



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Pastor Terry's Thoughts of the Week

Renewal

Oh, the beginning of the year! Resolutions! New ways of living! We're all going to be healthier, happier, and nicer throughout the coming year.

OK. We'll check with each other around June 1 and see how it all went.

We all like the idea of renewal, but when it comes to the application of it to ourselves, that makes a big difference. There is a difference in what has been done, what is being done and what SHOULD be done. I'm afraid I'm one who is very lazy when it comes to renewal in my life. I kind of like being lazy. I like sitting for hours on end "lost" in a book – a good story that will carry me off to strange lands or strange situations or dangerous places that I would never venture to in real life.

Someone gave me a new camera some time ago. It is still sitting in the box. I'm not ready yet to learn yet one more thing. I guess my mind is getting slower or just lazier as I get older. I am beginning to enjoy the rut I'm in – and that's dangerous! Ruts are too comfortable and too easy to fall into.

So, it is time for renewal. The time of Epiphany, which is very short this year, is often considered the missionary time. It is the time when, traditionally, the "kings" came, visited with the Christ child and then went back to their own countries and told the story. Missionaries leave their own home countries to tell what they believe is the best news to those who as yet have not heard or accepted God's love through Christ.

We need more people who are willing to do that. We know of denominations who send out missionaries to tell the news as they understand it. Mostly we are not happy when we see

these folk at our doors. My own feeling is that there are better ways to spread the good news – and that is SHOWING how much God loves his people, beginning here.

We come each week – sometimes twice a week to hear the Good News of God’s love. We become renewed as we receive both the word and sacrament. We pray for strength, healing, renewal and the stamina to use the gifts God has given us to serve in the community in which we find ourselves. That, too, is mission. We are God’s missionaries because we live the way we have seen others live. We have had contact in our lives with those who have shown God’s love to us in common and also uncommon and significant ways. God has sent people into our lives who have shown us his love and we have followed their examples.

There are some who say this is just good humanism, helping each other. That may be so. It IS good humanism. But as we look around the world we find that most of the general good that happens, happens because of committed Christians-- those who are willing to be the kind of stewards who put the things of God first and the things of personal desire second. Many of you are some of the finest missionaries I know. And some of you are developing into great givers of time and talent. You are willing to be renewed by God and you are renewing the community in which you live with the love of God.

TAK

-- Week of January 6, 2007