

As I am writing this letter, it is a beautiful gray, snowy New Year's Eve day. I am listening to Sting's "If on a Winter Night" CD, trying to warm up, trying to understand "Blue Screen" issues on the laptop I have borrowed from my dad. I am reflecting back on the last year, keenly aware of loss and yet remembering tender and sweet moments. The gray and the snow seem to reflect the ambivalence of winter – the magic, the beauty, the cold, the dark, the joy, the playfulness, all joining together in a heady mix.

Every so often, I check email and see the news on the netbook that one family is allowing us to use in worship for our powerpoint presentations. More speculation about the "fiscal cliff," including a sense of both inevitability and possibility, as we ponder as a nation, what direction we take in terms of economic policy. Good or bad, calamitous or a hiccup, going over a metaphoric cliff provides us the opportunity to rethink our priorities. We would be able to start a new year with a new vision.

As the Genesis 1 creation story tells us (among other things), chaos begets creativity.

This message fits us as a congregation as well. We are a revitalizing church that has tremendous gifts. We have members and friends, both long term and newly acquainted, who share themselves in many ways that bolster life within our faith community and within the Jacksonville community. We have a vision and a mission that centers us in God's grace and calls us outward to live the compassion and concern for all creation, to partner with God in creating a more just and peaceful world.

We have our own economic concerns but we live out the call that God gives us to love all people, to welcome all people, and to serve all creation. As we move into the month that allows us to breathe after the busy-ness of Advent and Christmas, as we begin to think about how we might continue to live out God's call to be Christ in this community.

As we prepare for a new year, we renew our vision to be a community of compassion that trusts deeply, prays boldly and gathers people together in love. The God of Christmas, the God who

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comes to live among us in our everyday lives, will guide us and sustain us as we go deeper and take risks in faith, hope and love.

We are finishing one (church) season, and are about to begin another, in which we hear God's invitation first to see the light in the darkness and, second, to live out being that light. I see hope and joy among us; I feel trust and renewed energy. Let us work, pray and play together as we continue to be a progressive witness to God's grace, as we engage in acts of justice, compassion and fun!

Happy New Year!

Pastor Lynn