I love calendars.

New fresh calendars all crisp and full of possibility in those empty date boxes. A bit of a calendar junkie, I linger over racks of calendars at every bookstore I enter, drawn to fascinating illustrations or meaning quotations. There are always a dozen I could easily take home with me and selecting only one to live with for a whole year is next to impossible. So I wind up buying plain filler pages for my very practical appointment book, but I get a couple of more "arty" calendars for my soul. Then in a few weeks when they are marked down half price, I get a couple more for good measure.

I like interesting artwork and a nice clean layout where I have plenty of room to make notes and see the projected layout of my life. Some months have a lot of erasing and scratching out by the time I flip to the next page. But even the items that didn't pan out as I originally planned are a record of my life in this abbreviated journal of the recent past.

When I thumb back through my 2007 calendar, I am thumbing through a record of my priorities. I look back and see plans that worked out and some that didn't. There have been some detours along the way.

As I begin to fill in dates in my crisp new 2008 calendars, I am laying out plans that may or may not hold steady, but they are a projection of what I value and what I hope for. Another roadmap for where I invest my energy, my time and, often, my money.

The groceries have to be bought and bills paid, doctor's appointments kept and work attended to. There's a structure to tending to our physical needs that calls for an investment of time and energy. It takes planning.

If we've not been warmed up to thinking in terms of our emotional needs, that part of our lives may get short shrift in the busy-ness of living.

However the emotional structure of our lives needs investment too. When only our physical roles are given attention, there's a lack of balance. As you look through last year's calendar, notice what your memos say about your relationships with others and about your relationship with yourself.

We may spend a small fortune to buy a cosmetic experience that's going to have a limited lifespan. Billboards and newspaper ads tease us to brighten our smiles. All we have to do is open a newspaper or magazine to come-ons for potions and injections and surgery to help us look younger longer. And let's face it….lots of us women and some men have no idea what color our hair actually is anymore!

Yet, no matter how great that hair looks, in a few weeks it's going to need attention. The perfect smile will last longer, but not forever.

I wonder how many of us make the same kind of investment in our emotional lives that we make in looking good. Many of us haven't been warmed up to investing our time, energy, and especially, our money in paying attention to our hearts.

And lives are out-of-balance because of it.

There are friendships that would love to be nurtured and families that would be richer and more supportive if the members could learn to put themselves in the place of each other. There may be roles we'd like to create for ourselves that require a standing appointment in order to change our New Year's resolutions into reality.

Investment in our emotional lives---I think of it as heartwork--- is the one experience that won't fade, wrinkle, or droop with the years.

Whatever the work of the heart looks like--- whether it's time set aside to spend with friends, dedication to spiritual pursuits, commitment to a personal growth group or time with a therapist, focused artistic endeavors, or something else entirely---when we thumb back through our old 2008 calendars, may it be with satisfaction.

There's a new calendar waiting.