



**Office of the President  
3015 Ave K NW  
Winter Haven FL 33881  
863.299.4084**

## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER - JANUARY 06**

Happy New Year!

New Year's celebrations are a strange mixture of contemplation of the year to come and wild parties and drinking. For some New Year's Day meant a day of watching college football games. Pundits pick the person of the year and make their predictions of what will happen in the year to come. All of this because of the turn of one page on the calendar.

Part of the reason for the wild celebrations, I think, is an attempt to deny the reality of man's mortality. The passing of another year means that we are closer to the grave and the emptiness of death. Peter quotes the prophet Isaiah, (1 Peter 1:24-25) "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away." Everything that man takes pride in - his possessions, his accomplishments, and his future are uncertain because of death. The passing of another year is a silent, unspoken reminder of the book of Ecclesiastes that everything is vanity or emptiness. So the world concludes, let's not think about these things on New Year's Eve.

Since only the word of the Lord endures, we should rejoice at the beginning of another year that "this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:25). We rejoice that for another year, our Savior God has committed this Word of reconciliation unto us. We have in our possession that which really matters because only in Jesus, His death and His resurrection, is there an answer to death. (1 Corinthians 15:57) "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We have answers for our people in response to a materialistic and hedonistic and empty society. Take time this week to rejoice in the treasure of the Gospel which is the heart and center of our ministry.

The other strange phenomenon is the emphasis on making new year's resolutions. Unfortunately, all these good intentions are often dissipated before the end of the week. There is the feeling that simply making a resolution will result in the change of behavior. Man has an inflated view of his ability to control and change his attitudes and behavior. The power of sin makes it impossible for one to make himself a better person. The Christian also is affected by the sinful flesh that is a part of each one of us. We understand all too well Paul's words, (Romans 7:18-19) "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice."

A new year, even a new decade or millennium, do not change the reality of this present age. On New Year's Day we woke up with the same problems that we went to bed with the night before. As pastors, we still struggle with helping our people apply Law and Gospel to the every day situations in their lives. We ourselves have the same weaknesses and failings that were a part of us the year before. It is a sobering realization to think that of ourselves we can do nothing. It is a leap of faith to commit all things to God's direction. One of the largest changes in the mores of the day is the feeling that man through technology or science or government can change or influence the direction this world and its history is taking.

James reminds us of the proper faith-attitude as we enter another year of God's grace. (James 4:13-17) "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

As a church body we ought to take to heart the admonition of James and say and believe that "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." Sometimes we think that the future of our congregations and church is up to what we do. The Church Growth Movement (CGM) makes much of making goals and measuring the progress in meeting these goals. This is a common strategy in the business world. The problem is that this makes man the measure of all things. We make our plans and adopt our budgets, but we need to realize that everything depends upon the Lord and His will. We trust that God's will is best and will be done in our work in Jesus' kingdom. The future belongs to the Lord.

Our last convention reminded us of the Gospel fact that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:19) This is the only answer to a new beginning. We have the blessed assurance in connection with our preaching, (2 Corinthians 5:17) "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Ev'ry morning mercies new Fall as fresh as morning dew;  
Ev'ry morning let us pay Tribute with the early day;  
For Thy mercies, Lord, are sure, Thy compassion doth endure.

May the Lord bless your ministry in 2006.  
John Schierenbeck

#### NOTES:

Please share with your congregations the information the Board of Trustees has prepared for the Cooperative Budget Plan (CBP). It is important that the pastors make this information available to their members. Your CBP estimates should be sent to Pastor Mike Roehl as soon as possible. Put the cooperative back in cooperative budget.