

Just Saying

By Doris Elmore

As I write this column it is a brand-new year, New Year's Day 2021. I have read so many FB posts about putting 2020 behind us and start new. Maybe I am looking at it wrong, but I truly think we have learned a lot this year amid all the chaos, pandemic, shelter-in-place, and so on. I know I have touched on this from time to time in the last couple months, but I really think it is true.

While there has been a lot of sickness, deaths, disappointments and sadness, there has also been a lot of positive events that have happened over the past several months. I am so sad for everyone who has lost a loved one and unable to have friends and extended family attend funerals. We too lost loved ones. Our brother-in-law Orv Graham passed away in May and nephew Bill Dean died in June. Neither of them died of COVID-19, but not being able to be with them was terrible.



My niece did bring her dad home for about three weeks before he died. She tried so hard to help him get better. My other niece wasn't able to see her husband until just before he died. It was so sad.

There have been so many people die of COVID alone. That is so terrible. Some people have other ailments, even given birth by themselves. Wow, that is not good at all.

So many businesses were closed for a while, some restaurants are still closed. While take out or drive through is okay, sometimes it just isn't enough. I feel so bad when businesses try so hard to stay open, but their struggles have been in vain.

I realize our youth have missed out on many school events, but school person-

nel and communities have worked hard to come up with unique ideas to make things happen. I was impressed with the parade of graduates and how they worked graduation. I know it is not the way everyone imagined it would be, but this is one year graduates will have interesting stories to tell their kids someday.

I have been intrigued with all the birthday, anniversary and birth yard art that have appeared. We surprised our granddaughter Alyssa in Tennessee with a yard card on her birthday. Actually, we surprised her parents as well. It was so much fun.

I was also impressed with the way the Atwood Fire Dept. had a drive-thru at Easter, Halloween Trick or

Treat and a drive around town with Santa and the Atwood Chamber of Commerce distributing treat bags. I can personally tell you that was a lot of fun with Santa. Some of these things should be continued next year. Yes, there were a few hitches, but it was the first time we tried it and you always learn the pros and cons after trying it. There are some changes that need to be made, better yet, improvements.

Families have had to spend more time together since the world shut down, people have had to learn to cook more, and our teachers and youth have had to learn a whole new way of teaching and learning. We learned when we were with our kids at Christmas that our granddaughter is going to start out going to school three days a week and online two days when she starts back. This is to minimize the number of kids in the school at one time. I hope it works well.

Churches have been shut down and re-opened with restrictions. It is hard to know exactly what to do.

Then there is the topic of wearing a mask. Oh my gosh, just put one on and wear it for your sake and the protection of others. I was in a store the other day and I think I was the only one wearing one. I really wanted to say something, but thought better of it. It is no big deal to put a mask on and it is the safe thing to do. I know some of you don't agree with me, and that is your prerogative, but I do think it is the best thing.

So here we are, at the beginning of a new year. A year of keeping positive thoughts for a happy and healthy new year. We do have a vaccine now and I am hoping that will improve the pandemic.

We are taking baby steps toward a new normal, but with our faith, we will get there.

I pray for each of you to write down a positive thought each day and put it in a special place. Then at the end of 2021, you can read those thoughts and realize how much you have to be thankful for.

A special thank you to those who are faithful read-

ers of my column and the Southern Piatt Record Herald. We try our very best to bring you hometown news to keep you in touch with your community. Be sure and let us know if you have anything you would like in the paper, we try to keep up on what is happening in the area.

Have a Happy and Healthy 2021 and as I always say, remember to smile.

Lake Fork United Church of Christ

It doesn't matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.



By BEV OBERT

Happy New Year. Welcome to 2021. I am sure that we are all happy that the year 2020 is past. It was a rough year that old year. As we begin this New Year I want to draw your attention to 2 verses in Matthew chapter 9, verses 16 & 17. These verses talk about a man putting new cloth into an old garment or new wine into old bottles. The old cloth cannot hold the new and the garment is ruined. Likewise the old bottles cannot contain the new wine, they break and the wine is lost.

So what does that have to do with the New Year?

We often make resolutions when the New Year starts but then don't keep them. There may be a resolution to lose weight, but if we do not change our eating habits or add exercise to our day, we will not lose that weight. We are trying to put new cloth into old habits. It

is sure to fail.

Last year there was racial unrest. If we desire to reduce this problem in our society, then we need to seek justice for all. To change the thinking and actions of people. Putting a Band-Aid on the problem will not fix it. We need new ideas and new cloth in which to wrap them.

As we start the New Year, we also can develop a deeper relationship with God. Through prayer, bible study, attending church, or doing new acts of devotion. Last year we turned to God in our faith to help us during the pandemic. Now is a time to become closer in our relationship to God.

Here's the thing....as this year 2021 begins, let us strive to develop a closer relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This will bring us closer to them and when we call on them they will not be strangers.

Warm Up This Winter With These Soup Recipes

By DORIS YODER

A wintery morning! Snow flurries yesterday after some rain. Thankful it didn't get slick.

I had the usual run to Rural Kings and Decatur Auto Auction this week.

I have a pickup today for a New Year's Eve event, meatballs, finger sandwiches and a veggie tray.

At noon I have a group eating here, fried chicken and ham with all the trimmings.

This finds us on the last day of a very unusual year... wonder what next year will bring? Here's more soup recipes, they taste great on these cold winter nights or even for lunch.

Country Potato Soup

3 c. diced, pared potatoes
½ c. carrots
½ c. onion
1½ c. water
2 chicken bouillon cubes
1 tsp. chopped hives
½ tsp. salt
1 c. sour cream
2 Tbsp. flour
2 c. milk

Combine potatoes, carrots, onions, water, bouillon cubes and salt in large saucepan. Cover and cook for about 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender but not too mushy. Add 1 c. milk, heat. Mix sour cream, flour, chives, and remaining milk in medium bowl.

From My Amish Kitchen

Stir mixture into soup base gradually. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until thickened. Add a little Velveta cheese for extra flavor.

Cheese Soup

4 chicken bouillon cubes
1 qt. water
1 c. diced celery
1 c. chopped onion
2½ c. cubed potatoes
1 c. diced carrots
1 (19.8 oz.) bag frozen mixed vegetables
2 cans cream of chicken soup
1½ lb. cubed Velveeta

Cook bouillon cubes, water, celery, and onions for 20 minutes covered. Add potatoes, carrots, frozen vegetables and cook additional 30 minutes covered. Add soup and Velveeta and heat until cheese melts.

Corn Chowder

6 slices bacon
½ c. sliced onions
½ c. chopped celery
1 T. flour
¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. pepper
2 c. hot chicken stock
3 c. diced potatoes
1½ c. corn
2½-3 c. milk

Chop the bacon and sauté 4-5 minutes in a large heavy bottom stock pot or saucepan. Add onions and celery and cook over low heat about 5 minutes. Stir in flour, salt and pepper. Cook 3-4 minutes. Gradually blend in hot stock, then add the potatoes. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Add corn, simmer 10 min-

utes more. Scald milk and add to the soup to the desired consistency.

Cheeseburger Chowder

1 lb. hamburger, brown and drain
2 med. Potatoes
½ c. chopped celery
1 onion-diced
½ tsp. salt
2½ c. milk
3 T. flour
1 c. cheddar or Velveeta cheese

Cook potatoes, celery, onion, and slat in 1½ cups water, until tender. Add hamburger and 2 cups milk. Use ½ cup milk to blend flour for thickening. Heat until soup has thickened. Add cheese.

Taco Soup

3 qt. tomato juice
2 c. water
¾ c. ketchup
½ c. barbecue sauce
1 onion, chopped
1 Tbsp. salt
1½ Tbsp. taco seasoning
2 lb. fried hamburger
Beans of your choice
¾ c. flour

Stir together and heat first nine ingredients. Thicken with flour and water. Add hamburger and beans.

Pizza Soup

1 lb. sausage
¼ c. chopped onions
¼ c. chopped peppers
2 qt. pizza sauce
4 c. water
6 oz. pkg. pepperoni, cut up

Pizza seasoning to taste
Brown onions and peppers with sausage. Add rest of ingredients and simmer.



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Letter to the Editor

As with all new years, there is the blessing of new beginnings

Dear Editor,

It's 7:30 a.m. on New Year's Eve Day and I've just finished perusing some news articles, leaving me feeling thoroughly unsettled. Specifically, it's the comment threads posted at the close of the articles that are the cause of my distress. The sheer vitriol—name-calling, derision, hateful condemnations—because the conclusion reached or opinion expressed differed from their own was truly depressing. And it was coming from both sides of the divide.

It is breathtaking how fractured we as a nation seem to be on almost every topic. Things that would normally have no political bent to them are, inexplicably, tied to Democratic or Republican leanings in 2020 America.

I will confess my own bias. I am not what you would call a Trump fan. It would be more accurate to say I find most of President Trump's actions and governance to be incompetent, and in some instances, dangerous. But lest you dismiss me as a far left extremist, historically I have voted Republican more often than Democrat. My goal has always been to vote for the person, rather than the party, when it comes to the position in question. I don't think job qualification falls to any one political persuasion.

That said, I also recognize that I have sometimes fallen into the trap of focusing on news articles that reaffirm my mindset, the appropriately named echo chamber that parrots back to me that which I already believe to be true. As a former newspaper reporter and editor, I try to scrutinize sources and seek out the most balanced, fact-based options, but the sheer volume of available "news" makes it near impossible to not be sucked occasionally into a clickbait.

We will in a few hours, as this is being written, put to bed what will surely be one of the more challenging years this world has experienced. But as with all new years, there is the blessing of new beginnings, of opportunity and hope. We resolve to do better, to be better.

Do you suppose it's possible, here in our little corner of the world, to be the collective "better person?" I am not proposing that we all agree to think alike (how boring would that be) but rather just to think. As in, take a moment to think before we speak (or text or tweet) ... think and analyze rather than blindly accept whatever it is we are taking in, before making decisions and taking actions that have real consequences not only for ourselves but the people around us.

While I am writing this as a private citizen, in the interest of full disclosure, I am an employee of Douglas

County Health Department. As such, I was allowed the opportunity to receive an initial dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine while helping with immunization clinics recently. Having done considerable research about the vaccine, I was not at all hesitant to take it. In fact, I was quite excited for the opportunity to not only help protect myself, but the community in which I live and work. As for side effects—my experience in this first 24 hours has been a sore arm, and some mild fatigue. The injection itself was completely painless.

COVID-19 is a virus. As such, it falls into the medical rather than political arena. There is ongoing solid, scientific research that should govern our approaches to its eradication. So I guess my wish for 2021 is that we all make honest attempts to educate ourselves about the virus and vaccinations—from credible sources—so that we can make informed, thoughtful decisions that are in the best interests of ourselves, our families, our healthcare providers, and our fellow citizens.

As with any subject worth discussing, there should always be room for thoughtful, even spirited debate, but if we could keep kindness and respect in the mix as well ... what a win that would be for everyone. Happy New Year to all!

Colleen Lehmann
Tuscola, Illinois