. I am passing it along to each of you with the hope that you also will cherish the "Unopened Gift" this season: No one knew how it got there. Everyone pleaded ignorance. But someone left it there.

"Maybe it was Santa," Dad said with a smile.

We don't know how long it had been there. It was pushed back against the wall behind the Christmas tree, buried beneath the other Christmas presents. My little sister was the first to see it that Christmas morning after we had opened our many presents and during our annual Christmas paper war (the wrappings from the presents were collected and made into paper bombs that we hurled with glee at one another).

"What's that?" she asked, pointing behind the Christmas tree.

We called a ceasefire and peeked behind the tree. It was another present, the size of a shoebox. It was wrapped in faded brown paper. For a bow it simply had a string tied around it. My little sister reached for it first but I was faster. I picked it up and she glared at me. I shook it. Whatever was inside didn't make any noise.

"What's in it?" she asked.

Everyone took a guess. Mom thought it just might be that new pair of shoes she had been dropping hints to Dad about getting. But I could tell from Dad's face that he was clueless about any shoes. All of us knew, even me, that mom wanted them for Christmas, everyone, of course, but Dad. Dad tried to change the subject by saying, "I sure hope it's not Aunt Alma's fruitcake." We all groaned.

Aunt Alma always fixed her "special" family her "special" fruitcake" each Christmas. It was horrible. The one she gave us last year was tossed out in the field behind our house. It was still there last time I looked. Even the wild animals stayed away from it. Our dog, Bud, who is not exactly a picky eater, took one sniff of it and ran under the house. I tried to get him to come out. "Come on, Bud. Come out, boy. I promise to bury that old fruitcake." But he just whimpered. He stayed under the house for three days. I had to set his food and water bowls under there for him. Poor Bud...

Well, I knew that it couldn't be Aunt Alma's fruitcake. That fruitcake weighed a ton. Whatever was in this unopened gift, if it was a gift, it was not that heavy.

"Maybe it's those bedroom slippers I wanted," Grandmother said, smiling at Dad. Dad did not look pleased that the topic had come back to shoes.

"I know what it is!" my little sister boasted.

"What?" we all asked together.

"It's a Barbie. Santa knew I wanted one," she said, convinced she had solved this mystery.

"But you already have a Barbie," I said.

"I wanted another one" she replied and explained how she had told Santa that in the letter she wrote to him. I wonder which letter that was, for she must have written at least a dozen. She couldn't even write. She just drew pictures of the gifts she wanted. Santa had to be pretty smart to figure out what she wanted from those pictures.

"I don't think this present came from Santa," I said. "If it did, he sure did a poor job of wrapping it. You'd think Santa, with all those years of experience, would be a better present wrapper than that. Besides," I continued, "I think it's for me. It must be that pack of baseball cards I've been wanting, or the new Superman comic."

"I don't think so," my sister replied. "It's a Barbie. But I'll let you play with it."

I tossed a Christmas paper bomb at her but missed. We all stood there looking at the unopened gift resting in my hands.

"Well, there's only one way to find out what's in there," Mom said. "Open it," she told me.

stayed in the shape of that box. I guess it had been wrapped around it for a long time. I took the lid off the box and looked inside...

Inside was more of the brown paper except it was crumpled up filling the whole box. I picked it up and could tell that something was wrapped inside it. I pulled the crumpled paper slowly apart. The paper had been protecting a piece of wood. No. It was not just a piece of wood. It was a woodcarving. I took it out and held it up for everyone to see.

"That's lovely," Mom said.

"What is it?" my sister asked.

"I don't think it's a Barbie," I said.

"I think it's part of a nativity set," Mom answered.

"A what?" my sister said.

"A nativity set. You know, carvings of the characters in the Christmas story - angels, the wise men, the shepherds, the animals, Mary, Joseph, and..." Mom took a closer look at the woodcarving in my hand and continued. "...if I'm not mistaken, that would be the Baby Jesus. But this is the most unusual one I have ever seen. Are there any other pieces there?"

I looked in the paper but it was the only one.

I took the woodcarving to the center of the room where the light was better. Sure enough, it was a baby covered with cloths of some kind - all carved in a polished, creamy brown wood. You could see the baby's eyes and even the tiny ears. The baby was smiling. His small arms were reaching up to me. The infant rested in what at first looked like a small cup. But it wasn't a cup at all. It was in the shape of a heart. The sides of the heart curled up around the infant as if cradling him.

"Whoever did this is a real artist," Grandmother said. "I have never seen anything like it. It's beautiful."

"Is there anything else in the box?" my sister asked, still hoping there was room for a Barbie somewhere in there.

I looked inside the box. There was something else there - a folded piece of paper yellow with age. I took it out and opened it...

It was a handwritten letter. The ink, though faded, was still clear enough to read. It said:

The Unopened Gift

Inside this old shoebox you will find the great "Unopened Gift" of Christmas. I know. It's just a carving I made from olive wood of the Christ Child. But I give it to you to remind you that he is that great Unopened Gift. Often he is lost in the business of Christmas, buried beneath presents, pushed aside, and forgotten. But he is always there. Look at him. He is still reaching up to you, asking to be opened, to be received by you. Like this box with its brown paper, he seems plain, nothing special at all. Yet within him is God's most precious gift. He is the very love of God wrapped up in swaddling cloth. Don't let the greatest gift of Christmas stay unopened.

But there is another unopened gift. This one is inside you. He wants you to open it for him. He wants your heart to be his cradle, his manger. Let this "Heart Cradle" carved from wood remind you, your children, your children's children and every generation to open your hearts and let him be born there this Christmas and every day...and Christmas will truly come to you...It wasn't signed.

When I finished the letter, we all looked at the "Heart Cradle" again but in a different light now. There were tears in the eyes of Mom, Grandmother, and Dad. Even my little sister was unusually quiet. I must admit that it was as if something deep inside me, inside all of us opened up that Christmas morning...

After that, each Christmas we placed that same old shoebox, with the same brown paper, tied with the same string, and its wonderful contents under our Christmas tree. It was always the first gift we opened. Somehow it changed everything about Christmas.

This happened many years ago. Now I am a father myself. It's Christmas Eve. Resting on my lap is that old shoebox still wrapped up with brown paper and string. I am on my way downstairs to place it under our Christmas tree so that my

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Lewis Madison	1/6	Mary Lou Rolley	1/6
Nancy Lipscomb	1/8	Sandra Oliver	1/9
Mary Emily Moore	1/9	Marjoire Carkhuff	1/11
Tracey Oliver	1/14	David Norwood	1/19
Brooke Gibson	1/21	Betty Herman	1/21
Linda Arthur	1/22	Travis Hamlett	1/22
Frank Davis	1/23	Logan Jones	1/23
Joan Roberts	1/26	Grace Castle	1/26
Charlie Simmons	1/28	Ed Barden	1/31
Dave McKee	1/31		

Don & Bev Chestnut 1/6
 Jim & Susan Nutter 1/27



	January 2	January 9	January 16
Nursery	Rolene Ramsey	Win Baker	Robin Bowen
Children Church	Heather Harvell	Betty Miller	Scotti Moore
Lay Reader	Sally Morgan	Nancy Barden	Marilyn Mink
	January 23	January 30	
Nursery	Brenda Cahoon	Mary Linda Davis/Dawn Jones	
Children's Church	Taylor Moore	Laura Castle	
Lay Reader	Myrna Howerton	Lynn Harvell	

Jamieson Memorial United Methodist Church
Joint Meeting of Current and Incoming Administrative Council and Program Council
December 9, 2010

In attendance: Richard Pulliam, Marilyn Mink, Leigh Felton, Eddie Baker, Win Baker, Irene Chapman, Larry Chapman, Linda Pulliam, Joanne Gilmore, John Gilmore, Rev. Dale Gillis, Steve Roberts, Nancy Barden, Terry Kirkpatrick, Elaine Senz, Joe Senz, Greg Carkhuff, Dave Norwood, Ken Morgan, Mike Cowley, Barbara Cowley, Jean Smart.

Devotion: Richard Pulliam shared his thoughts about Christian service in our church and a reading from I Corinthians 12.

Richard Pulliam, Chair, reviewed the agenda.

Steve Roberts distributed an article from the Advocate, *On Becoming United Meth-old-ists* which he felt was pertinent to our church. Irene suggested that we give more consideration to our role with this population. Richard asked that the Program Council continue this discussion.

Richard welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.

Treasurer's Report: (John and Joanne Gilmore) Current bank statements and Income/Expense Reports through 11/30/2010 were distributed. The budget currently shows a deficit of \$15,077.39. Parsonage expenses and pastor moving expenses showed the greatest overage. Certain budgeted mission expenditures may not be made for 2010 due to the budget deficit, but all Covenant commitments have been made.

Credit card: John explained that there is a need to acquire a credit card for use by staff to purchase items for the church.

Motion: That the church acquire three credit card with signatures of Lori Hamlett, Pastor Dale Gillis, and Clint Dalton. Moved by Leigh Felton; seconded by Joe Senz. Approved.

Check signatures: **Motion: That the church acquire new bank signature cards for Eddie Baker, Joe Senz, Joanne Gilmore, and John Gilmore. Moved by Leigh Felton; seconded by Larry Chapman. Approved.**

Stewardship: (Ken Morgan) The initial report in November from Consecration Sunday was a total of \$171,676 pledged. The updated amount of pledges now totals \$183,816. There are 66 pledges, with 52 of those increasing their pledge amounts from last year and a total dollar increase of 15%. \$196,000 is the projected income for 2011. Ken was commended for his leadership on the Consecration Sunday program.

Review of 2011 budget: (Terry Kirkpatrick) Each committee has been asked to reduce their budget requests by 10%. The projected income for 2011 is \$196,000. Apportionments have been established. Considerable discussion was devoted to projected expenses and some line items were determined. Further information should be forwarded to Terry by December 15. There will be a meeting on December 19, 9:45 am to approve the budget.

Action items arising from the November meeting:

1. (Carried from September, October, and November meetings:) Meeting of the Finance Committee and the Trustees with the Director of the Virginia United Methodist Foundation to discuss the possibility of establishing an endowment fund.

Action: Mike has been in communication with the United Methodist Foundation and has information on performance of the fund. There will be a training meeting on January 16 at Blackstone, but Mike has requested a meeting in Clarksville. He will communicate with the Finance Committee and Trustees when a date is set.

2. Committee budget requests. Action: Some committee chairs have submitted their budget requests, and the remainder are asked to submit the information to Terry by December 15.

3. The Memorials Committee is asked to consider the purchase of a wide screen television for use in the Fellowship Hall. No action.

4 Current committee chairs are asked to set a time for a meeting with the incoming chairs before December 9. Accomplished.

New Business:

1. Bland Music Competition: Clarksville Lions Club has asked for use of the church on Friday, Feb. 25 and March 4.

Motion: Leigh moved; Jean seconded. Passed.

2. **Motion: By request of the Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee, church office hours will be reduced from 20 to 15 hours per week. Moved by Dale; seconded by Terry. Approved.**

3. Leigh raised the question of the process is for special offerings. Terry said that the Finance Chair must be consulted. The Mission Committee has certain priorities and does not want to have conflicts.

4. Staff Christmas gifts: Richard explained the opportunity to contribute to staff Christmas gifts by placing a contribution in an envelope and into the box beside the tree.

Order of Installation and Recognition of Leaders: Pastor Dale Gillis led a responsive reading for incoming officers and committee chairs.

Next meeting: **Sunday, Dec. 19, 2010, 9:45 am** for the purpose of approving the 2011 budget.

Respectfully submitted

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