

Blessings for 2018 in the name of Jesus Christ who came to save us!

I've encountered dozens of suggestions for new year's resolutions from advise columnists in newspapers, from the radio airwaves and discussions about what people are resolved to do in 2018. One writer concludes her advice giving with the final suggestion: "believe in something bigger than yourself because research shows that people who have connected with a spiritual belief cope much better in difficult times." We do live in a world of competing values and conflicting loyalties. We Christians follow Jesus; we believe in someone bigger than ourselves-the creator of life, the one who saves us from ourselves and the world. We cling to the cross of Jesus. It is Jesus who teaches us how we celebrate the great times and cope with the not so nice times. Our campers learn a song that I hope remains in their hearts forever, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

We need to constantly orient our lives towards God by what we do and say and think. That is why we have weekly worship, Sunday school classes, future bible studies and many service ministries. The discussions surrounding our worship and learning and ministries involve the struggle we have orienting ourselves always towards God and God's will for us and help us connect with God's will for us.

We usually begin worship with confession because we know that we are not seeking the kingdom of God but seeking the kingdom of material wealth and social status. We begin the year as we recall the visit of the magi who were seeking the Christ child and we will remember our baptism. We will install our new council members and accept new members in January. In baptism we are claimed by God who will never abandon us and will always love us with a love that never lets us go. That, my friends, is GREAT news! Such knowledge helps us through the times that are challenging. Such knowledge causes us to rejoice in Jesus, our savior.

During 2018 each of us can do more to get connected with God. Begin by believing and acting on the hymn we sang during Christmas season, "Come and worship Christ the new born king." Connect and reconnect with the faithful folk at St. Paul. Invite family and friends to worship and fellowship, to Sunday school and Bible study. When we seek first God's kingdom, life has a new orientation and priorities fall into God's perspective.

We at St. Paul look forward to being with you as together we continue to connect with Jesus, the merciful one who is bigger than us. God's blessings on each of you as we embark on a new year, new challenges, and new causes for celebration.

Shalom,

Pastor Bev +

