

***COLLBRAN CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH***

***ANNUAL MEETING***

***JANUARY 17, 2016***

***POTLUCK DINNER 12:30PM***

***MEETING TO FOLLOW***

**THE MUSTARD SEED**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
COLLBRAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
P.O. BOX 160  
COLLBRAN, CO 81624

DEC. 2015/JAN. 2016

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HAPPY  
NEW  
YEAR!

I am writing this reflection the week that we mark the transition to a new year – to 2016 this time around. Frankly, I am bored stiff anticipating and thinking about it. We do this every year, so after nearly 7 decades of celebrating “*New Years*,” I find there is very little today that conveys the magic of the celebrations that I remember from earlier in my life. That should probably not surprise me — or you: I think most ritualized celebrations lose their enchantment and meaning over the years, and it takes great effort to re-infuse them with a sense of newness and/or magic. So for the purposes of this reflection, I prefer to focus on the *next* “*holy day*” that follows Christmas — ***Epiphany***. (It is the traditional 12<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas — “*12 drummers drumming*”.)

Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian feasts. It was celebrated since the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, even before the Christmas holiday was established. It is commonly known as Twelfth Night, Twelfth Day, or the Feast of Epiphany.

It means “*manifestation*” or “*showing forth*”. It is also called Theophany (“*manifestation of God*”), especially by Eastern Christians. Yet, Epiphany is not just a day; it is also an entire liturgical season that stretches to the beginning of Lent; and the liturgical color for the season is white, a color associated with light. The following passage from the prophecy of Isaiah, which is one of the Lectionary texts for Epiphany, keeps alive the theme of darkness and light which we examine in Advent/Christmas:

**60:1** *Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. 60:2* *For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. 60:3* *Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

I am reminded of a chapter from Rachel Naomi Remen’s book, ***KITCHEN TABLE WISDOM***. She notes that light is frequently associated with healing energy. “*But things are not always as we have come to expect and the mysterious may surprise....*” (p. 309) In her work with some of her cancer patients, together they discovered how positive “*darkness*” can be for healing. We begin life in the darkness of the womb, and plants begin in the darkness of the earth. So, Dr. Remen ponders the idea that healing may emerge from the experience of engaging one’s own darkness.

In an initial conversation with one of her cancer patients, he described his cancer as “*this black hole in the middle of my life that keeps pulling me in.*” She asked him what was in the hole. “*Just darkness,*” he said. So she invited him to imagine what this might mean. Her session notes illustrate the power of healing in our darkness....

“He imagined himself pulled into the hole, into the darkness.... *There is darkness. Big darkness. I am floating.... The darkness is very soft . . . gentle . . . It supports me. I have no needs here . . . (Sighs) I am tired.... I am at rest . . . totally at rest. Every cell is resting, every cell is open.... I am filling up . . . filling up with life. I could not fill up because I could not open up . . . let go. I can open up in the darkness.... Life is everywhere.... Whatever happens, it will be okay . . .* (p. 311)

Let the light shine in your darkness, and the darkness become a light of healing in your life!

*Happy New Year and Godspeed!*      **Gary**

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# 11 RESOLUTIONS EVERYONE SHOULD CONSIDER MAKING NEXT YEAR

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS YOU'LL ACTUALLY WANT TO KEEP.

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BY JESSE CAREY

DECEMBER 28, 2015

We've all done it: Made resolutions to work out regularly, to stick to a budget, to eat better. Those are all great goals. And they can pay off if we stick to them. But the thing about strict resolutions is that when we break them, it can feel like we've failed, and it becomes easy to ditch them altogether.

That's why we've created this list of 11 New Year's resolutions that everyone should consider making in 2016. These aren't just based on do's and don'ts, but small habits that can make a difference in our lives—even if we don't do the best job of always sticking with them (see No. 7).

### TO SPEND MORE TIME IN CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Too often, days at a time can go by with the conversations we have with our friends, family members and co-workers going no deeper than surface-level chit-chat. Though there's nothing wrong with joking around, theorizing about the latest episode of *Serial* or strategizing about fantasy football, if we're not intentional about regularly engaging in deeper conversations—that challenge us intellectually, spiritually and socially—too often, those types of talks can become increasingly rare.

Complaining about something can offer momentary relief from frustrations, but working on solutions to the problems in our world can actually *fix* the things that are broken.

### To Complain Less and Do More

We're all guilty of it from time to time: We see something broken—in culture, the Church, the government, in our own personal relationships—and our first instinct is to vent about it instead of thinking of ways we can help change it. Complaining about something can offer momentary relief from frustrations, but working on solutions to the problems in our world can actually *fix* the things that are broken.

### TO SPEND LESS TIME WORRYING

Any time spent worrying is time wasted. It's also counterproductive. As author and activist Corrie ten Boom said in *The Hiding Place*, "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength."

### TO PRAY MORE

It's easy to pray less when we have lots of things to do, but really, life should work in the opposite way. As Martin Luther once said, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." No matter how busy we become, committing to spend more time praying—even if it's during our commute, when we're working out or throughout our day—is a key to growing spiritually.

### TO LISTEN TO MORE NEW MUSIC EVERY WEEK

With the rise of platforms like SoundCloud, NoiseTrade, Spotify and Pandora, keeping up with new music releases has never been more involved. But it's also never been easier to find new artists and get introduced to songs you've never heard. Next year, consider making even more margin to check out innovative music and the artists who are shaping culture.

### TO CUT OTHERS SOME SLACK

In the social media era, where everyone's opinion gets a platform, it's all too easy to fall into the trap of getting angry at our friends over things they say that we don't agree with. Unfortunately, many times, that same mindset of taking offense at dumb stuff people say or do creeps into real-world relationships, the

Church and workplaces. The thing is, most of the time, outrage is overrated. In 2016, commit to be offended less and reserving your anger for issues that really matter.

### **TO CUT YOURSELF SOME SLACK**

We've all been driven to try to accomplish things but ended up falling short. We've all made mistakes. We've all failed. The good news is, God doesn't expect perfection from us, and we shouldn't expect it from ourselves. Next year, when you mess up, drop the ball or let people you care about down, do what you can to make it right, but be quick to move on and show yourself the same grace you extend to others.

Though being able to take a stand for what you believe is an admirable trait, so is listening to the other side and putting yourself in someone else's shoes.

### **TO READ MORE GOOD BOOKS**

In a letter to a friend, C.S. Lewis once wrote, "Clearly, one must read every good book at least once every 10 years." Considering that there are thousands of "good" books to choose from, Lewis' advice doesn't seem all that practical, but that doesn't make it any less powerful. No matter how much time you currently spend reading, there is even more potentially life-changing wisdom in the pages penned by some of humanity's great minds. All you have to do is take the time to read it.

### **TO CHALLENGE OUR OWN PRESUPPOSITIONS MORE OFTEN**

Just take a look at recent news headlines, ongoing current events and debates in the Church, and it's clear to see that we live in polarizing times. Though being able to take a stand for what you believe is an admirable trait, so is listening to the other side and putting yourself in someone else's shoes. Even if we don't end up changing our position on an issue, questioning our own long-held presuppositions doesn't just serve to challenge our beliefs—it can actually strengthen them.

### **TO SPEND LESS TIME ON YOUR PHONE**

When you reflect back on 2016 this time next year, you probably won't remember your new *Candy Crush* high score or that listicle of things you didn't know about the cast of *Boy Meets World*. Even if you're not a full-fledged app addict, in the era of the iPhone, we can all use a little less time looking at screens, and more time enjoying the people and places around us.

### **TO SHARE MORE MEALS WITH PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT**

We're all busy. And, the reality is, a lot of times it's just more convenient to go to the drive-thru, eat lunch at your desk or use dinnertime to catch up on some Netflix. There's nothing wrong with doing this every once in a while, but when eating on the run becomes a lifestyle, you end up depriving yourself—and others in your life—of moments that could be used to build deeper relationships.

**[REPRINTED FROM RELEVANT – A MAGAZINE ABOUT FAITH, CULTURE AND INTENTIONAL LIVING]**

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS**

**The Sunday school children performed “How Silently” for the Christmas Recital with adult voice accompaniment and then again during church December 27<sup>th</sup>, as the children’s choir. They have learned three verses of “Jesus Loves Me” which they love to sing, as well. Our Advent study covered prophesy from Isaiah to the Nativity story in Luke.**

**Our Spring months will begin January 10<sup>th</sup>. Lent begins February 10<sup>th</sup> this year and that means we will have an early Easter on March 27<sup>th</sup>. We may be hunting eggs in the snow, who knows.**

**Please come join us!**

**Sue Bellotti – Christian Ed**

## **CHRISTMAS RECITAL**

**The annual Christmas Recital, held December 6, 2015, was a wonderful beginning to the holiday season. We heard from Nona Carver with the SOLDIERS CHRISTMAS and a new poem for her, CHRISTMAS AT THE COWCAMP. There were vocals performed by the Crystal Crackers and Children’s Choir. Lloyd Power read “Creation” a Southern Sermon with accompaniment by the Crystal Crackers. There was a piano and a flute solo by Dustin King, and piano and harmonica performances.**

**Thank you to everyone that prepared something to share with the audience for this special night. A special thank you to the ladies who prepared the cookies and cakes for refreshments afterward.**

**We look forward to having you again next year. Mark your calendars. December 4, 2016. This much lead time should give us plenty of time to practice.**

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

**The annual meeting of the Collbran Congregational Church, UCC will be held January 17, 2016. A potluck dinner will follow church and the meeting will begin about 1:30pm. Your input is encouraged and your attendance is necessary for us to have a successful meeting.**

**Reports will be presented by all committees and offices. This is a great time to learn more about how the church functions and to learn about plans for the future.**

**SEE YOU THERE!**