



FIRST

VISIONS

an edition of the United Methodist Reporter

Two Sections, Section A | 070665 | Vol. 152 | No. 50 | April 21, 2006

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## Barry's Corner

Pastor's  
Report



### 'Checkmate'

On display in the magnificent Louvre Museum in Paris, France, is that dramatic painting of Goethe's Faust. Faust is seated at a table engaged in a competitive game of chess. And at first glance, it looks like Faust is losing. His opponent in the chess game is Satan. The devil sits there grinning smugly. He thinks he has the victory in hand. He is pointing at the chessboard with an evil leer and he is gloating.

As you look at the painting, you can almost hear the devil shouting: "Checkmate! Game's over! I win!" However, a person with a keen eye who knows the game of chess can see that the match is not over at all. As a matter of fact, just a few years ago, an internationally famous chess player was admiring the painting when all of a sudden he lunged forward and exclaimed: "Wait a minute! Look! Faust has another move and that move will give him the victory!"

The painting is something of a parable for us Christians, because here we see symbolized the good news of Easter. Think of it. When we look at the Cross on Good Friday, it looks (at first glance) like evil has won. It looks like the defeat of righteousness. It looks like goodness is dead and buried forever. It looks like Christ has been silenced and conquered. But then, Easter Sunday morning reveals God's move, the greatest checkmate move of all time. Christ comes out of the grave and into our lives with power and victory.

Charles Wesley, the great hymn writer, expressed this truth when he wrote:

"He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free, His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood availed for me."

The next time you feel like Faust; out played, and out maneuvered, remember the difference the one day of Easter can make in your life. God has the last move and the final word. And the word is that 'Christ is Risen!' God has forgiven you and me, therefore we're no longer the vanquished, but victors through Christ!



He's  
Alive!

Happy Easter!

Your servant,

Barry

## Kenya and Uganda Mission Trip

by Aaron Goldman

The problems in Africa are so multifarious that it is costing the world billions of dollars just to keep matters from getting worse. The United Nations has made large investments through its organizations to combat AIDS, help resettle refugees, provide education, keep peace among warring groups and tribes, and help start industries. But an impending budget cut will reduce aid; within a month millions of Kenyans will be facing starvation. Church World Service (CWS) has recognized the needs and with a budget of \$30 million dollars has used a portion of these funds to help in many African communities. CWS responds to disasters all over the world including the USA. CWS was one of the first to assist flood victims in the recent hurricane that demolished areas in Mississippi and Louisiana. CWS worked with the Red Cross here in Los Alamos during our fire recovery.

A large part of CWS income comes from so-called CROP walks held throughout the country including Los Alamos. With the idea of giving CROP walk directors a first hand look at their Kenya and Uganda efforts, eleven supporters from New Mexico and Colorado were selected to make observations. It was my good fortune to join this group led by Art Zieman, CWS Southwest Director.

Monday, Feb.20, 2006

Our first good look of Nairobi began by driving through the slums in the early morning hours. I commented to our Kenyan driver that I had experienced similar slums in America and he replied that we had not entered Slum City yet. Slum City hosts a million people, which makes it the world's largest slum. We passed shack after shack that served as shops that sold fruit, vegetables, furniture, and clothing. Repair stores cropped up everywhere. It seemed like job opportunities were limited to owning a shop. Slum City contained a few high rise apartments with clothes hanging non-stop in the wall-to-wall balconies. The "homes" lay in a valley so we could get a bird's eye view of the hundreds of cardboard buildings the inhabitants call home. We stopped in the heart of the Slum City to visit a CWS sponsored school called Women and Children in Strength (WCS). Originally started by the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) and called Women and Children in Stress, CWS took over, changed the name motto to Stress to Strength. At WCS, single women are taught trades to become financially independent.

Women in multi-colored long skirts greeted us with Swahili songs coupled with the shrill sounds produced by vibrant movements of their



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## A Special Note to Thank You

**The Lord has blessed us through you.  
(Note from Mississippi)**

Dear Friends,

I live in a mobile home 1/2 mile from the beach at Gantier, MS (between Pascogonler and Biloxi). Flood waters went north, south, east, and west of me while I sustained only minor roof and window damage. FEMA and Red Cross began to move people out of

the shelters (one week after the storm) and into recreation trailers. People had no food, clothes, or money. The Lord spoke to me and I began a distribution center from my home to help those who had lost everything.

I'm writing to thank you on the behalf of the people here in Jackson County, MS who received the flood buckets that you sent to UMCOR Sager Brown. We received and delivered every one personally to families that had lost their homes to Katrina. I know it was a sacrifice for your members to provide for us. And we do appreciate your kindness.

May God bless you for your love,

Sincerely,

Your sister in Christ  
Donna Velasquez



## An Autobiographical Introduction Part 2

It was also during this same time period (1970-1971) that I met and married my wife, Fran. She is from Baltimore, Maryland; we met when I attended the wedding of a high school friend there. I literally asked her to marry me on the day we met, and she actually responded in the affirmative. While I don't recommend our style of engagement to other young couples, our 35 years of marriage thus far is proof that "love at first sight" really can work. (At least it has for us.) We were actually married slightly less than one year after we met, having "dated" primarily via long-distance telephone calls, since we lived 1800 miles apart.

In early 1973 Fran and I jointly made the decision that I would yield to God's call upon my life and take a radical career turn from engineering into full-time Christian ministry. That transition was not without many bumps and bruises along the way. But I was able to attend seminary, earning a Master of Divinity degree from Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia, and by July 1975 we found ourselves in full-time missionary service in Guatemala City, Central America.

Our missionary stint was short-lived (just one year-plus) because of tropical parasitic infections. On returning to the U. S., I enrolled in Vanderbilt University's Divinity School in

Nashville, Tennessee, earning a Doctor of Ministry degree with specialization in cross-cultural ministry. While in Nashville I also served as associate pastor of East End UM Church, working with a transitional neighborhoods project including a variety of black-white racial dynamics and issues. Both these early ministry exposures - to missions and to cross-cultural outreach -- continue to be strong foci of my leadership to this day.



Upon completion of my doctoral program, Fran and I decided to return to the southwestern United States. For 24 years we served in pastoral ministry in United Methodist congregations associated with the New Mexico Annual Conference and, for the most recent five years, in the Northwest Texas Conference. I've been appointed to a total of seven churches -- small, medium, and large -- and have thoroughly enjoyed all but one of them. Since June 2001 I have been senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Big Spring, Texas, a truly delightful congregation. The many pre-

vious persons I have met in all the churches to which I've been assigned have helped me to grow in the faith and fellowship of Jesus Christ, and I believe that I have similarly aided many of their individual walks of Christian discipleship.

Along the way, Fran and I have added three additional Ring's to the family name, making a "five-Ring circus" when we're all together! All of our children are presently young adults. All have undergraduate degrees and all are currently working toward and/or envisioning graduate study. (Educational expenses never seem to end for us.) Our sons are Dave IV and Jonathan and our daughter is Joanna.

And now, I'm poised to begin as pastor of First United Methodist Church in Los Alamos. Since Fran and I have moved around so much during our lives, we consider the State of New Mexico in general to be the closest we have to an actual home. So we're excited to be "coming home." And we hope you are, too! Pray for your (soon to be "our") church, pray for my wife and adult children, pray for me. Pray that God grant us, each and all, significant roles in the advance of His Kingdom in our years ahead together. Praise the Lord!

-- Dave Ring

### Kenya con't. from p. 1-A

tongues while performing jitterbug type dancing. The women are taught crocheting, how to weave cloth to make clothing, beaded jewelry, shoes, cups, soapstone bowls, and cloth paintings. The government provided grants of ~\$10 for enrolling. Students progress at their own rate and when they feel they can make it on their own, they received another ~\$70 start-up money. Small children sit silently on mothers' laps but most of the students' children attend schools both inside and outside the slum area with the provision they can come home every third weekend. The women treated us with delicious white cake, made without benefit of a stove but rather using the sun and sand. They present-

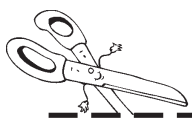
ed us with black colored stone necklaces and sold us cloth paintings, aprons, place mats, and hot mats. Paintings reflected the African scenes of tall, thin black natives in their native costume, the jungle animals, and the ever present tree with the elongated top with a setting sun background. We joined in the singing and dancing as we left. Before leaving Slum City,

we toured a second hand clothing store, a machine shop, a craft shop that featured wooden frames, and an outdoor cookery.

We began the day at the Joint Voluntary Services (JVS), administered by CWS, that gave us our second look at CWS activities in Nairobi. In 2005, JVS used 13 offices in 20 countries to relocate 12,000 refugees from African countries in the USA. The effort includes a background check to insure no terrorists gain entry. From 1991 through 2005 JVS has resettled an average of ~20,000 refugees per year but numbers have diminished since 2000 because of the 9/11 constraints. Refugees total over 11 million in camps in Africa (13



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### Cut and Fold for McCurdy

Come with us for a McCurdy cut and fold day on May 5. Every first Friday of the month, we will meet at church at 9 am to drive to McCurdy School in Espanola to help volunteers cut labels or prepare a mailing. We eat lunch in the school cafeteria and head home about 3 pm. You can vary the schedule to your convenience if you drive your own car. Please call Opal Lee Gill, 662-5311, to have a reservation for lunch at McCurdy. This UMW sponsored event is for all members of the church.

## 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

Attendance on Easter Sunday was 274. He is risen indeed!

### Our Giving

Figures through April 16--  
Ministry budget for 2006 \$475,000  
Ministry gifts needed each week 9,134  
Ministry gifts needed to date 146,144  
Ministry gifts received to date 138,200

Special gifts received to date for ministries outside our budget 7,380

## Special May Days

### Birthdays:

Jana Beery 05/02  
Fred DeVries 05/03  
Hunter Eaton 05/03  
Jason Trimmer 05/04  
Tom Ricketts 05/06  
Bob Malone 05/09  
Rachel Taylor 05/11  
Deborah Trimmer 05/11  
Brent Collom 05/12  
Ron Jones 05/13  
Anna Parks 05/19  
Susan Dickens 05/24

Sarah Ricketts 05/26  
Kyle Beery 05/27  
Walker Eaton 05/29  
Angela Hodgson 05/30

### Anniversaries:

May 21  
Tom & Vicki Ricketts  
May 23  
Dale & Linda Leschnitzer  
May 24  
William & Carol Mead

Kenya con't. from p. 4-A

million overall). These camps originated in 1980 and have grown in number and size. JVS's modest office is one of 14 out of 20 sponsored agencies in Africa to handle an unsurmountable refugee problem that keeps growing. People have spent their entire lives living in tents in a refugee camp and worse yet children are born to complicate matters even more. Most African refugees come from war-torn Sudan and Ethiopia.

Both CWS and the Kenyan government support the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK). We visited Kajaido, site of a water project financed by NCCCK and

Potterhouse ( an organization founded by TD Jakes) that began with a bore hole drilled a few years ago and followed by another completed in November of 2005. These were built to supplement a reservoir that ran dry in 2003 because of the ongoing drought that began in 2003. The artificial lake from the first drilling went dry and the second stopped working after only two months of operation because of a busted pump. The Kenyan government has been unsuccessful in locating the American engineer who drilled the bore hole; meanwhile carcasses of dead animals surround the area. Some got trapped in mud and others died

The next edition of Visions will be dated May 5.

The deadline for articles is Friday, April 28.

First United Methodist Church

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

E-mail: [lafumc@lafumc.org](mailto:lafumc@lafumc.org)  
Website: [www.lafumc.org](http://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

Easter is always a full time for our church that brings great joy and celebration. Thank you to everyone who worked to bring this season to fulfillment. We want to specially recognize the following--

We thank the Cross Set-up team:

Don Siebe  
Dennis Trumblee  
Nels Hoffman  
Darin Westley  
Denny Armstrong  
Brian Granzow  
Wayne Kohlrust  
Dick Basinger

We thank the Flowering the Cross Team:

Eileen Douglass  
Kim Granzow  
Susan Nava  
Dennis Trumblee  
Louise Mendius

We also thank Doris Jackson and Susan Hodgson who prepared and set-up the Easter lilies.

## Children's Sabbath This Sunday

This Sunday, April 23, Linda Warnes Penaloza will give our sermon, "Suffer the Little Children". This service is focused on the place and plight of children, especially in New Mexico, and is arranged by the United Methodist Women.

Linda J. Penaloza is Research Associate Professor at the University of New Mexico, Department of Pediatrics. Since returning to New Mexico in 2003, she has been conducting research on adolescent health risking behaviors, truancy prevention, tobacco-related health disparities, and evaluation



of the state's tobacco prevention and cessation programs. She serves as the Director of Communications at the Center for Health Promotion and

Disease Prevention.

A survey researcher with 25 years of experience, she has specialized in sociological research methods, public participation and science communication. Her educational background includes Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Sociology, and a Ph.D. in Mass Communication from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Linda is originally from Los Alamos, the daughter of Dick and Nancy Warnes. She is married to Robert Penaloza. She is a certified Lay Speaker in the United Methodist Church.

## Social Principles--Rights of Children

While we are considering the status and plight of children, especially in New Mexico this Sunday, we should take a look at what the United Methodist Church says on the subject. The UMC has a statement on the "Rights of Children" in the Book of Discipline, the governing document of our church which bears upon our concern for children. The next paragraph is a quote from that book.

C) *Rights of Children*--Once considered the property of their parents, children are now acknowledged to be full

human beings in their own right, but beings to whom adults and society in general have special obligations. Thus, we support the development of school systems and innovative methods of education designed to assist every child toward complete fulfillment as an individual person of worth. All children have the right to quality education, including full sex education appropriate to their stage of development that utilizes the best educational techniques and insights. Christian parents and guardians and the Church have the responsibility

to ensure that children receive sex education consistent with Christian morality, including faithfulness in marriage and abstinence in singleness. Moreover, children have the rights to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and emotional well-being as do adults, and these rights we affirm as theirs regardless of actions or inactions of their parents or guardians. In particular, children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

## About the children's Defense Fund

The mission of the children's Defense Fund is to Leave No Child Behind and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*,

a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective voice for all of the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves.

Kenya con't. from above, left

of dehydration. The community families, like many in Kenya, must travel distances up to ten kilometers (6 miles) to buy water. Water is carried in yellow 5 gallon containers (40 pounds) furnished by the government. Kenyan women are quite strong and they are a common sight, carrying a load seemingly

without effort. Water conservation is practiced by using a minimum for washing and drinking. Toilets are of the pit variety that do not require water. The families usually have 7 to 9 children and the AIDS epidemic has either killed or severely weakened many of the husbands and left many of the chil-

dren HIV+. Mass starvation lies just around the corner because the drought has killed many of the cattle. The evidence in Kajaido, a suburb of Nairobi, is typical of the rural scene found all over Kenya.

**Look for more of Aaron's report next edition, May 5!**