

From the Pastor's Pen

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The Greek philosopher Socrates said many centuries ago that the unexamined life is not worth living. A thoughtful examination of our life is something that makes us more human, teaches kindness, and helps us in our learning process. Standing at the cusp of a new year, we tend to think back to how we weathered the past 12 months and also how those months of living shaped us.

The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us "to everything there is a season." For us at Good Shepherd it was a continuing season of growing together as a community in Christ. God blessed us in so many ways throughout the year. I smile whenever I think of the growing group of children and also our littlest ones who are brought to sit before the altar by their parents to listen and participate in the children's moment. What a blessing! We welcome them and their parents as a sign of God's gracious and renewing love among us.

What a blessing it was to be able to send help and relief to subsistence farmers. It is a gift of God to be able to participate in healing some of the hurts in the world.

Of course, there was always the question whether we are able to pay our bills in a timely manner. Come to think of it, that is a blessing too. I can think of nothing worse for creating moral turpitude in a church as to be sufficient unto itself, depending on a trust fund rather than on God's graciousness and generous outpouring of gifts.

This year also brought us uncertainties – fears of losing a job, worries about the stock market – will our investments hold up for our children's college fund or for our retirement? Again, this is a time when we need to remind ourselves that our God is greater than the time in which we live and will be with us no matter what the moment's news dictates.

As we look around the church we see the faces of our fellow worshipers and give thanks for each one of them – they are indeed the church. Each contributes in his or her own way to the body of Christ. No one is insignificant in this special body. Christ has called us to make a difference in our world. Some of that happens when we engage in mission together as a corporate body, much happens when we, as individuals, are out in the world to be Christ's hands and heart.

We look with hope to the New Year because we know that Christ is with us. There surely will be new challenges, new situations to find solutions for, and new paths to travel. But with the Psalmist we can declare:

*"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters;
He restores my soul."*

Blessings to you in 2009,

Pastor Dagmar