

Pastor Sailer's Page

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NEW RESOLUTIONS...OR NEW OPPORTUNITIES?

Opportunities have an element of surprise!

Who really wants to give up ice cream? But that's the kind of thing resolutions demand (and sometimes, one's health demands) as we begin a new year. I am not anti-New Year's resolutions. I just know that some will result in successes, to a greater or lesser degree. Others are doomed for failure.

As you ponder your New Year's resolutions, I'd like you to consider the difference between resolutions and opportunities. New resolutions are often based on what we already know, and they have a past focus that may or may not change in the future. New opportunities, on the other hand, have a forward focus and are guaranteed to be new because they are yet to be revealed.

Opportunities have an element of surprise. They do not have such baggage as, "We've never done it that way before." After all, a real opportunity is something that has never been done before. And, as applied to the work of our congregation as we begin a new year by God's grace, I'd like us to commit to pursuing some new opportunities for the mission of our Lord in 2015.

Opportunities to serve the Lord in new ways stem from the newness granted in Christ: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come"* (II Corinthians 5:17). The newness of Christ causes us to look at the world in a new way—looking for opportunities to let [our] light *"shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

Every day is a new day with new opportunities. However, we must look for the opportunities God gives us as individuals and as a congregation to witness to His name. For individuals, this may be the opportunity to speak an encouraging word from our gracious God to someone in turmoil, or to befriend someone who doesn't believe in Jesus. For congregations, this may be

an opportunity to begin a new ministry to meet needs in the neighborhood.

What opportunities is God providing you to be His witness? What opportunities is He giving Faith Lutheran Church?

Perhaps you have seen something tucked away in the corner of a church calendar or included in a listing of events in recent weeks called the "Matthew 28 Project." Have you seen it? Do you wonder what it is?

Matthew 28 is a reference to the very end of the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus charges His disciples: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Mt. 28:19-20). Matthew 28 Project affirms that we, God's disciples today, have the opportunity and privilege to do something to carry out this commission and command of Jesus.

The "Matthew 28 Project" is a group of mission-minded Faith members who have some ideas about how our resource-rich congregation might meet specific needs around us by encouraging and assisting financially the adoption of children, by addressing education, health, and housing needs of people in the Whittier neighborhood, and by evaluating the many ways we are already reaching here, near, and far with the Good News of Jesus.

You will hear more from the Matthew 28 Project team in the days to come, most notably in the January 18 Voters' Meeting. Just know that this group understands that God has placed new opportunities for mission all around us in an ever-changing culture.

Resolutions. Opportunities. Both are important. I pray that the Spirit empowers you to keep the important resolutions you have made, and I pray that by the power of the same Spirit we will rise up as the redeemed people of God in Christ, making the most of every opportunity to share the Gospel message of Jesus who makes "all things new" (cf. Revelations 21:5).

