



FIRST

VISIONS

an edition of the United Methodist Reporter

Two Sections, Section A | 070665 | Vol. 152 | No. 40 | February 10, 2006

INSIDE
FIRST VISIONS

Barry's
Corner
Pastor's Report

Coffee Helps

1^A

Amazing
Event!

4^A

We Witness

Special
February
Days

Chili
Cook-off

Our
Applause

5^A

Barry's Corner

Pastor's
Report



Simplicity of Heart & Soul

Over the past 23 years, all of my pastorates have been blessed with special needs children. Many of these children, have grown into adult bodies, yet amazingly retain a simplicity of heart and soul which at times the rest of us with our stressed and harried schedules might find almost enviable.

The article below is not my own, but rather one shared with me some time ago by our own Claire Harmon. I find myself deeply touched both by its humor and its spiritual depth. I hope you will too. It's entitled "I Envy Kevin." The author is unknown to me.

My brother Kevin thinks God lives under his bed. At least that's what I heard him say one night. He was praying out loud in his dark bedroom, and I stopped outside his closed door to listen. "Are you there, God?" he said. "Where are you? Oh, I see. Under the bed." I giggled softly and tiptoed off to my own room. Kevin's unique perspectives are often a source of amusement. But that night something else lingered long after the humor. I realized for the first time the very different world Kevin lives in.

He was born 30 years ago, mentally disabled as a result of difficulties during labor. Apart from his size (6-foot-2), there are few ways in which he is an adult. He reasons and communicates with the capabilities of a 7-year-old, and he always will. He will probably always believe that God lives under his

bed, that Santa Claus is the one who fills the space under our tree every Christmas and that airplanes stay up in the sky because angels carry them. I remember wondering if Kevin realizes that he is different.

Is he ever dissatisfied with his monotonous life? Up before dawn each day, off to work at a workshop for the disabled, home to walk our cocker spaniel, return to eat his favorite macaroni-and-cheese for dinner, and later to bed. The only variation in the entire scheme is laundry, when he hovers excitedly over the washing machine like a mother with her newborn child.

He does not seem dissatisfied. He lopes out to the bus every morning at 7:05, eager for a day of simple work. He wrings his hands excitedly while the water boils on the stove before dinner, and he stays up late twice a week to gather our dirty laundry for his next day's laundry chores. And Saturdays-oh, the bliss of Saturdays! That's the day my Dad takes Kevin to the airport to have a soft drink, watch the planes land, and speculate loudly on the destination of each passenger inside. "That one's goin' to Chi-car-go!" Kevin shouts as he claps his hands. His anticipation is so great he can hardly sleep on Friday nights.

And so goes his world of daily rituals and weekend field trips. He doesn't know what it means to be discontent. His life is simple. He will never know the entanglements of wealth or power, and he does not care

Con't. on Page 5

Coffee Helps

by Susan Nava

Using Fair-trade Coffee Helps Small Farmers

The Church Council of LAFUMC has unanimously voted to participate in the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Coffee Project and will serve only fair-trade coffee purchased through UMCOR's Coffee Project in our church. This project will begin when supplies arrive in just a few weeks. This project links congregations with small farmers and their families in Latin America, Africa and Asia through fair-trade. This congregation will now buy and make available for sale to our congregation fair-trade coffee as acts of social justice.

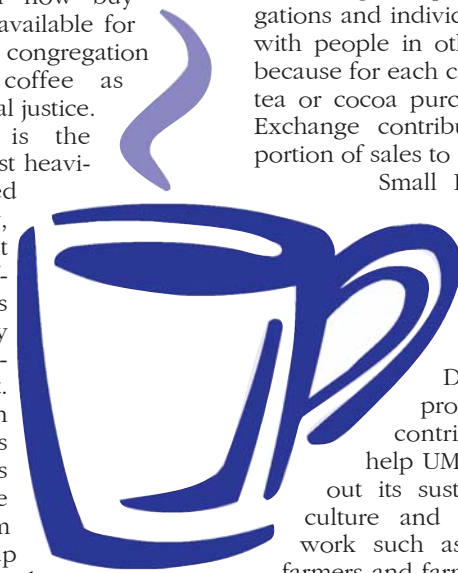
Coffee is the world's most heavily traded commodity, after oil. Yet most coffee-growers receive very little financial benefit. "The chain of events that leads from the coffee farm to your cup is long and expensive, often leaving the farmer with very little to live on," according to UMCOR's Coffee Project web page. People in the United States consume one-fifth of all the world's coffee, making it the largest consumer of coffee in the world, "but few Americans realize that agriculture workers in the coffee industry often toil in what can be described as "sweatshops in the fields," according to campaign literature.

Most of the world's small coffee farmers reside in isolated villages in the world's poorest countries and sell their coffee through middlemen, who offer the lowest price. At least 20 million people live near the equator, eking out a living on coffee.

Because of fluctuating prices, the farmers never know what they are actually getting for their crops. "In their struggle just to make a simple living, the producers of a rich crop are often trapped in poverty," according to the project's web site.

Churches and individuals that participate in the coffee project help small farmers earn a fairer share of income, obtain access to credit and technical support, and gain a trading partner they can trust, a fair-trade organization called Equal Exchange.

Through the project, congregations and individuals connect with people in other countries because for each case of coffee, tea or cocoa purchased, Equal Exchange contributes a small portion of sales to UMCOR's the



Small Farmer Fund which supports UMCOR's Sustainable Agriculture &

Development program. These contributions will help UMCOR to carry out its sustainable agriculture and development work such as training of farmers and farmer to farmer exchange programs in appropriate technologies and improved methods of farming as well as nutrition enhancement, capacity building, economic empowerment and income generation.

United Methodist congregations and other participants enable investment in farm improvements, debt reduction, nutrition enhancement and training small farmers to plan for the future.

Using fair-trade coffee is a small way that we make a difference and make everyone aware of who is affected by their purchasing decisions. Some people think that the only way to make a difference is to go on a mission trip but this is

Con't. on Page 5

Amazing Event!

by Jan Stong

One of the strengths of the United Methodist Church is the number of excellent speakers we have in our churches. These great speakers do not just happen. A lot of hard prep work is involved. Our lay speaker schools enable willing and able people to step up and do the job God has called them to do.

Lay speakers are members

of a local church who are ready and desirous to serve the Church. They are well informed on the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of the United Methodist Church and have received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication, church and community leadership and care-giving ministries.

Yes, classes are involved. Ten hours are spent learning the basics which allow a person to be a local lay speaker. An additional ten hours are spent taking advanced courses which prepare a person to also be utilized by other congregations.

This year's director, Terri Foxx, decided to conduct at least one session in the northern part of the state. The training was held here at FUMC in Los Alamos the weekend of January 27-28. Many people took special advantage of this opportunity to attend the Lay

Speakers School in the northern part of the state. People from other parts of New Mexico attended as well.

FUMC has a large facility that lends itself well to putting on this kind of event. Many members of the church participated by providing food and site set-up. Of course, a significant number of members were also involved as students and instructors.

School began with an informal gathering for a light dinner. Students and teachers took this opportunity to catch up with people they knew and to become acquainted with new friends.

The Lay Speakers School formally began with a communion service led by Rev. Gary Seelau, pastor of White Rock UMC. This service set the tone of reverence and commitment for the group who were drawn together through this communion fellowship.

The hard work of the school

began following the service. Students attending their first Lay Speaker School studied the fundamentals in the Basic Class. Those who had attended before, took more advanced classes. These classes continued into the next day.

The School concluded during the late afternoon on Saturday with a service led by the students of the Basic class. These fifteen students divided up the parts of the service, prepared for the service, and led the school in the worship service that concluded the weekend school. This basic class was not just head learning, but also practical experience while all of the information was fresh in their minds. It allowed them to become more comfortable in a worship situation while in front of friendly faces.

Everyone gleaned a lot from the weekend school. They felt a strengthening in their commitment to their calling to serve in their churches and a renewed

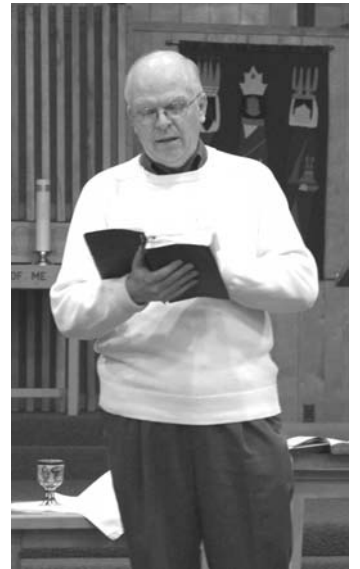
enthusiasm for the work God has called them to do.

The next school will be hosted by FUMC-Tatum on March 10-12. The advanced course will be Layspeakers Discover Spiritual Gifts.

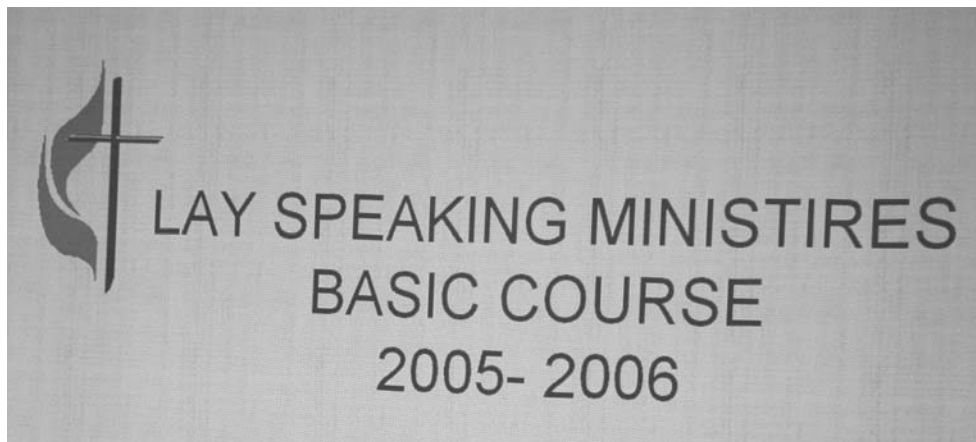
For more information email them at pastorjc@leaco.net <<mailto:pastorjc@leaco.net>> or call the church at 505-398-364.



Terri Foxx, Director



Rev. Gary Seelau



Advanced Class



Communion on Friday evening



Breakfast on Saturday morning

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

Our attendance at church this Sunday was one hundred sixty-five.

Special February Days

Birthdays:

Doris Blackstock 02/01
Bob Collom 02/05
Aaron Goldman 02/08
Frances Naffziger 02/15
Sarah Kelly 02/18
Peter Dickens 02/26

Anniversaries:

February 17
Cathy & Darin Westley



December-January
Birthday/Potluck
Chili Cook-off
January 29, 2006



The next edition of Visions will be dated February 24.
The deadline for articles is Friday, February 17.
First United Methodist Church

715 Diamond Drive
Los Alamos, NM 87544
Phone: 505-662-6277
Fax: 505-663-0089

E-mail: lafumc@lafumc.org
Website: www.lafumc.org
Pastor ~ Barry Dickens
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 Youth 6 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 to Susan Bryant and the Fellowship Events Committee for January's Birthday/Potluck Chili Cookoff. It was greatly enjoyed by all. We are looking forward to the many events that are already in the works by this committee!

Thank you to all who helped make the Lay Speakers Classes go so well last weekend. Meals

were cooked, tables arranged, classes led and attended, etc. Way to go!

Kudos to all of our church counters who Sunday after Sunday stay after church to keep an accurate track of our giving.

Computers are a necessary and important part of how our church functions. Thank you, Rob Kelsey, for your quiet,

behind the scenes labor that keeps our systems working well.

Thank you to Joy Beery, who organized transportation to treatments for Pat Mendius. Thank you, also, to all those who provided the transportation.

Coffee Helps con't. from Page 1

a way people can stay at home and make a huge difference in the lives of others overseas and in improving their economy.

This church will also make fair-trade coffee and fair-trade chocolate available for members to purchase. Once supplies arrive you will be treated to a "Free-trade Coffee Sunday" in which Fair-trade coffee will be made available to taste and to provide ordering details. Please contact Cathy Hinojosa at 662-9240 if you would like to help in this effort.

More information is available at the project Web site: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/hunger/coffee.cfm>

In Mission together,

Susan Nava

FAIR-TRADE COFFEE:

- Gives growers a fair price and access to microcredit and technical support, which ensures farmers a fair return for their work;
- Allows growers who are usually in a local cooperative to sell to the United States without going through a middleman;
- Promotes and encourages sustainable farming practices such as organic and shade-grown agriculture which build a long-term economic base for farmers while protecting community health and the environment.

Simplicity of Heart & Soul con't. from Page 1

what brand of clothing he wears or what kind of food he eats. His needs have always been met, and he never worries that one day they may not be. His hands are diligent. Kevin is never so happy as when he is working. When he unloads the dishwasher or vacuums the carpet, his heart is completely in it. He does not shrink from a job when it is begun, and he does not leave a job until it is finished. But when his tasks are done, Kevin knows how to relax.

He is not obsessed with his work or the work of others. His heart is pure. He still believes everyone tells the truth, promises must be kept, and when you are wrong, you apologize instead of argue. Free from pride and unconcerned with appearances, Kevin is not afraid to cry when he is hurt, angry or sorry.

He is always transparent, always sincere. And he trusts God. Not confined by intellectu-

al reasoning, when he comes to Christ, he comes as a child. Kevin seems to know God - to really be friends with Him in a way that is difficult for an "educated" person to grasp. God seems like his closest companion.

In my moments of doubt and frustrations with my Christianity, I envy the security Kevin has in his simple faith. It is then that I am most willing to admit that he has some divine knowledge that rises above my mortal questions. It is then I realize that perhaps he is not the one with the handicap - I am.

My obligations, my fear, my pride, my circumstances - they all become disabilities when I do not trust them to God's care. Who knows if Kevin comprehends things that I can never learn? After all, he has spent his whole life in that kind of innocence, praying after dark and soaking up the goodness and love of God. And one day,

when the mysteries of heaven are opened, and we are all amazed at how close God really is to our hearts, I'll realize that God heard the simple prayers of a boy who believed that God lived under his bed. Yet Kevin won't be surprised at all!

Perhaps we would all do well to be a bit more like Kevin? I know I would. God's peace and grace be with you this week as we too look for God in the strange and unexpected places of our lives.

Your servant,

Barry