

---

## *Happy New Year!!*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

I usually spend New Year's Eve far away from the parties. I love parties, but I have never thought a mere calendar change was worth staying out all night partying. That just doesn't excite me. This year, I was asleep by 9 p.m. on New Year's Eve!

I do get excited about starting over. Some cultures have celebrated the new year just after the vernal equinox; March 25 was once the beginning of the new year. That makes sense to me. Other cultures celebrated the new year just after the winter solstice (like we do now). That makes sense to me, too.

Whether the equinox or the solstice, if we take the new year date as an occasion "to start over," to "begin again," that is exciting. In the Jewish tradition, the new year observance always ends with Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. Our "new year's resolutions" appeal to our inner human need to start over, to begin again with a clean slate.

It happens that the first or second Sunday of the new year always coincides with the Feast of the Baptism of Christ. Thus, when we return to church after our new year's revelry, we are faced immediately with the sights and sounds of baptisms. In place of drunken carolers, we hear screaming babies. Which one do we prefer? In place of pointed hats and noise-makers, we see old family baptismal gowns and Sunday finest.

This is a happy coincidence. For the Christian, the renewal of baptismal vows can be the beginning of a new year, a new way, a new direction. In fact, for the Christian, every morning can be our Easter morning, our day to be born again and to cast off the sins of the past.

Therefore, use this Sunday, the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, to make a Christian New Year's Resolution. You can find that resolution in the Baptismal Covenant of the Book of Common Prayer. After the Apostles' Creed, it begins "Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?" It ends with the question, "Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" "I will, with God's help," is the Christian answer.

Resolve to be a Christian this new year. Show the world another way. The world does not need another excuse to party. The world needs Christian resolution. Happy New Year!

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler