

Community Church of Issaquah

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Let's Start Over

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We stand today at a threshold. One year has ended, and another lies before us—unknown, unwritten, and full of possibility. The turning of the calendar invites reflection: on what has been, what has been lost, what has been learned, and what still lies ahead.

The New Year often brings resolutions, hopes, and questions. Will this year be better? Will things change? Will I change? Some of us enter the New Year with excitement. Others step into it carrying grief, exhaustion, or uncertainty. And into this moment, the Gospel speaks a simple but powerful truth: God goes with us.

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, many of us feel a mixture of emotions. We carry gratitude for blessings received, sorrow for losses endured, and hope for what lies ahead. The turning of the calendar invites reflection, but more importantly, it invites renewal. Scripture reminds us in Lamentations 3:22–23, “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” The promise of the New Year is not that life will be easier, but that God’s faithfulness will remain constant.

As we move forward, we are reminded that God does not reveal the entire path at once. Instead, He invites us to

trust Him one step at a time. Proverbs 3:5–6 teaches us, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.” The New Year may bring uncertainty, but it also brings opportunity—to walk by faith rather than by sight. Some of us look back on the past year with gratitude. Others look back with regret, pain, or disappointment. Perhaps there are words we wish we could take back, opportunities we missed, or prayers that feel unanswered. This New Year service invites us to bring all of that—joy and sorrow alike—before God. Not to deny it, but to release it. Because God is not finished.

The past year may have included victories we celebrate and struggles we wish we could forget. Some prayers were answered; others remain unanswered. Yet through it all, God has been present. The New Year does not erase our past, but it offers us an opportunity to place it into God’s hands. Paul writes in Philippians 3:13–14, “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal.” This does not mean ignoring our experiences, but refusing to let them define or limit us. In Christ, we are never trapped by yesterday.

A new year calls us to examine our hearts. Where have we grown distant from God? Where have fear, resentment, or complacency taken root? Psalm 51:10 offers a prayer for this moment: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Renewal begins not with resolutions we make in our own strength, but with surrender to God’s transforming grace.

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Let us also remember that we do not enter this year alone. We are called to walk together as the body of Christ, supporting one another in love, prayer, and service. In a world hungry for hope, the Church is called to be a living witness of God’s grace and truth.

As this New Year begins, may we not simply hope for change, but commit ourselves to faithful obedience. May we seek God daily, love generously, forgive freely, and trust deeply. And as we do, may we discover that the greatest gift of the New Year is not what lies ahead, but the God who walks with us every step of the way. We stand today at a threshold. One year has ended, and another lies before us—unknown, unwritten, and full of possibility. The turning of the calendar invites reflection: on what has been, what has been lost, what has been learned, and what still lies ahead.

The New Year is not about reinventing ourselves alone—it is about renewing our dependence on God. One of the greatest anxieties of a new year is the unknown. We do not

know what this year will bring: changes in health, relationships, work, or the wider world. But we do know this: God is already there. Jesus' final words in the Gospel of Matthew are a promise: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." That promise did not begin at the resurrection. It began at the manger.

The same God who came as a child, who walked among us, who suffered and rose again, now walks with us into the future. We do not step into the unknown alone.

The New Year may be uncertain—but God is faithful. The world encourages us to make resolutions: to work harder, do better, become more. While discipline and growth are good, the Gospel offers something deeper than self-improvement. It offers transformation. True change does not come from willpower alone. It comes from surrender. From allowing God to shape our hearts, renew our minds, and guide our steps. The question of the New Year is not simply, What will I do differently? It is, Who am I becoming in Christ? God's "new thing" is not always about changing our circumstances. Sometimes it is about changing us within them.

As we stand at the beginning of a new year, we do not know what lies ahead—but we know who walks with us. The Christ of Christmas is the Lord of the New Year. The God who was faithful yesterday will be faithful tomorrow. The light that shone in Bethlehem still shines before us. So let us step forward—not in fear, but in faith. Not clinging to the past, but trusting God with the future.

Not alone, but with Emmanuel.

May this new year be shaped not only by our plans, but by God's presence. May we walk humbly, love deeply, and trust fully. And may the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in the year to come.