



FIRST

VISIONS

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## Barry's Corner

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Have you ever seen a Christmas pageant where everything went absolutely perfect? I suppose it can happen, but in my experience they are few and far between.

Whether perfect or not, however, there's something very special about all Christmas pageants. Even those in which everything seems to go wrong.

I read recently about one such Christmas pageant. Trying to outdo previous years, they decided to rent a live donkey for Mary to ride on. It seemed like a good idea at the time. (Have you ever noticed that a lot of things sound like a good idea at the time?)

The day of the pageant arrived. The congregation sang several Christmas carols beautifully, and the angel choir, complete with halos, got through their first big number almost on key and in unison.

Then the time came for the grand entrance of Mary and Joseph. Mary, of course, was riding on the donkey and carrying what later proved to be a Raggedy Andy doll. Then it happened.

The donkey made two hesitant steps through the rear door of the chancel, took a look at the whole scene, and locked his legs fast! The donkey wouldn't move and the entire procession came to a screeching halt. Jerking on his halter had no effect. Neither did some wicked kicking on the part of the Virgin Mary.

Just then the President of the Trustees, seated in the front row and dressed in his Sunday best, rose to the rescue. The floor of the church was a smooth polished cement. With the aid of another man pulling

the donkey's halter, the President of the Trustees crouched behind the donkey and pushed, slowly sliding the rigid beast across the floor, inch by stately inch.

Meanwhile, the choir director, attempting to rescue the moment, chose to turn on the CD player which blared forth a mighty chorus from the Dallas Symphony Choir. But this only served to scare the poor donkey even more. By this time, of course, everyone in the congregation was in stitches. And as you might imagine, the pageant director and organizers were mortified.

Yet the congregation claimed it was the best pageant they'd ever seen. Why? Because the unexpected occurred, and that's usually far more realistic than the perfect performance.

If we look at the pageant as portrayed in the Gospels we'll notice that nothing about the story fits normative expectations.

o The Messiah arrived in an age when Israel was conquered and occupied.

o He was born to a peasant couple, not wealthy aristocrats.

o His place of birth was a smelly stable rather than a king's palace.

o The first guests to pay homage to this new born King were shepherds - an occupation renowned for dishonesty and petty theft.

o The only royal visitors were foreigners - Magi from the Parthian Empire.

o And before the Messiah was two years old, Mary and Joseph had to flee their country to Egypt so as to avoid King Herod's massacre and the

## Workshop Rotation Model

by Vicki Ricketts and Jan Stong

Last Wednesday, December 7th, many people who are interested in furthering the Children's Sunday School programs of our church gathered for a taco dinner, fellowship, and a discussion of the Workshop Rotation Model.

Children's Sunday School provides an excellent source of good morals, special relationships with people of faith, and most importantly, a connection and a way for each child to learn and grow in faith themselves. Sunday School gives our children a foundation in faith that is valuable and can't be found just anywhere.

The Workshop Rotation Model is an innovative program we are starting in our Sunday School classes in January of 2006 (not far away!). This type of curriculum has been hugely successful in other churches. We have observed the model used successfully at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. The children there were excited about the program.

One unit, or lesson, is taught in unique and different ways over several weeks. Over the course of four weeks, a child experiences the same theme through Art, Computer, Cooking, Games, Music, Science, Storytelling, or Movies--or a combination of these activities.

Children, grades K-6, will be divided into 3 or 4 groups by age. Each group, led by their "Shepherd" (adult who stays with that group as they move through the stations), will encounter the theme in a different setting and location each week.

This variety of learning keeps interest high throughout the unit and allows students to learn through a number of learning methods. Some people learn best orally, listening to the story; some grasp hold of ideas with a more kinesthetic method, playing games or participating in an art activity; some remember best what they experience visually, perhaps watching a video; etc. Stations are also adjusted weekly to address the age of the children whom will be there that particular Sunday.

Ways You Can Help: pray for this program's success, round up materials, read a story, serve as a regular or backup shepherd, find special stories relating to lesson, lead music, donate necessary items, help with games, act out a story, find a useable website, help with cooking, lend your gift on a weekly or monthly basis, aid in planning units, program, or a myriad of other possibilities!

If you'd like more information, please call Vicki Ricketts at 663-0102.



Vicki Ricketts, FUMC's Sunday School Superintendent, explains the Workshop Rotation Model to eager listeners Wednesday evening.

## Is That a Real Cow, Mom?

by Jan Stong

For the last nine months the youth of FUMC have been gathering funds for the Heifer Project, a mission outreach to help poor people throughout the world by donating livestock to help them provide for themselves.

Throughout the year as the children brought money, they were rewarded with a visual glimpse of what their gifts could

bring to families in need. Chickens, rabbits, goats, and alpacas filled the church with the sights and sounds of the children's accomplishments.

Sunday, December 11 saw the culmination of this project. When people perused the bulletin and saw that the Children's Sermon was on the Heifer Project, anticipation



began to build. What animal would come through the side door of the church? Speculation centered on a cow. Had the children collected enough money for the namesake of the project? Would they be giving a heifer to the Heifer project?

Dennis Trumblee covered the floor with a tarp in anticipa-

tion of the big moment. Children came forward to the front of the church and sat down around Susan Nava, eager to hear and see the results of their work. The moment finally arrived and the side door was opened. All eyes were riveted on that door.

What approached through the door surprised everyone. It sure wasn't a Gurnsey! A large, human filled Texas longhorn costume entered to laughter.

Susan Nava then explained how important this gift (the real thing, of course) would be to the village that would receive it. They would use the cow's milk for their daily nutrition and her calves to build a herd.

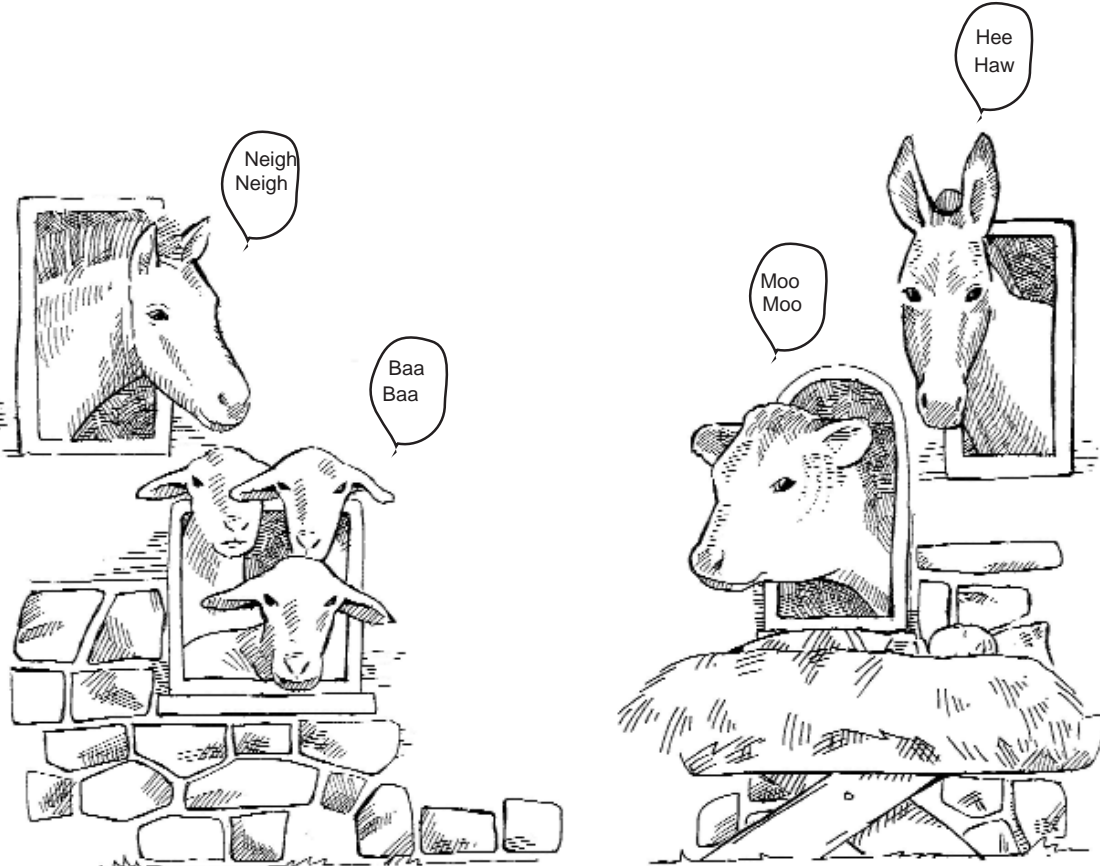
The youth of FUMC collected \$776.19. This money will purchase a goat, a llama, and a heifer! Way to go, kids!



# The Next Noel

✠ Humbling Christmas Musical

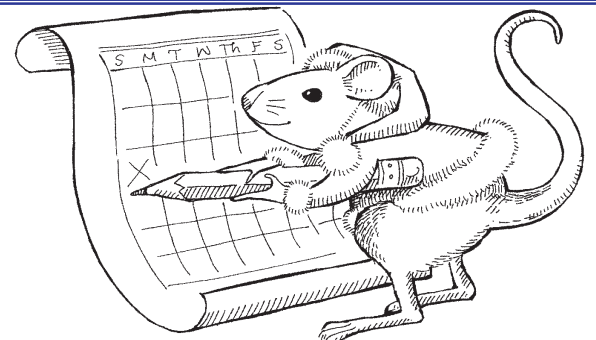
Coming 7:30s Sunday, December 18, 10:30



## Happy Birthday, Jesus!

### Special Christmas Activities

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Christmas Pageant Rehearsals                      | Sunday during Sunday School--drama and music, December 18<br>Saturday, 9:30 am, December 17 |
| Christmas Pageant Performance                     | Sunday, 10:30 am, December 18   |
| UMW Christmas Party                               | Sunday, 12 noon, December 18  |
| ARK Christmas Program                             | Tuesday, 5 pm, December 20  |
| Christmas Eve Traditional Candlelight Service     | Saturday, 7 pm, December 24   |
| Christmas Eve Candlelight/Communion Service       | Saturday, 9 pm, December 24   |
| Christmas Combined Communion Service              | Sunday, 10:30 am, December 25   |
| ARK/offices closed                                | December 26-30, January 2   |
| New Year's Day Lessons in Carols Combined Service | Sunday, 10:30, January 1  |



## We Witness

### Our Church Vows

We will be loyal to the United Methodist Church and uphold it with our prayers, presence, gifts and service.

### Our Prayers

There are many, many prayer needs in our church family and community. The caring board by the church office is filled to overflowing, and there are too many prayer needs to put in this space

without leaving out some other equally important needs. Having the complete prayer list is as simple as sending your email address to the church office and asking to be placed on the email list for prayer needs.

### Our Presence

Sunday, December 4th attendance totaled 257 people for both services.

# Special December Days



### Birthdays:

Kelly While 12/03  
 Bill Mead 12/06  
 Nancee Beebe 12/08  
 Zeke Zumbro 12/10  
 Nancy Warnes 12/11  
 Chelsea Pearson 12/13  
 Rod Douglass 12/14  
 Hazel DeVries 12/17  
 Maurice Sheppard 12/25

Joey Grindstaff 12/25  
 Lucy Malone 12/26  
 Loui Janecky 12/27

### Anniversaries:

December 19  
 Brent & Robyn Collum  
 December 20  
 David & Loui Janecky  
 December 28  
 Herald & Peggy Kruse

## Barry's Corner

Continued from Page 1

innocent. No, the real Christmas story is filled with unexpected events. So who's to say our pageants shouldn't also? After all, maybe Mary really did ride a stubborn donkey which Joseph had to push from behind.

This Sunday, Dec. 18th at 10:30 a.m. will be our own FUMC Christmas pageant. I don't expect we'll see a live donkey, but as with every pageant, our children may offer some new insights we've

never considered before. So come early, bring your camera, and prepare your heart for a creative retelling of this familiar story through both the expected and unexpected.

Your servant,

*Barry*

The next edition of Visions will be dated December 30.

The deadline for articles is Tuesday, December 20th.

### First United Methodist Church

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 Pastor ~ Barry Dickens

Youth and Education ~ Michael Ross  
 Choir Director ~ Sarah Kelly  
 First Visions Editor ~ Jan Stong

**Ark Child Development Center**  
 Carol Mead, Director  
 (505) 662-4822

**Sunday Services & Activities**  
 8:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship  
 9:15 a.m. Sunday School  
 10:30 a.m. Traditional Worship

**Wednesday Activities**  
 MYF 6:30 pm  
 Chancel Choir 7 p.m.

**United Skates, Friday evenings**  
 First Session 5:00-6:45 p.m. for children third grade and younger, \$2.00 includes skate rental  
 Second Session for third grade and up, \$2.50 includes skate rental



## Our Applause



Thank you, Sandy Larson and Jackie Peterson.

Sandy is a very important assistant in the office. Here she and Jackie are stuffing bulletins with information about the Methodist Children's Home in Waco, Texas and Methodist Mission Home in San Antonio, Texas.

Thank you, Susan Nava, Judy Keen, Laura Porch and Carol Mead.

Susan industriously strives to keep the bills of FUMC paid. We all know how important she is to the functioning of our church!

Judy, Laura, and Carol endeavor to provide a great environment for our children and those of our community at the ARK.



## Bravo!

by Jan Stong

The MESSIAH by G. F. Handel was performed Sunday, December 4, at FUMC. Members of the church's Chancel Choir and community combined, fifty strong, filling the sanctuary with the resounding message of the coming of Christ. The congregation listened in rapt attention to the glorious news of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The thrilling notes of

violin, oboe, bassoon, and more instruments resonated through our hearts and minds in magnificent accompaniment.

Sarah Kelly, director of the FUMC Chancel Choir, once again brought together these talented people and directed the successful performance. Sarah has been at the helm of FUMC's music ministry for --- years. This is the --- performance she has conducted here.

At the beginning of the service the congregation thrilled at the opportunity to join their voices with the Chancel Choir and orchestra in praising God and singing "Angels From the Realms of Glory." Singing with the orchestra enhanced the experience and filled souls with joy.

Thanks to all who participated to make this a most memorable occasion.

