



Greetings From The Grove

Kallam Grove Christian Church
An Evangelical Covenant Church

January, 2019

From the Mind of the Pastor
January 2019

Resolutions

It is the beginning of a new year and the time to make resolutions. Unfortunately, this will sound like a cliched joke to most of us, because most of us automatically assume that resolutions are only made to be broken and forgotten. We only talk about them to announce that we have no intention of following through on them. This leads me to wonder why people talk about them at all; maybe it's just to relieve our guilty consciences? It does feel better to find out that no one is trying to get better either. It also eases the disappointment of failure when it was our expectation from the start. Maybe proudly announcing that we will *not* be changing our lots in life has just become such a part of the season that it just wouldn't feel like New Year if we just forgot the pretenses and didn't say anything. I don't know.

Whatever the reason for our desire to express goals we don't intend to achieve, I do believe that our culture is against us any time we make an effort to change. Our schedules are like towers built too high. Our habits are tailored to buttress structures that should never have been allowed to exist anyway, and if one of those supports is removed or changed then the whole structure is in danger of collapsing. Self-improvement is desirable, but not if it threatens the pursuit of money or the fragile sense of control we have in our lives. It's not worth getting fired or having a nervous breakdown!

All this is to the detriment of our culture in general and our personal well-beings in specific. The idea of self-improvement has a long and venerable tradition. In all times and places wise people have understood the importance of personal growth, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. There are a couple of things that also seem to be recognized as necessary by all these different traditions. First, in order to change we need to have goals. Goals give us direction, allow us to track progress, and provide us with a sense of satisfaction when they are met. Second, no one can change by themselves. We need friends - and by that I do not mean buddies, acquaintances, or even family members. Friends are the people with whom we form deep connections based around common interests and goals. Our commitment to the relationship becomes one of the most powerful tools to help us stick to goals when the prize of a better life has lost its luster.

We all know the things about us that we would like to change. The beginning of a new year is one of the most logical times to set goals that will get us where we want to go; even though they are a big joke, I think New Year's Resolutions are a good idea and I think we would do well to take them seriously, not only as individuals, but also as a church.

This column is called "From the Mind of the Pastor" and its goal is to let you know what I'm thinking about our life together in the church. To that end, here are my resolutions and goals for Kallam Grove this year: **First I would like this to be a year of rest.** When I got here five years ago, I would have described the church as anxious. There were some fresh wounds and I sensed panic as people were responding in their own ways to some trauma. Now I think the mood has changed; I believe the Holy Spirit has been at work at Kallam Grove. Relationships are being repaired and the spirit of the church seems more at ease. A new generation has begun to step up and become involved in the leadership of the church and is even now setting a course for where we will be in the next five, ten years. **THIS IS SO GOOD and SO ENCOURAGING!**

But I also sense that y'all are tired. In the business world taking a break may not ever be an option, but we are a different people in the church. We don't answer to the gods that rule the rest of the world. We answer to the God who built Sabbath into the fabric of creation. It isn't wrong to take a break for a bit - it is doing God's will.

So what might a break look like for this year? Well, I don't think we should just stop having our committee meetings and stop coming to church; that would be bad. Instead I hope we can learn to scale back in quantity and focus on quality. Maybe the best way to say it is, "less is more." We are not a big church, and while we have money, we do not have a ton of man-power. I hope we can take time at the beginning of this year and take a serious look at what programs would be the best for encouraging our membership and building our name in the community and cut out the things that take time and attention and just leave everyone worn out in the end. If we can be a little intentional about planning together, I think we can put together an *amazing* year with only a fraction of the stress we normally feel. So many people have worked so hard over the past couple of years I want to do my best to show them that their work has been effective and also allow them to rest and enjoy it.

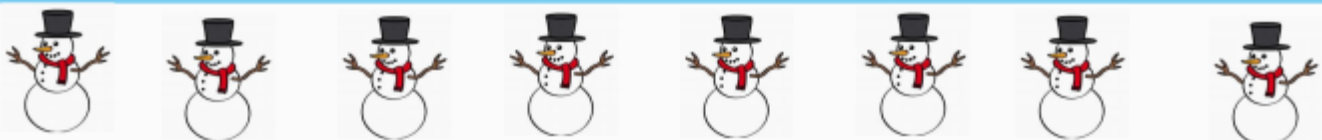
My second resolution is that this would be a year of growth. When I arrived I preached long and hard that Kallam Grove would only grow when it became a place that all our current members wanted to be. Who would invite anyone to a church they didn't even like attending!? I think we have become that kind of genuinely warm place again and so I sense it is time to start growing. I believe God will take care of us if we honestly follow him and I believe that God would rather have 10 devoted followers than 1,000 wishy-washy ones, but it is a reality that we need to grow sooner than later if we want a vibrant future for the church. There was a farming metaphor we used during vitality; churches can't grow in bad soil. We have done the hard work of preparing our fields, now it is time to plant.

These are fine things to say, but how do I plan on coming through on any of them? Well, remember the wisdom of the ancients. It will not be possible to do these things without setting goals. So one of my goals is to sit down with the planning and calendar committees by the end of the first quarter to get some planning done for the year. Really, the calendar committee has an amazing opportunity to help the church plot a course for the year and then stick to it. I also have a goal of finishing the Kallam Grove handouts Megan and I began this fall, so we can have literature ready at hand for visitors and to hand out at any missions/outreach events we do. Finally I want to start a serious prayer group who commit themselves to regular prayer with me for our church. I talked about this during the vitality year and dropped the ball. I believe this is necessary, though, for our continued wellbeing at Kallam Grove. After these are met then it will be time to set some new goals.

So we have goals to work for, but the most important piece is still friends to hold us accountable. It will be impossible to keep any of these resolutions without the work of all of us here at Kallam Grove. In some traditions, growth is solely the responsibility of the pastor. But it is a false idea. That is a good way to end up with a broken pastor and a broken church. Instead, growth belongs to the whole church. It will be my job to reach out to inquiring visitors, be present in the community, and prepare services and studies that help feed our people (both members and prospective members), but I cannot grow the church. It is your job to invite friends and family members. It is your job to show up at the events we put on - why should we expect visitors to come to our special services if we don't come ourselves? It is your job just as much as mine to come along side visitors and get to know them and encourage them and make them feel at home. As much as I would like to pad my own ego, people don't stay at churches for the pastor - they stay for their friends and that is y'all.

So there you have it - my hopes and dreams for 2019. I hope these are easy dreams for you to be excited about! Because I can't do any of them without you. We are all in this together, friends of Kallam Grove. As I and others in leadership make efforts to get all this started, please just pray for us and pray for our church. I've said it many times and I will keep saying it, God has started something special at Kallam Grove; may he see it through to perfection. AMEN.

Pastor Nathanael Putnam



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