

REV. JIM'S THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

January 2018



Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Loving God and Happy New Year! As we begin another year I hope you feel the love and possibilities for joyous and abundant life that God has for you.



I've been reading *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* written by Henri J. M. Nouwen. The book lays out a plan for living a spiritual life that guides us toward a deeper relationship with God. My guess is everyone wants a deeper relationship with God. Most of us try our best to make that happen.

Some folks make a New Year's Resolution to wake up every morning at 6:00 am, read the Bible and pray for ½ an hour before the day gets moving. It works well for 3 days... and then we get a telephone call from a loved one who needs a listening ear as they struggle with a problem. The next thing we know, it's midnight and we just can't wake up at 6:00 am the next morning. *The little interruptions of life!* Both the phone call and the morning Bible reading and prayer time are important. Or... we have the perfect job, with the perfect hospitalization and pension plan... and we think we will retire from the job in another 10 years... and suddenly we get a "pink slip" ... the company downsized and now we have to start over ... and it affects everyone in our family. *The big interruptions of life!* So what do we do when things seem to get in the way of life as we plan it? Or as some people say, "life throws us a curve ball!"

Nouwen says in his book that "we often look at the many events of our lives as big or small interruptions, interrupting many of our plans, projects and life schemes." He goes on to ask "don't we feel an inner protest when a student interrupts our reading, bad weather our summer, illness our well-scheduled plans, the death of a dear friend our peaceful state of mind, a cruel war our ideas about the goodness of man, and the many harsh realities of life that challenge our good dreams about it? And doesn't this unending row of interruptions build in our hearts feelings of anger, frustration and even revenge, so much so that we see the real possibilities that growing old can become synonymous with growing bitter?" Friends, I don't know about you, but Nouwen's words seem to 'hit the nail on the head' when it comes to some of the thoughts that run through my mind.

However, the good news is that Nouwen invites us to consider the interruptions from a more positive perspective. He invites us to consider if the interruptions "are in fact our opportunities, if they are challenges to an inner response by which growth takes place and through which we come to the fullness of being? What if the events of our history are molding us as a sculptor molds his clay, and if it is only in a careful obedience to these molding hands that we can discover our real vocation and become mature people?" *Friends when Nouwen talks about vocation he is referring to the purpose God has for our lives and God is the perfect sculptor.*

So the questions I begin 2018 with are these:

- "What is the purpose God has for my life?"
- "What is the purpose God has for your life?"
- "What is the purpose God has for the life of our Church Family?"

My prayer for all of us is that we open ourselves to the possibilities God has for us... and that we begin to consider "the interruptions of our lives" as the opportunities God is giving us to live life abundantly.

Love and Prayers,

+ Pastor Jim