

FAITH MATTERS

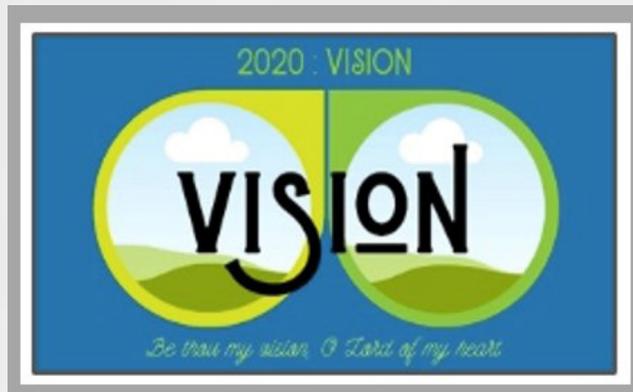
be loved • believe • become

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VISION

In Proverbs, we read that 'where there is no vision, the people perish'. And in a favorite traditional hymn, we sing, 'Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart'. VISION. It is the cliché word that goes with a year like 2020, but at Harvard Avenue Christian Church, 2020 really will be a visionary year ... in leadership, in ministry, in stewardship, in opportunity. In this issue of FAITH MATTERS, some of our staff team share first-reaction reflections to the star words we've each drawn for the year to come.

How will each and every one of us live into God's vision for Harvard Avenue in 2020?





My star word for 2020 is MORE!

Most people want MORE happiness, MORE money, MORE freedom, MORE peace, MORE joy, MORE confidence, MORE! MORE! MORE!

I would like MORE time to ride the Pedego Ridge Rider Electric Mountain Bike that Santa gave me this Christmas. I want MORE self-discipline when it comes to diet and exercise. I want to read MORE books in 2020. I want MORE Tenors in the choir...and Sopranos...and Altos...and Basses. I want MORE room in the Choir Loft. I want to be MORE of the father & husband & friend I know I should and can be. I want to be MORE present and transparent. I want to sing MORE, and laugh MORE, and travel MORE. MORE! MORE! MORE!

But, it's my prayer that our heavenly Father would continue to mold me and make me MORE and MORE like Him. And it's my prayer that He will make us - this body of believers called Harvard Avenue Christian Church, MORE and MORE into the people that He wants us to be!

I could say MORE...but I'd need MORE time!

 Kelly Ford
Traditional Music Director



Drawing star words is one of my favorite things we do as a church body each year, propelling our thought into the new year!

The first thing that came to mind when I read my star word for 2020 was "Where there is a will, there is a way". Is that true? If we have a strong determination, can we conquer anything? Then, of course, I started questioning if I'm in God's will and looking up the definition of the word in the dictionary. Which, by the way, the definition of "will" is "expressing future tense, inevitable events". Ah! A new perspective and meaning to that same little word.

So, I wonder what "inevitable events" will happen in God's will for me in 2020, because **"where there is a will, there is a way"**.

 Ashley Pease
Children's Music Director

This is probably my favorite word so far. For me "notice" means to take notice. Pay attention to the beautiful world around me. Really notice the wonderful diverse people that I come into contact with daily. **Notice all the blessings God has given me.** This year I want to slow down and notice all of God's beauty.

 Nedeane Geurin
Finance Manager



As we considered this new year ... where to begin a preaching and teaching theme this month ... as we remain in a period of prayerful waiting, working, and looking ahead ... truly the only word that captures it all is VISION.

Yes, it is perhaps a cliché and easy reach in theme development to say, "It's the year 2020. Let's go with vision! We're so clever!"

But my goodness, when you look at the year to come with 'church glasses' on, isn't VISION really the only thing that fits? This one word says so much about who we are – people of vision, with eyes fixed on God, and prayers for the work and will that rests in the Holy hands. It is a word that brings into focus so much about what is ahead:

Our new Lead Pastor will be named and join our team and congregation in ministry. Our leadership teams will engage in bigger and bolder visioning to carry us from our 60th anniversary year of 2019 into the next decades to unfold. The new members and frequent visitors who have joined us over the last several months are engaging their hearts and spirits with those who've been here for years. God is already stirring new hopes and wonders for the year (and years) to come.

'Star words' aren't magical. They are meaningful. This is the seventh year that Harvard Avenue has engaged in this Epiphany worship practice (borrowed from a colleague of mine who borrowed it from a colleague of hers, and so on). It is expected (and sometimes greatly pressured) to 'choose something' to carry as a 'resolution' into the New Year. And it is also expected (and often in short order) that we will drop, neglect, slide on those resolutions ... either because of how they're set, how they're chosen, or simply how life just happens along the way. And then we're left with this sinking feeling of messing up, missing out, and being misguided ... again.

But with star words? It's lighter. More open. More engaging. The idea is that you choose a word, from among hundreds (580 this year!), so that no two of us within the congregation have the same word to explore. (Actually, the only repeats are the 80 that our children (preschool through 5th grade) receive. I've wondered about a way to match up the adult and the child who receive the same word ... wouldn't that be something ... to explore together?!) You don't have to tell anyone what your word is (unless you're on staff and I ask you to write about it

for the January newsletter!) ... or you can tell absolutely everyone you know!

The word is something to look to, focus on, engage in ... like the star that guided the magi to the wonder and mystery of the Christ Child. Maybe it's something you'll work on. Maybe it's something you'll try to do more of, or do more with. Perhaps you'll simply stay open to where you see this word, this characteristic, this gift, appearing in the world around you, in the lives of others. It just gives us something to watch for ... something to take notice of ... something to hold onto when we get going too fast or thinking too much or feeling too out of sorts. Look at that card again, keep it close – in your wallet, on your mirror, in the cup holder of your car – and consider: **Where is this speaking to me, and where can I bring this about in the world?**

My word for this year?

Well, after a couple of hours wrestling with the copier to get these 580 star word cards to print in time for Epiphany Sunday worship? And more than a few uncharitable thoughts about technology and its usefulness in the world? And aggravation with myself that I didn't do this before Christmas instead of when I was trying to get out of the office after Christmas?

My word for this year – drawn at random, from the same face-down pile of cards that everyone else is choosing from – is ...



Well. Doesn't God just have a way? Won't the Holy One just drop right into every moment that we let so consume us and say 'Hi. Let's sit here together for a minute. There's something you might want to consider. Let's call it a guide, a light, a focal point ... let's make it your star.'

Courtney

Courtney Richards
Connections Pastor



My soul breathed deeply just hearing the word.....silence. It was as if God was affirming what I have come to realize about myself, and my plans to honor the need for silence in my life. I've known for a long time that I am a 50/50 mix of introvert/extrovert, but only in the past year I've begun to intentionally plan for periods of silence. Silence is important to me for several reasons: to deepen my relationship with God; to have time to listen to creation; to remind me to listen more than speak; and finally, to renew my spirit.

2020 already holds some intentional planning for silence. This spring, I am teaching a course in Celtic Spirituality at Phillips Seminary. One of the required textbooks is *The Soul's Slow Ripening* by Christine Valters Painter. It is a book of Celtic spiritual practices with each chapter providing a personal reflection, a tie-in to a Celtic saint, a scripture reflection, biblical context, and a choice of ways to practice the theme. Not-surprisingly, there is a chapter on solitude and silence! In addition to using the chapter in the class this spring, I am enrolling in an online solitude and silence retreat by the author later in the year.

Another intentional plan for silence will happen this fall when David and I take a three-week vacation to visit some National Parks – inspired by a certain author we know (Brad Lyons), who co-authored *America's Holy Ground: 61 Faithful Reflections on Our National Parks*. If you don't have a copy yet – go to Chalicepress.com – NOW! In addition to car companionship, David and I expect to experience a lot of creation silence – which is usually not silent at all! **But when we choose to quiet our minds and internal chatter to truly listen to the earth, we feel an inner peace like no other.**

While those plans are grand, I also need regular bouts of silence to restore my soul. When I walk a labyrinth in prayer, when I enjoy a cup of tea while journaling, when I practice listening instead of speaking, when I take time to listen to the birds outside my home, when I take a walk in a forest, when I sit and wait in expectant silence at the end of a lengthy session of prayer – all of these ways of honoring my need for silence keep my soul at ease, keep me smiling, keep me hopeful.

May you be blessed by silence in the new year as well!

 Darlene Martinez
Childrens Pastor



There is little doubt each year brings its own changes; new opportunities, new challenges, new possibilities for growth. Even when those changes are difficult, **there is room for God's grace to enter in and transform us for the better...**if we are, indeed, open to that sort of thing. I feel confident that I will be using this star word as a daily reminder that I must move through each day with an open heart and an open mind so that I can receive the gift of God's grace found in an unfolding the future.

The invitation, to remain open is a welcome, if challenging, one. Admittedly, I have some serious spiritual lifting ahead if I am to remain open to transformation in 2020. It has become all too easy for my heart to become hardened and my thoughts to turn cynical. Come to think of it, this is probably why Jesus said that we must be like children to enter his Kingdom; remaining vulnerable, curious, and open to growth.

With God's help—and the kind reminder of my star word placed just below the computer monitor of my work desk—I would like to make it a special focus in 2020 to be the sort of clay that the Master Potter can fashion into something more useful for this ministry to which we are called.

Here's to opening ourselves to how the Spirit is at work in and among us.

 Kevin Howe
Community Pastor

"It's my pleasure"... Words used in response to a thank you for doing someone a favor, for a gift given and appreciated, or for taking the time to listen. It's a phrase I use quite often but have never given any real thought to what it means. So when I drew "pleasure" as my star word to focus on for 2020 I decided to dig deeper. The dictionary says it is a feeling of happiness, enjoyment, satisfaction. It also means to take only one's own wishes into consideration in deciding how to act or proceed.



I have to admit, my initial reaction upon seeing my star word was to fist pump and say "Yessss! Permission to indulge in things that make ME happy!" And as I've begun reflecting on my word, I've thought about some of the things that give me pleasure: hugs and love from friends and family, people who laugh with me until tears run down our faces, singing and dancing, and of course, chocolate!

While I believe God intends for all of us to enjoy pleasures in life, I've been thinking about **what it means to take His wishes, instead of my own, into consideration when deciding how to act or proceed.** Ephesians 5:10 encourages us to "...find out what pleases the Lord," and 2 Corinthians 5:9a says to make it "our goal to please Him." Great instructions for me to live by in this new year and decade. So, as I continue to enjoy my chocolate, laugh with friends, or sing and dance, I will thank God for the pleasures of life that cause me to feel happy and satisfied and make it my goal to please Him!

Christy Christy Southard
Communications Director



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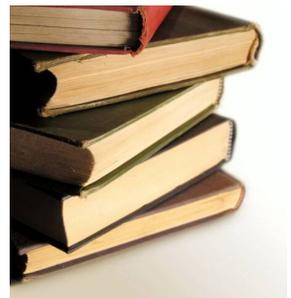
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Mark the Date!

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| January 16 | Book Discussion Group 11:00 am |
| January 19 | Faithful Families Workshop 4:00 pm |
| January 23 | HACC Bridge Group 1:00 pm |
| January 26 | Congregational Meeting &
State of the Church Address 10:00 am |
| February 6 | Next Man Up <i>First Thursday</i> 5:30 pm |
| February 7 | Parents Night Out 6:00 pm |

Book Discussion Group January 16 11 am Room 217

Moving through three generations and back and forth in time, *The Guest Book* asks how we remember and what we choose to forget. New York Times best selling author Sarah Blake's triumphant novel tells the story of a family and a country that buries its past in quiet, until the present calls forth a reckoning. All are welcome to join the discussion!



Next Newsletter - February 5
Visit us at www.hacctulsa.org

Sunday Morning
9:00 a.m.—The Rising
10:00 a.m.—Sunday School
11:00 a.m.—Traditional Worship

Office Hours: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm Monday - Thursday; closed Friday (918) 742-5509