

CHURCH

A New Year filled with faith and determination

A brand new year is here, and I'm excited to see what the Lord has for us! Keeping Christ at the center of our thoughts takes a great deal of discipline and determination, but so does everything else we really care about. We often hear people discussing their resolutions, which are serious intentions, desires, and promises they believe they can achieve. What are your goals and visions for the coming year? Would you like to draw closer to God and experience His peace and joy? I can tell you, according to His word, He loves you and waits for you to be more involved with Him. James 4:8, and Jeremiah 29:12-14 talk



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LIVING ON PURPOSE

about this, but it will take more than just a whim. It will take a drastic lifestyle change. To become more holy and governed by God, instead of our emotions, let us understand that lifestyle transformation involves personal sacrifice. It is said that the only limit to our goals for tomorrow will be our doubts of today. So, here's the big question: Just how willing are we to give Him total control of our lives? Isn't this why we are here? If we abide under the shadow of His wings, we will walk in the peace and joy of His Spirit, but if we allow ourselves to be tempted and drawn away by sin, we will remain distant and miserable. Matthew chapter 22 gives us

the true meaning of life, "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Most of the time, we are so busy making our own decisions that we hardly consider the distractions that cause us to ignore Him. In the book of Revelation, chapter two, God is disappointed with how the Ephesians had left their "first love," but what does this mean? It's time to examine our hearts and choose once and for all who we are going to serve. Actually, the Bible contains many passages where God says He loves us and how much He wants to fellowship with us. The incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection are all about Jesus inviting everyone to have a

personal relationship with Him, but it's our decision since He will never force us to love Him. This has been a challenging year for my health, along with other various disappointments, as I'm sure many of you also have your own issues. I actually spent Christmas Day in the hospital. We need our strength as there is much to do for God's kingdom. My family lost some dear members this year, and this holiday has not been very jolly, but we are comforted in knowing they loved God and are with Him now. I ask that you pray for the inmates that we serve at our local detention center. We bring the good news of the gospel, along with baptizing those who give their lives to Christ, and serving communion. I also have some exciting

news, as I became a certified substitute teacher this year for Jessamine County. I've really enjoyed the challenge, love the kids, and look forward to this coming school year. With a doctorate in Christian education, I have a passion to teach and coach, especially knowing how the enemy is attacking the young ones in today's world. I want to pray and help children in any way I can. Philippians 3:14 declares, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus," which reveals a vital condition to personal transformation: no one else can do it for us. We must see our need to change and be willing to do whatever it takes to be victorious. It's commendable to have long-term goals, and we should release our faith into accomplishing

our destiny, but it's critical to realize just how desperate we must become. It's not automatic, but a day-by-day process. It would be much better to go slow with permanent results than to go through the motions and become overwhelmed with frustration and eventually give up. Let us pray. "Father, in the name of Jesus, I ask that you truly become our Lord. No more games, no more lukewarmness, depression, or excuses. Please give us the courage to discipline our flesh and the faith and strength to say no to all that is wrong, and yes to your perfect will for us. We give you all praise and glory, amen."

Dr. Holland is an ordained minister, chaplain, and author. Read more about the Christian life at billyhollandministries.com.

Can we change God's word?

There seems to be a temptation in every generation to try to change the scriptures. As we think of ourselves as progressing in society, we want to be more modern and up-to-date. With that line of thought comes the idea of getting rid of spiritual values that seem old fashioned or not up to our current view of



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advancement. Can we then change our view on whether hell is real? There will always be some truths in God's Word in every era of mankind which offends someone. Many centuries ago, there was a King of Judah who was given a scroll that were the very words of God. God's prophet

Jeremiah had these words written down with the hope that the nation would avoid the calamity God had planned for them because of their sin. Those that first heard these words from God became very afraid. It was agreed upon that the King must hear these things. As this scroll started to be read in the presence of the King, he took out a knife, cut it and threw the scroll in the fire that was burning (Jeremiah

36:20-23)! Of course, this isn't the end of the story. Jeremiah was instructed to have these words written on another scroll. Not only was this scroll rewritten, but "many similar words were added to them" (Jer. 36:32). In the end, cutting and burning the scroll changed nothing. God's Word had not changed. Ultimately, the nation of Judah was lost because of its disobedience. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon

came in took all he wanted and led the people into exile. Will we learn this lesson today? Do we think we can edit God's Word to our preferences because we don't like what it says? Remember, not only is scripture given by inspiration of God, it also makes us complete and equips us for every good work (II Tim. 3:15-16)! It may not tell us what we want to hear but it definitely tells us what we need!

Pope Leo XIV gets into Christmas spirit with prayer for peace at Spanish Steps

BY NICOLE WINFIELD
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROME — Pope Leo XIV got into the Christmas spirit Monday by taking part in a very Roman papal tradition: praying for peace at a statue of the Madonna near the Spanish Steps on the Dec. 8 feast day that kicks off the Christmas season. Leo greeted thousands of well-wishers who braved the cold to watch

the American pope on his inaugural outing to the statue. They were treated to a popemobile romp through Rome's historic center, which has been decked out for the start of the holiday shopping season. The pope got a special honor from the association of shop owners of the Via Condotti, the chic shopping street that extends from the Spanish Steps and features

such brands as Bulgari, Hermes and Prada. Wearing his formal red mozzetta, or cape, Leo offered a big bouquet of white roses and then a brief prayer at the foot of the statue. He recalled the millions of people who have come to Rome this year on a Holy Year pilgrimage that brought them to the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica. "After the Holy Doors,

may other doors now open to homes and oases of peace where dignity can flourish once more, where non-violence can be taught, and the art of reconciliation can be learned," he said. Leo will be presiding over his first Christmas as pope this year, and already has introduced one novelty. The Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Mass, which had been moved

up earlier and earlier in recent years to accommodate older popes, this year is due to begin at the 10 p.m. usual start time. Leo will have just a few hours of sleep before celebrating Christmas Day Mass in St. Peter's Basilica the next morning, followed by his return to the loggia — where he first appeared as pope May 8 — to deliver his Urbi et

Orbi speech (to the city and the world). He'll preside over evening prayers known as vespers on New Year's Eve and then a New Year's Day Mass and blessing Jan. 1. The Christmas season comes to an end with Epiphany Mass on Jan. 6, which also marks the official closing of the 2025 Holy Year and the shutting of the Holy Door to the basilica.

CLASSIFIEDS

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PUBLIC NOTICE
Benton Salvage, located at 1573 Oak Level Road, Benton, KY, 42025, hereby gives notice to Justin Harper, Owner, of the 1992 Chevy 1500, VIN 1GCDC14K3NZ7139410. Vehicle will be sold January 6, 2026.

Heart-Related Deaths Claim Almost 1 of 2 Americans

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