

FORGIVEN

CHURCH

Happy New Year Friends

We are so excited to be venturing into this beautiful moment with all of you!! What a joy! Oh, what a gift! Just to be able to walk right over into a new year, a fresh start, a clean slate, a 2nd chance and it's kinda overwhelming (well, for some of us... it's way beyond 2nd chance. Let's start the year off by being honest, shall we? Alrighty then!) It's always a great feeling when you know you can have a do over, huh?(Who doesn't like that?) You can go to bed in one year (2022—so long!) and wake up in a whole other one (hi 2023!!) That's pretty amazing. Don't care who you are.

Well, guess it's all in your perspective. You can choose to wake up to the newness and anticipation of what lies ahead, OR... you can be grumpy, unenergetic, not excited at all, no feelings regarding it whatsoever, a pout on your face (did you know it takes more muscles to pout than to smile?), and mad at everyone and their grandma and go on to stay the same. (doesn't sound so good when we say it like that, huh?). What's awesome is we each get to choose our attitude and expectation moving forward. Aren't you so glad others don't get to choose that for you?! Cuz, let's be honest, some people make dumb choices. (Too honest for the 1st of the year? Maybe.)

This is a great opportunity to decide for yourself that you're moving up, on, out, forward, and into better things. Why expect nothing new? Why not challenge yourself? Why not decide to improve and expand your person, your life, or your impact? It's freeing really to know that things don't have to stay the same if they aren't good. Things can improve and head in the right direction if they've taken a detour this past year. (Some roads have been quite crazy, right?). That's totally beautiful and possible!!

Jesus came to give us new! New is not our idea or our witty invention, it's His! He told us that if we would let Him in, let Him rule and reign in our life, let Him take the wheel (great song!) that we could and would have a brand new life!! Some of us have only dreamed of that, but in Jesus, and with Jesus... it doesn't have to remain a dream. We can expect the dream in 2023. We can expect new. Live new. Think new. Walk in new. Become new!

God said in, 2 Corinthians 5:17 TLB

- 17 When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun!

That sounds great to us!! How about you?? There is so much we need to leave behind us. Yes, there are many things we should have, could have, done differently, but maybe we didn't. This is a perfect time to let those things go, forget the past,

stop regretting what you can't change, and move forward into something brand new. Jesus said we could and if He said it, it must be true. We don't have to spend this next year full of guilt, condemnation, or on what-if's, shame, or regret... we can just choose (if we never have) to let Jesus take the wheel of our life, to steer, to lead, and we can just hang on for the ride (with our head out the window and our hair flapping in the wind. Unless you don't have hair. In that case, there will be no flapping. But you can still stick your head out the window and breathe!)

Our prayer for you, dear reader, is that 2023 will be the best year you have ever stepped into. We pray your joy will be full and your heart will be overwhelmed with goodness. We pray you leave the past behind you and go boldly where no man (or woman) has gone before (Star Trek... a great movie!)

We can say with confidence: No one is holding you back, but you. Jesus would never get in your way (nor will we) of a fresh start, a clean slate, a do over, a start again, a 2nd chance (we've already established for most of us, we're WAY past 2). Jesus, if you could hear him, would be saying..."it's time to go big or go home!" (well, you don't have to go home. We say it only for impact.)

Don't just make new year resolutions this year (cuz you're supposed to) that you have no intentions of keeping (let's be honest. We know us. We won't keep 'em). Make promises to and FOR yourself that you have every intention of keeping. Because who deserves that if YOU don't? Get out of your box. Throw the limits off! Rev up your expectations! Kick off this new year with a bang! Start 2023 off right, with the full determination to change everything for the best! Don't look behind you. Don't be so hard on yourself. Give yourself a break. Don't rehash all the messups and foolish things you've done (we didn't see anything) and just let things go. (Let it go, let it go—insert Frozen movie music here). Look ahead.

We believe the best for YOU is yet to come so why not step into this wonderful New Year believing with us? Huh? We can't wait to hear about all the great things God's getting ready to do in your life!!! YAY!!!

We encourage you, if you're not part of a great church, find one. There are so many wonderful churches in our community and you'll thrive better together than you ever will apart on your own. We aren't called to be an island unto ourselves (even though it's way quieter there!). Find your church family and let's join together, standing arm in arm and shoulder to shoulder, walking into our best life yet!!!

HaPyY 2023 from our heart to yours!

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SERVICE TIMES

Bluffton: Sundays at 9am & Thursdays at 7pm • Fort Wayne: Sundays at 11am