
Big New Years and Small New Days

An article for the *Cathedral Times* by the Very Rev. Sam Candler

Well, we were certainly ready for a new year when 2020 began. And then, we said the same thing as 2021 arrived. "Wow, we really need a new year!" Then, we struggled to repeat the hope in January of 2022, last year, when the pandemic illness was still gripping and scaring us.

Perhaps now, as 2023 begins, our hopes for a truly new year have some comfort to them. We are connecting again, without fear. Strangely, we are even getting sick, with the same old viruses (usually mild) that we remember from years past. Happy New Year!

Happy New Year! Yet, all of us, at some point or another, have asked the question, "Why do we mark off the year so exactly, as if January 1 is so different from December 31?" Yes, calendars and occupations and financial records and such must structure themselves somehow; and that is how we do it. A year is marked off, and we say welcome to the new one.

However, it is my sense that life is not really lived in years – or marked by moons or by winters, as some of our other past civilizations have marked time. Life is marked by days. We live our lives one day at a time, not one year at a time. Occasionally, in the big picture, we say we have lived another year, or we say we are fifty years old.

But good life, to me, is always lived in the small picture, not in the big picture. It is impossible to paint big pictures without painting little pictures first. It is not healthy to try to create large institutions without creating small institutions first. If someone cannot be mayor of a city, they should not be president of a country. Some of the best presidents of corporations worked in the stockrooms first and at the cash registers. Moreover, leaders of large systems must always be aware of serving the small systems as the priority.

There are no healthy large systems without healthy small systems. There are no healthy years without healthy days.

A couple lies together again on New Year's Eve, watching on television the festivities across the world. Is it New Year's yet? No, honey, not yet. I'm tired and falling asleep. People on TV seem to be having a good time. Well, we are, too. Let's say Happy New Year now and go to sleep. Yes, good night. Happy New Year.

Every moment can be the beginning of a new year! Every new day is the occasion for a completely new year!

On September 20, 1822, the priest John Keble wrote a poem that encourages this new potential of every day. It has become a hymn, number 10 in The Episcopal Hymnal, that I encourage you to read this new year, and this new day. Here are the first two verses:

*New every morning is the love
Our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life and power and thought.*

*New mercies each returning day,
Around us hover while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.*

We made it through 2020 and 2021 and 2022 taking it one day at a time. Declaring big things and big plans

rarely worked. We paid attention to the small things in life, the personal relationships, the daily necessities. There were new opportunities every day. And there still are. Here's to a healthy and thriving 2023, which will grow one day at a time!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip