

## **A Look Back at 2019, A Look Forward to 2020 December 27<sup>th</sup> 2019**

Wednesday is New Years day and with New Years there always comes what? New Year's resolutions. Have many of you have made New Year's resolutions this year? Do you want to share them?

I have made a couple and they are the standard few that I think most people make. What do you think they are? Eat less, exercise more and read more books. I don't know about you but think I make these every year and to some degree I fulfilled them but not so much that I wont try a little harder in the coming year.

As I look back upon the last year and the events that occurred in my life I see there is still a need for change, a need for personal and spiritual growth although I don't think you can separate those two.

It's my desire, my resolution to reduce the face time I am spending on all the available screens that are in my life. Computer, television and my phone which I can access the internet and Facebook.

For all of us I think it is good to look back upon our lives to see where there might need to be some adjustments. I think as a church it is also a good idea to look back to see if there needs to be some adjustments made as well.

Let's take the time to briefly look back at what occurred at Wiggins Community Church in 2019. To remember some of the events and people that touched our lives.

You will see some of the these same statistics in the newsletter but I thought it would be good if we celebrate them this morning.

In 2019, here at WCC, we celebrated as 10 individuals made a statement of faith and were baptized. Most were teens and we know this is the beginning of their faith walk and it our responsibility to be used by God to create pathways of discipleship where they can continue to grow in their knowledge and love of the Lord.

We are thankful for Ray Meyer and his passion for the youth and we are also thankful for Jeremy and Sarah Reed who have also come alongside Ray in leading the youth. In 2019 we saw as many as 27 attending the Sunday night youth program with an average of 15-18 each Sunday. We are also thankful for Lori and Kaitlyn Bernhardt who teach the youth Sunday School and for all who provided snacks on Sunday night.

We are excited about what God is going to do in 2020 with our youth.

**PIC**

They are heading out to serve non-profits at camp this year. They will be going to San Antonio TX and to Denver. Of course fundraising is a bit part of this so if you haven't picked up a couple of calendars from one of them please do.

So far this year, we are blessed in our children's outreach. In Kingdom Kidz we are averaging around 60 children. **PICS both on the same slide.**

This great ministry would not be possible if it wasn't Jody Shipman, our Education Director and for all the volunteers we have. Counting the teens I think we have as many as 30 volunteers helping this ministry thrive. I would like to give them another time of recognition as they have dedicated each Wednesday night to teaching our kids and the kids of the community about Jesus and His love for them.

If you have helped in any way with Kingdom Kidz would you please stand?

We are also blessed with our Sunday School teachers. We are blessed with volunteers who rotate every 3 months or so to teach our kids. Donna Stahley, Myra Hanson, Maddie Stewart, Michal Herde and Yvonne Lorenzini and Megan Andrews plus all those teens who help with youth church each Sunday.

Our weekly attendance continues to grow as in 2019. So far we are averaging 106 and in 2019 we had 29 people join the church. I don't place a lot of value on numbers although it does show that people are believing in what we are doing here, and that is pointing to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is with sadness that we remember those who left their earthly bodies and are now with Christ in heaven. Paul said as much, to be free from the body is to be with Jesus. Let's take a moment to remember those who are of our church family and those who are near to us. As we take a moment let us say a prayer for each family.

**Evelyn Green**

**Gerald Egan**

**Ada Loose**

**Wendy Steckly**

**June Lentell**

**Mary Virginia Jones**

**Robert Sauer**

**Janice Marick**

**Vernon Baumgartner**

**Let's put each name up in a separate slide**

We celebrate a lot of things concerning the Wiggins Community Church. We celebrate how we have grown numerically but growing numerically is not as important as how has each person grown spiritually. Are we on task. Can we look back on 2019 and say that yes, we can see that people are growing in knowledge and in faith in their Lord Jesus Christ.

We don't gather here each week just to maintain the relationship you have with the Lord or with each other but we gather that we might all grow in our relationships especially in our relationship with the Lord.

As you look back upon your life the biggest question I have for you is have you grown spiritually. Is your walk with the Lord closer than it was in 2018?

As I look across the body of Christ here I can say for most, yes, you have grown spiritually. But none of us is immune from sliding back into old patterns of life. There is an old saying that if you are not growing you are dying. The same is true of your spiritual life.

Another old story tells about how if an ember is pulled away from the fire, from the rest of the embers, it doesn't take long to cool off and grow cold. How has it been for you over the course of 2019? Has your relationship with the Lord been cool, hot or somewhere in between.

Well, when it comes to New Year's resolutions some of the best resolutions have to do with your spiritual walk. In fact, if you embrace your spiritual walk guess what will happen to your life walk? It gets better and stronger doesn't it?

Jesus said, **John 14:6, "I (Jesus) am the way, the truth and the life."** He also said **John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches; those who remain in Me and I in them, they will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing."**

How much spiritual fruit would you say you bore in 2019? I believe there is a few things you can take a look at that might help.

**Discipline #1 The Word of God. What wood is to a fire, the Word of God is to your Christian life.**

As a follower of Christ you cannot live without it. To stoke the flames of relationship with God you must commit to read His word on a daily basis.

Paul wrote in **Romans 10:17**, “**So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God.**”

Our faith grows as we spend time in God’s word.

A good way to help you stay focused on daily reading is to get a One Year Bible like this one. Or you can get a schedule for reading through the Bible in a year. This is a Chronological Bible...

Daily devotions are also good. One that I have read for years is Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers. If you like to have either let me know and I will order them for you.

It only takes 30 minutes a day and if you ask God to, He will speak to you through His word or through daily devotions. My Word will not come back void God has promised.

Another discipline you will want to pay attention to is

**Discipline #2 Your Prayer Life. What was it like in 2019? Does it need to vamped up a little or a lot?**

Do you know that a prayer life with God means a two way conversation with Him? Do you allow time for God to speak or do you tend to use

your prayer life like a man who rubs on a bottle hoping a genie will pop out and grant him three wishes?

God has things He wants to reveal to you but it usually only comes through a quiet, soft whisper. Are you allowing enough time in your life for God to speak?

Time with God also gives you time to share your burdens, to ask for you needs to be met.

**James 4:2, “...You do not have because you do not ask.”**

Time in prayer with the Lord develops that two way conversation.

**Discipline # 3 How about your church attendance?**

In today’s society church attendance doesn’t seem to be as high of a priority as it used to be but the truth is that when you pull an ember away from the fire it doesn’t take long for it too cool off and go out does it? The same is true for spending time with your church family.

**Hebrews 10:25, “...not forsaking our own assembling together...but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”**

Again, we don’t meet here to keep the status quo, we meet each week to stoke your fire, to hopefully stimulate you to grow spiritually in ways that sparks a fire in you which in turn sparks a fire in the people around you.

The days we are in are getting tougher and tougher spiritually. There are more and more distractions, lack of morality, anger and many other things that can pull you away from your relationship with the Lord. We come together so we can encourage each other to stand strong in the midst of a dark world.

So...How did you do in 2019 and how are you going to do in 2020? Are you committed to reading God's Word? To prayer? How is your church attendance? How about your giving?

#### **Discipline #4 Tithing – Giving the Lord of Your Firstfruits**

**1 Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as they may prosper...”**

There is no certain amount or percentage that you are told to give the Lord but it says here as each has prospered. The church has used the Old Testament rule of 10% and I think it is a worthy goal.

The real question is do you give of your firstfruits or is God given your leftovers. Whatever you have leftover and the end of the week.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:21, “...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

How you spend your money shows where God what is in your heart.

Where was your heart in 2019? Where is it going to be in 2020? I challenge you to examine your giving see if you are where the Lord wants it to be.

#### **Discipline # 5 Ongoing Repentance**

Lastly, is there anything you need to be repentant about? Are there areas in your life that you have faltered in or maybe even wollered in? Were there areas in your life in 2019 that you know you were selfish and self-centered, following the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes or the prideful ways of life?

If so then repent, ask for forgiveness and the strength to overcome these areas. Let God help you put them behind you and begin afresh in 2020.

**1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

It is true that because of the blood of Jesus your sins are all forgiven to yesterday, today and tomorrow. But it is also true that unconfessed sin and ongoing sin blocks a free flow of God’s spirit communicating to your spirit.

Maintaining a spirit of repentance keeps the slate clean so to speak. It is keeps the lines of communication clear and unhindered.

Now, at the beginning of 2020 is a great time to look at these things. Pray about these things and not really make new commitments or resolutions but asking God if He will give you the strength, grace and mercy to live by these disciplines. If you make a commitment to pray for these things in 2020, then I know it will be your best year yet.

We are looking forward to all that God is going to do in our lives, in your lives and the life of the church in 2020.

Let’s begin this New Year, this new decade by dedicating ourselves to the Lord as we remember His sacrifice by the receiving and taking of Holy Communion.