

From the Minister's desk.....

A New Year Can Begin at Any Time....

One November we ordered a new car, which did not arrive until the new year. As we cleaned out the old car, I muttered, "How did we accumulate so much junk?" We sorted through old maps, dried-up ballpoint pens, outdated addresses, old sweet wrappers (some still containing the old - now very sticky! - sweets), crumpled tissues (used and unused!!), Numerous old car park tickets, loose coins and many, many more bits of 'stuff' that had been left in there.....

We made unwavering resolutions about keeping the new car clean, orderly and functioning properly. Thinking about resolutions, I sensed a connection between a new car and a new year. The first order of business is to clear out the clutter, discard the useless, remove the dust and dirt....

In other words.....Begin afresh!

A new year can begin anytime in our lives. For Methodists, our New Year begins on September 1st each year, and it is a time when we welcome new Ministers to the Circuit, having said our 'goodbyes' to those who have moved on or retired. This year we have said 'goodbye' to both Revd, Norman Hooks and Revd. Phil Warrey. We thank them both for their ministries, and as Phil takes up his new appointment and Norman retires, we hold them and their families in our hearts and prayers for their next stage of service.

We also take joy in welcoming Revds. Stephen Watts, Nana Banyin Thomford and Stephen Mayo to the Circuit. The Welcome service for our 3 new ministers and their families will be at Rayleigh Methodist Church on Tuesday, 5th September at 7.30 p.m. This service is for the whole Circuit and we hope to give them a very warm welcome as they settle in to their new homes and work amongst us.

.... And so, as Methodists, we stand at the beginning of our New Year and, like any new year, it can be a time to make new resolutions....

.....A time when we can sort through old attitudes, clean our minds of envy, toss out the habits of gossip and carrying grudges. We can resolve to keep our promises and curb our anger.....

When I stood back and surveyed the fresh, shiny car it occurred to me that, yes, a new year could begin anytime or any place. A lot of things from the past need discarding. Things we collect that are of no more value or usefulness need to be put in the rubbish bin, or recycled. St. Paul wrote, *“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds”* (Col. 3: 8-9).

It is amazing how a brand new car changes your life: None of the old squeaks, rattles and knocks. Travelling down the road in a brand new vehicle is a delight. So is the journey ahead, if we can truly forget things in the past and press on to greater things....

The arrival of a new minister is, for many, a joyful time when we look forward to new ways of doing things and receiving new insights - for some, though, the thought of change is about as welcome as a lead balloon! It reminded me of this story...

“You’ll Get Dizzy”

A certain man was troubled with dizzy spells, redness in his face and bulging eyes. Every day when he went to his office, he experienced these things. Weekends were not so bad, so he concluded his work was causing his physical discomfort.

He went from one doctor to another and none could tell him what the problem was. He consulted psychiatrists, psychologists and psychics. What was wrong? Why was he constantly suffering from dizzy spells, redness in his face and bulging eyes?

He tried everything, it seemed. Nothing helped. He finally resigned himself to the fact that whatever was causing all this was fatal. It bothered him so much he began to lose weight. He couldn’t sleep at night. He feared he would never overcome this. He became a nervous wreck and his health began to deteriorate. He had lost hope that he would ever recover.

He decided to prepare for the worst. He made out his will, bought a cemetery plot, instructed the minister about what he wanted at his funeral, and even made arrangements with the local undertaker. He was fully convinced of his imminent demise. He even decided to buy a new suit of clothes to be buried in.

When he went into the clothes shop he was measured for everything. He picked out shoes, socks, coat, and trousers. The sales person asked, "What size shirt will you be needing, sir?" "Size 15, please," he replied. The clerk said, "But, sir, I believe that is a bit small. Let me measure your neck size." After the measurement, the sales person said, "I'm sorry sir, but your will need a 16 1/2, not a size 15." But the man insisted, "No, I have worn a size 15 for years."

The sales person tried several times to convince his customer that he needed a 16 1/2, but the man would have nothing of it. Finally, the exasperated sales person said, "Well, sir, if you insist, we'll get out a size 15, but I must warn you, you will have dizzy spells, get red in the face, and your eyes will bulge out."

Some people are so set in their ways, they will never admit the obvious. Some are so unwilling to change they appear to prefer to remain spiritually without comfort. Long ago, a very wise men wrote:

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Prov. 12:15)

May the Spirit of God always be our guide, and may we all have the grace and strength to listen and follow.

Wishing you all a Very Happy Methodist New Year!

Every Blessing,

Rev. *Teresa M. Rutterford.*