

Shiloh Notes and News January 2026

A Word From the Pastor

I used to do it every year, but I don't anymore. It used to be fun, but it actually became discouraging. You might do it and that's fine, there's nothing wrong with it. But I've found something I think is better.

As one year closes and another opens, the world urges us toward making resolutions: better habits, stronger discipline, improved versions of ourselves. While the intentions of this tradition are often sincere, they can quietly place the weight of transformation on our own strength. By February, many resolutions fade, not because we lack desire (willpower maybe), but because we were never meant to carry the burden of renewal alone.

The Christian life has never been about self-improvement. It has always been about surrender. Rather than asking, "What will I do better this year?" the gospel invites us to pray, "Lord, what will you do in me – and through me?"

What if we moved from resolution to covenant? A resolution is a promise we make to ourselves. A covenant is a promise we entrust to God. John Wesley understood this distinction deeply. For him, spiritual renewal was not rooted in willpower but in yielded hearts. Each year, Methodists have traditionally gathered to pray the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer, placing their lives again into God's hands – not negotiating terms, not protecting our comforts, but offering themselves fully.

Let's look at the prayer:

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

The prayer begins with words that stand against anything found in any modern self-help book: *"I am no longer my own, but thine."* In that sentence, we release the illusion of control. We remember that our lives belong to God – not just our Sundays, not just our best intentions, but every season, success, and struggle.

The new year is full of unknowns. It will contain joys we cannot yet imagine and challenges we would never choose for ourselves. Resolutions try to control the future. Covenant trusts God with it. Wesley's prayer continues:

"Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt."

This is not the language of ambition, but of availability. It is the prayer of a disciple who believes that God's will – whatever it brings – is good, holy, and loving. Entering the year this way doesn't promise ease, but it promises faithfulness. The Scriptures echo this posture:

"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." Proverbs 16:9

This Covenant Prayer is challenging, and possibly the most challenging lines are these: *"Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee."* This is a prayer of absolute trust. It acknowledges that some seasons will be active and fruitful, while others will be quiet and hidden. Some years feel full; others feel empty. Yet, every season belongs to God and can be holy.

Resolutions often fail because they depend on ideal conditions. Covenant faithfulness remains steady even when circumstances change. It anchors us not in outcomes, but in obedience.

The Wesleyan Covenant Prayer doesn't end in fear or heaviness, but in deep assurance: *"Thou are mine, and I am thine."* This is the heart of Christian hope. We don't enter the new year alone. We move into it held by grace, by mercy, and by a God who has already gone before us. The goal of the coming year is not perfection. It's faithfulness. Not achievement but belonging.

What would it look like if we offered this year fully to God? Are we willing to trust God not only with our plans for the new year but with the unknowns as well.

As we step into this new year, let's do so not clinging to resolutions that we know will probably fade by the second or third month of the year. Instead, let's move ahead resting in covenant, trusting that the God who calls us is faithful.

Have a happy and blessed New Year,
Pastor Fred

Please join us for:
Sunday School - 9:45 am
Worship Service – 11:00am
Bible Study – Tuesday's 7:00pm
Methodist Men's Breakfast – 2nd Sunday of each month

Mission Minutes: Thanks to everyone for the continued donations to the Julian Food Pantry. This is greatly appreciated! For the **January** distribution we are collecting **Powder & Shelf Milk**.

There is a box provided at church for these items.

The Foundation of Our Faith



Jesus' resurrection is the very foundation of Christianity. If Christ had never been raised from the dead, we'd have no Christian faith.

God's power was at work in Christ's death and resurrection. "It was on the resurrection fact that the church was built," said New Testament scholar James Stewart.

Paul understood that the resurrection was the bedrock of our faith: "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14, ESV). He continued, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17, ESV).

The resurrection proves that Jesus is Lord and Savior. Its authenticity means that by faith in Christ, we are reconciled with God.

Billy Graham said the risen Christ is the bridge between us and God: "One of Christ's hands holds the hand of God; his other hand holds ours."

Scripture Keys to a Joyful New Year

Hold fast to your faith (Hebrews 4:14)

Assemble with the saints (Hebrews 10:25)

Pray earnestly every day (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18)

Pray for great blessings (Malachi 3:10)

Yield not to temptation (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

Neglect not your talents and opportunities (Galatians 6:10)

Examine yourself daily (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Work diligently for the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Yield your members to righteousness (Romans 6:11,16)

Exercise yourself in godliness (1 Timothy 4:7)

Aim at sinless perfection (Hebrews 6:1)

Redeem the time (Ephesians 5:15, 16)

— Gus Nichols

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Thomas Dorsey, a jazz musician from Atlanta, made a bold decision in 1926 to leave behind secular music and devote his talent to writing songs for the Lord. But following that call wasn't easy. During the Great Depression, many church leaders criticized his soulful gospel style, calling it "the devil's music." Dorsey later joked, "I got kicked out of some of the best churches in the land."

Then, in 1932, tragedy struck. While in St. Louis for a revival, he received a telegram that his wife had died suddenly during childbirth. His faith was shaken to the core, and grief nearly silenced him. Yet in his deepest sorrow, Dorsey turned back to what he knew best — music. Out of that heartbreak came one of the most beloved hymns of all time:

*"Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand.
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn..."*

Dorsey's song reminds us that even in our valleys, God is near — guiding us, strengthening us, and using our pain to comfort others who walk the same road.