



FIRST

VISIONS

an edition of the United Methodist Reporter

Two Sections, Section A | 070665 | Vol. 153 | No. 4 | June 2, 2006

INSIDE FIRST VISIONS

Barry's Corner Pastor's Report

Parsonage Help Needed

1 A

Journey to Africa

4 A

We Witness

Special August Days

Our Applause

Celebrating Pre-school Graduation

The DaVinci Code: A Review

5 A



Barry's Corner

As you know, I'm a bit of a story teller. Jesus taught in parables because they can carry truth powerfully and be remembered more easily. So, for my final article before I move, let me share one more fairy tale.

Once upon a time, there was a boy who lived in a big house on a hill. He loved dogs and horses, sports cars and music. He climbed trees and went swimming, played football and admired pretty girls. Except for having to pick up after himself, he had a nice life.

One day the boy said to God, "I've been thinking, and I know what I want when I become a man."

"What?" said God.

"I want to live in a big house with a porch across the front and two Saint Bernards and a garden out back. I want to marry a woman who is tall and very beautiful and kind, who has long, black hair and blue eyes, and who plays the guitar and sings in a clear high voice.

"I want three strong sons to play football with. When they grow up, one will be a great scientist, one will be a Senator and the youngest will quarterback for the 49ers.

"I want to be an adventurer who sails vast oceans and climbs tall mountains and rescues people. And I want to drive a red Ferrari and never have to pick up after myself."

"That sounds like a nice dream," said God. "I want you to be happy."

Well, things turned out different from what the boy had hoped. A knee injury prevented him from sailing or mountain

climbing. He started a medical-supplies business. He married a beautiful, kind girl who was short, had brown eyes, couldn't play the guitar or sing. But she was a fantastic cook and an artist. He lived in a city in an apartment that overlooked the ocean and the city's twinkling lights. He had a fluffy cat.

Instead of three sons, he had three daughters, all very beautiful. The youngest was confined to a wheelchair. His daughters loved him very much. They often sat under a tree in a nearby park, strumming guitars and singing lovely, haunting songs.

He made enough money to live comfortably, but not enough to buy a red Ferrari. And, now and then, he had to pick things up and put them away--even things that didn't belong to him. After all, he had three daughters.

Then one day he remembered his boyhood dream, and he was very, very sad. Things had not worked out the way he had wanted. He complained to his best friend who told him he had a wonderful life and should be happy. But he was still sad. He confessed his sadness to his wife. She agreed with his best friend and told him to look at the bright side. But the man would not listen. He went to a therapist, who assured him that he had no reason to be unhappy. But the man was still sad. Nothing had worked out the way he had dreamed.

He was so sad he became very sick. He lay in a white hospital room surrounded by nurses in white uniforms. Tubes and wires connected his body to blinking machines . . .

Then one night, when everyone except the nurses had gone home, the man spoke to God and said, "Remember when I was a boy and I told you all the things I wanted?"

"It was a lovely dream," said God.

"Why didn't you give me those things?" asked the man.

"I could have," said God. "But I wanted to surprise you with things you didn't dream of.."

"I suppose you've noticed what I've given you: a kind, beautiful wife; a good business; a nice place to live; three lovely daughters--one of the best packages I've put together--"

"Yes," interrupted the man, "but I thought you were going to give me what I really wanted."

"And I thought you were going to give me what I wanted," said God.

"What did you want?" asked the man. It had never occurred to him that God was in want of anything.

"I wanted you to be happy with what I'd given you," said God.

The man lay awake in the dark all night, thinking. He decided he needed a new dream, one he should have dreamed years before.

He decided to dream that what he wanted most were the very things he already had.

And the man got well and lived happily on the 47th floor, enjoying his children's beautiful voices, his wife's deep brown eyes and her glorious paintings. And at night he gazed at the ocean and contentedly watched the lights of the city twinkling on, one by one.

We all dream of things we want most in life, don't we?

Churches do too. Congregation dream of the perfect pastor who's

o a scholar and author, yet a simple common man of the earth,

o the world's greatest preacher, yet spends all his time visiting and serving in community efforts.

o Possesses maturity and wisdom of age and experience, yet is energetic and does great youth ministry...

Well you get the idea. Eight years ago some folks may have dreamed of the ideal pastor, instead you got me.

Eight years ago I dreamed of the perfect congregation and of a stress free community. I got Los Alamos.

Yet by His grace, God has blessed us, enabled us to love, grow, and engaged us in very significant ministry together.

Dave Ring is on his way to become your new pastor. I encourage you to do away with any ideal dreams of the "perfect pastor" you may have and just let Dave and Fran be Dave and Fran. Dreams are just dreams, but Dave is real, abundantly gifted, and is coming to open his heart and soul to you. If you'll do likewise, I am confident that FUMC's best days are yet to come!

Thank you for the blessing of being your pastor. I hope to see you this Sunday in worship as I Susan and I and the kids say farewell.

Your Servant,

Barry

Parsonage Help Needed

The trustees need your help to prepare the parsonage for the arrival of our new pastor, David Ring. Work days for that effort will be June 9th and 10th (Friday and Saturday).

On June 9th we will concentrate on interior painting and sanding the deck. On June 10th we will stain the deck and take care of other

exterior issues: caulking, painting, fencing, shop insulation, moving gravel, etc. A clean up crew is also needed following the work.

Please sign up on the clipboard in the church office or in the back of the church following either Sunday service.

Ben Gibson Trustees President

Journey to Africa (con't.)

by Aaron Goldman

including carpentry, making clothes, sewing, use of computers, and painting.

Next we visited homes of graduates of the school. One woman had seven children to take care of after 2 died of AIDS. She survives by selling bananas and making bricks. Life has been even more difficult with 3 children recently testing HIV+. Another woman takes care of her children by selling firewood. CWS has distributed 29 goats to families along with goat training. Our group had fun handling the gentle animals that provide much needed milk.



We saw only a small number of slums in the Mbale area but the country (Uganda) is obviously poor. We met with FDNC - Foundation for Development of Needy Communities, an organization formed eight years ago to provide training for single mothers and health care programs. The Community Health Worker program, recognized by President Museveni in January 2006, has done much to improve the life of AID survivor families. We met with some of the leaders and toured three of their efforts co-sponsored by CWS. We visited a training center school for single women whose husbands died of AIDS. They were taught trades



CWS supports an entire community of surviving women who work together, just trying to survive. We received a hearty welcome from a healthy looking group and enjoyed dancing and singing with them.

That night we stopped at a park that featured a 300 meter waterfall. I regretted we did not have time to hike down to the bottom but we did get a spectacular view from the top. After a full course meal we were entertained by some professional Ugandan dancers and a brass band. An 8 year-old boy pranced about in a slightly too large white drum-major costume while twirling a baton like a high school majorette in front of a band that paraded in circles. FDNC gave us t-shirts with WE SUPPORT UGANDA DEVELOPMENT written on the back.

Saturday, February 25

Another long drive took us to the Nakuru Game Preserve, abutting the large Victoria Lake that borders both Kenya and Uganda. We used the open top vehicles to view the zebras, giraffes, water buffalo, jackals, monkeys, baboons, elands, and rhinos. Thousands of flamingos lined the shores turning the lake into a sea of red.

The hotel consisted of separate units that contained a large bed covered by a mosquito net that draped down from the ceiling and large hand made wooden furniture. A large bathroom with a huge bath tub made for a relaxed evening. The evening buffet looked like it came out of India with chappati and pappadum served with rice and chutney.

Sunday, February 26

We spent some more time touring the park and then enjoyed the rest of the day shopping in Nairobi. I only saw one signal light and Chris drove through a red light, explaining that the first to the intersection has the right of way-no matter if it is a green or red light. Cars are either speeding down the street or going through the roundabouts with reckless abandon. Pedestrians are either quick or dead unless they choose to cross the bridges that are several miles apart. I tried both and advise any one in a hurry to take one of the crowded buses and keep both eyes closed between stops. The big stores and groceries are modest in size, selling about everything you need.



Note from the editor--

Thank you, Aaron, for sharing so much of your trip to Africa with us. We appreciate knowing where the money raised by Crop Walk is being used and learning of the difference it is making in the lives of the people in Kenya and Uganda.

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 for second service on May 21 was 119.

Our Giving

Figures through May 21--
Ministry budget for 2006 \$475,000
Ministry gifts needed each week 9,134
Ministry gifts needed to date 191,814
Ministry gifts received to date 190,863

Special gifts received to date for ministries outside our budget 9215

Special June Days

Birthdays:

Bob Visel 06/01
Cydne Urbina 06/03
Barbara DeMarsh 06/04
Court Courtright 06/07
Joe Bubernak 06/09
Cindy Little 06/13
Gail Little 06/14
John Stong 06/14
Terri Armstrong 06/15
Denny Armstrong 06/27
June Pirtle 06/27
Lora Belle Cole 06/28
Kimberley Scudder 06/28

June 9
Jim & Betty Terrell
June 12
Bob & Lucy Malone
June 15
Thomas & Jana Beery
June 18
John & Sue Wooten
June 19
John & Geniece Courtright
John & Jan Stong
June 20
Charles & Emma Jean Mader
June 21
Denny & Terri Armstrong

Anniversaries:

June 3
Al & Doris Blackstock
June 5
John & Martha Zumbro
June 6
Bob & Sarah Kelly
June 7
George & Miriam Balog

June 22
Michael & Pan Hundley
June 24
Maurice & Jensina Sheppard
June 26
Craig & Carolyn Pearson

First United Methodist Church
called to:

Seek God,
Share Christ's Word,
Serve His World

The next edition of Visions will be dated June 16.
The deadline for articles is Friday, June 9.

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

A very grateful staff extends praise to Don Siebe for all the work he has put in to get the swamp coolers in the building working properly and well. The heat relief is much appreciated by all

who spend time in the church building during the day.

The church and the ARK staff would like to thank Betty Koch for the beautifully designed diplomas for the

ARK's Pre-school graduation. Many thanks also to Mada Jones who assisted in the presentation of the diplomas to the graduates.

Thanks to Doris Blackstock for her work in the Library.

Celebrating Pre-school Graduation

by Jan Stong

May is noted particularly for graduations. Our church is no exception. We honored our graduating Seniors on May 14th as they face future challenges of college/work. Two weeks ago we honored our own school's grad-

uating Pre-schoolers as they prepare to move on to Kindergarten from the ARK.

The ARK is a school/child-care facility that excels at giving our youngest children care and education in a Christian atmosphere. Our goals include giving parents a comfortable feeling about leaving their children here. We focus on preparing them for school through their experiences here-teaching them

social, cognitive, creative, and literacy skills. We have achieved National Early Childhood Program Accreditation which gives us a 5-star state license (the highest offered by the state).

Our facility has a total of 120 students representing many cultures. At one time this year we had a class of five students and two teachers which contained member of seven distinct cultural groups. Throughout the year the average number of cultures represented here is ten. Sometimes students speak no English when they enter the ARK, but, by the end of their first year, they are fluent in English (often more fluent than their parents).

This year the ARK graduated 24 children in a formal ceremony in the church sanctuary. I asked Carol Mead, director of the ARK, why the school considered this graduation as an important event. She replied that going from Pre-school to Kindergarten is milestone in the

life of young people, as well as, in their parents' lives.

These kids will be changing schools next year. They are heading to a much more structured environment. It is, also, a well-established tradition of

FUMC and the ARK to honor these children in this manner.

All the graduates wore either a blue or red cap and gown as they entered the sanctuary to Pomp and Circumstance. The children sang two 'off to Kindergarten' songs followed by a rendition of Star Spangled Banner performed by Thomas, our British graduate. Diplomas, designed by Betty Koch, were delivered to each student by Mada Jones, an ARK Board and FUMC member, and Carol Mead. A reception followed in the Fellowship Hall with cake and punch for everyone.

The DaVinci Code: A Review

by Jan Stong

For the last couple of years a great deal of public interest has been sparked over Dan Brown's book, *The DaVinci Code*. I resisted reading it until I spotted it in an airport while on my way to Dallas. I had time to kill; so I thought, "Why not see for myself?"

I went into reading the book with the understanding that it was a work of fiction, nothing more. With that expectation I allowed myself to enjoy a light piece of fiction that kept me guessing about who the 'bad guy' in charge was. The book

was, as it should be, entertaining, not a book to place next to *Les Miserables* or *Grapes of Wrath*.

Those two pieces of historical fiction have a great deal to tell us about the times in which they were written. *The DaVinci Code* is not of that caliber. It takes rumors, poorly documented statistics, and outright fabrications and weaves an interesting intrigue out of them.

The movie has generated even more hype. People have waited in eager anticipation for *The DaVinci Code* movie. Well, like most books that are turned

into movies, this one does not stand up well as a movie. The suspense is missing; the plot is spoon fed leaving little to the imagination.

If you really want to understand all the controversy surrounding *The DaVinci Code*, you should read the book and, of course, attend our new class, "Discussing *The DaVinci Code*." Everyone is welcome to attend whether they have read the book or not. The class will begin on Monday, June 12th at 7 pm in the Mid-high Room and will continue for four or five weeks.