

LOOKING AT THE NEW YEAR by Carl McMurray

2019 was a great year for the Anderson church of Christ. There were some who started Bible studies in their home, and some who had invited visitors, saw them attend. Some started texting encouraging scriptures regularly and some who had not taught a public Bible class before did so. Some came to the Lord for the first time and were born again, and some were restored in their walk. Volunteerism was rampant last year with the jobs that circle around our worship and caring for the facility. Work days accomplished much. Meals were scheduled, made, and delivered. Both the winter classes, men's and ladies', set attendance records, again with new teachers. The Annual Ladies Day was a great success with excellent teaching and quite a few visitors. And our worship services and welcome to visitors continued to get five star ratings. I believe the many prayers of thanks often offered here affirm the fact that we are aware of God's abundant blessings. But, we must not be content with the accomplishments of the past. The challenge of reaching forward and excelling in all that we do for the Lord should drive us onward. If we aim at nothing this year, we are sure to hit it. Here are four areas to consider for 2020. Does one or more interest you?

Hospitality. We might try to have someone from the spiritual family into our home each month, or to socialize with them in some way to help promote hospitality. Now don't grumble, hospitality is part of being a Christian! 1 Pet. 4:9. In some places it seems that it is dying out with the older generation. So young families... don't let the blessing of children and good jobs cause you to be so busy you neglect the work of sharing with others and encouraging them. Having friends over is great, but let me challenge you to have someone over who you *need to become* friends with, rather than some you already have.

Evangelism. "Each one win one" is a great bumper sticker. We aren't responsible for the response of other people, but we are responsible for *inviting* them. Each member might consider inviting one person to visit our worship weekly. Make a list of friends and co-workers and go through the list. When you're done, start over, things in their life might have changed and now they might see their need.

Visitation. Each member might set one evening per week aside for visiting. Some things are done best, and some can only be done, with a personal visit. Take someone else with you or set up a schedule with a regular partner. Visit a guest at our worship to welcome them and invite them to return. A five minute stop might make a lasting impression (and you'd be meeting the challenge of "inviting" in the preceding paragraph too). Visit an erring member to say you miss them or a new member to meet and welcome them, or a weak member to offer your love and encouragement.

Giving. The elders are setting down a weekly budget. Each member is challenged to examine this part of his/her worship and do their part to help reach this goal. We update our phones, computers, wardrobes, vehicles, kitchen counters, etc. And most get small updates in their salary. Have you updated and purposed your giving lately. Remember, "He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully" (2 Cor.9:6).

2019 was a great year, but with the Lord's grace and blessing 2020 can be even better. Excel still more.