

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*Cheryl Punzalan, Council President*

Last month we spoke of passings. This month let's think about transitions. Each December as I stuff the new calendar in my purse, I think about the year that has passed. I paged through my 2004 calendar and saw many dates noted with wonderful events that I shared with you: a glorious Easter, dinners with dear friends and celebrations of milestones in many lives. However, there were those other dates: the funerals, the farewell party at work and the last time I saw a friend before they moved. This was a tough year in many homes. Letting go of these memories, both happy and sad, and turning the page is not easy.

If only I could go back to the carefree days of my childhood, I may sigh at times as I face a mountain of bills and a slim checkbook. If only I had called on that friend once more before he passed away. If only... These phrases don't help me face that new calendar with anticipation! Coming to terms with the fact that life is full of goodbyes and hellos, is a great leap of faith. I have often quoted my daughter from the first day of her first grade year when she told me that she didn't want to go to first grade...she didn't know anything about first grade stuff. She was really good at kindergarten stuff, why couldn't she go back to that class again? Isn't this why transitions are so hard? We know all about the stuff that happened before – been there – done that. But we are concerned with our ability to face new challenges, new ideas and new situations.

We are transitioning to a new phase at Salem. We will be continuing the youth work that Jerry started, but without Jerry. Will it be easy? No, probably not. Jerry was unique and a wonderful example of the Christ-filled life. He has helped our youth build strong relationships with their own faith. He has brought many new experiences to them in their walk through their teens and beyond. He has been a good preacher, a good friend and a good colleague. Will this ministry go away? No, but it may take a new form. We know all about doing Jerry ministry, can't we still do that?

One thing that I have learned from my years walking my journey, and from Jerry's example, is that there is one element of my life, year after year, that is constant, unchanging and always there: God's support and presence. This knowledge is what will make the transitions easier. OK, 2005, give me your best shot because I am ready for you now.

Shalom, Cheryl

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