



Days are long, but years are short. - Whitney Hansen

It's that time of year; a time of endings and beginnings - again. I've been considering all sorts of ideas and directions over these holidays to include the actual definition of the word *holiday*.

The Old English derivation means *holy day*.

Along with the understanding of festivity and celebration, holidays can be an exemption from work, freedom to do what we want, and a time of relaxation.

Not everyone has the luxury of relaxation and vacation at this time of the year. Grocery stores are still busy with bakers, deli-staff, stockers, cashiers, and baggers. We shop, wrap, bake, travel, and visit family and friends. There is the mad dash to return and exchange gifts the day after Christmas. And sadly, there are many, many people who are ill, alone, or grieving during these marked days of remembering.

If these are indeed *holy* days, and I believe they are, how do I move through them? I become reflective. I chose my "word" for the new year. Last year, it was *transformation*.

Only a few things really transformed. I moved through the year with one dog instead of two. I faced the sober reality that I am in a new decade of my life. I lost and gained weight. I invested time in writing poetry and short stories. I learned, via the Enneagram, that I am a "Helper" – a person with altruistic characteristics of care, love, and generosity whose motivations may

New Year Intentions

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include selfishness and pride.

As I chose my “Word of the Year” for 2019, other notable sites picked: existential, climate emergency, me too, they, and voice. Each word has significant meaning in contemporary society. Underneath each word is a responsibility and call for freedom, accountability, inclusivity, and human rights. Each word and idea bears weight.

This new year, after deliberate consideration, I choose *intention* as my word for 2020. The number of years behind me exceed the years ahead of me, and each one, each day, is a singular gift. It must be lived with intention. My motivations and actions must be intentional. I have to ask myself, “

Why

am I doing this?” A big task. Maybe, probably, I am setting myself up for failure. Can I truly be that self-aware to understand every intention?

There is a real-life parable of intention on-going between our St. Helena and Harbor Islands. The truss swing bridge, built in 1939 by the Works Project Administration, is being replaced by a fixed span bridge. On a recent trip to Fripp, I commented to my husband how amazed I am by the planning and engineering needed to build a bridge. The metaphors for bridge building are plentiful. Preparation, laying foundations, labor, the uncontrollable forces of nature, time, talent, materials, execution, and even luck combine to connect one shore to another. I am fascinated by the efforts. It is a concrete example of intention.

In a blog post by money coach Whitney Hansen, she advises that an intentional life leads to a happier life, and she offers ten tips. Learn to say no, declutter, acquire financial discipline, be self-aware and grateful, exercise and meditate, engage in less social media and focus on essentials – less is more. For me, another integral component for happiness is my spiritual well-being, building bridges of faith, and trusting that I am on the right path.

It’s crazy, but I am just now facing my mortality. I’ve lived a lifetime of missed possibilities and only now am I understanding that; “Yes Vivian, there is a Santa Claus,” and “Yes Vivian, there is an end,” and it is in sight. What am I going to do about it? Earlier I asked, how am I going to move through my days? Intentionally.

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I'm sure my husband will tease me about my word choice. "Are you intentionally eating that ice cream?" "Did you intend on keeping those pieces of driftwood, feathers and seashells on the workbench in the garage?" I intend to ignore him.

My past does not need to dictate my future, however short or long that may be. God willing, there is still time to give time to my passions. There is still time for personal transformation. There is always time to live a conscious, considered, and purposeful life, to continue to explore and develop my values and beliefs. I need to receive my life as a gift, practice self-control, give and find joy in the wonder of each day.

This is our season to stay awake, prepare, give, receive, reflect, slow down, relax, and to enjoy the holidays, our holy days, limited days, our fleeting days. Choose a word for your new year, for this new decade, for 2020. Build a bridge. Connect. Transform. Pay attention. Look fear in the eye and leap. Change the ordinary. Be determined. Love. Hope. Question your motivations and be intentional. Be something. The choice is always yours. Happy New Year.