

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A message from Regina Reed, Council President

As the notes of our glorious Christmas concerts still ring in my ears, I can see our precious children dressed as Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the angels. I also remember with thanks the families who helped trim Salem's Christmas tree and "green our grounds," the sacristans who washed and mended robes, the volunteers who moved risers, folded newsletters, quilted quilts, planned fellowship events, provided nursery care, cleaned carpet stains, managed our endowment funds, called on shut-ins, taught Sunday School, invited people to worship or fellowship, cooked meals and fed the hungry six days a week at Salem. The list goes on and on - everyday during the month of December was a whirlwind of activity.

Take a deep breath. It was a beautiful, giving, worshipful, wonderful month and I pray you were as renewed by the message of God's love for us as I was. **Now what?** Well, the secular calendar says that we are celebrating the start of a new year. (We know the church year begins in Advent so actually we've been having a happy new year for several weeks now). Let me say "Happy New Year" to you anyway.

So what's so new about this "new year"? So far it seems pretty much the same as last year - the same new year's resolutions, the same bowl games, the same cartoons with Baby New Year in a top hat.

Galatians 4:4-7 gives us clear picture. ⁴"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God."

We were adopted as God's children and promised an incredible inheritance! We were promised freedom from slavery and the Spirit to guide us. This is who we are. This is what makes us a new creation. This is why, as we mark the end of one year and pass into another, we have the same message and the same hope that belonged to Mary and Joseph, to the apostles, to our ancestors and that now belongs to our children. We have a father who loves us and we believe there is no person or created thing that is outside that incredible love. The transforming power of that love **makes us new**. New is not a new calendar page – new is **YOU**. A scrubbed clean, ready to go into the world, 2008 brand new model **YOU**.

What will 2008 will bring to Salem? I know it will be filled with joys and sadness, with surprises and challenges, new opportunities and hopefully a new pastor or two. I look forward to sharing it with you. ***HAPPY NEW YOU!***