



FIRST

VISIONS

an edition of the United Methodist Reporter

Two Sections, Section A | 070665 | Vol. 153 | No. 32 | December 15, 2006

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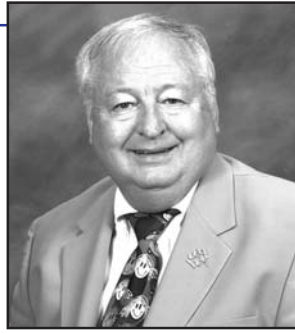
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The Pastor Ponders



"Surprise! Christmas is Coming!"

The year was 1970. I was working at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, with my parents living on the east coast in Baltimore, Maryland, 1800 miles distant. I traveled a lot for Sandia that year, but all of my trips seemed to head to places other than the Washington/Baltimore area. So starting in July of that year my mother began asking me a question every time we'd talk on the phone: "Son, are you coming home for Christmas?" And I'd reply, "Sorry, I doubt that I can. It's a long way and I'm pretty involved with my job. You'll just have to get along without me at Christmas this year."

Frankly, I was telling a bold-faced lie. But for once I wanted to pull off a surprise on my parents. I already had an airline ticket sitting on my dresser, scheduled to arrive at BWI Airport at noon on Christmas Eve, December 24th.

When that day finally came, I flew to BWI, had a friend pick me up at the airport and drive me to my parents' house, and sneaked in the back door while they were both still at work. When my mother arrived home at about 4 o'clock that afternoon, I was standing behind the door. As she closed it behind her, I stepped out and said a casual "Hi." You could have heard her scream of pure delight for five miles around! Christmas 1970 was one of the most enjoyable I ever spent with my parents -- and a lot of it had to do with the element of surprise.

Unfortunately, there's not

much surprise about Christmas for most of us these days. The retail sector of our economy begins putting up Christmas displays earlier and earlier each year - this year I'd almost swear it was July 5th. If you don't pre-reserve a seat for a flight at Christmastime by mid-September, your chances of going anywhere are slim to none. As a pastor, I long ago learned that it's futile to try to visit anyone from Thanksgiving onward - folks' schedules are just too tight to permit any additions whatever. And with all the holiday parties and activities, just about everybody is completely stressed out by December 15th. Small wonder that I hear increasing numbers of folks wearily say, "I just wish Christmas were over, so we could get back to normal living."

It's probably impossible for a completely "surprising" Christmas to be had in our world today. But the real surprise of Christmas - the announcement which left the shepherds outside Bethlehem awestruck on the night of Jesus' birth - is God's amazing plan for the redemption of humanity. A babe in a manger the Savior of the world? It was totally surprising then -- and it's no less so today.

Surprise -- Christmas is coming! Praise the Lord!

Dave Ring

May God bless
your Christmas
with the joy of Christ.

The True Light,
who enlightens everyone, has
come to the Earth.



from

Jan Stong

Special December Days

Birthdays:		<i>Lucy Malone</i>	12/26
<i>Kelly White</i>	12/03	<i>Loui Janecky</i>	12/27
<i>Bill Mead</i>	12/06	Anniversaries:	
<i>Nancee Beebe</i>	12/08	December 19	
<i>Zeke Zumbro</i>	12/10	<i>Brent & Robin Collom</i>	
<i>Chelsea Pearson</i>	12/13	December 20	
<i>Rod Douglass</i>	12/14	<i>David & Loui Janecky</i>	
<i>Hazel DeVries</i>	12/17	December 28	
<i>Joey Grindstaff</i>	12/25	<i>Harold & Peggy Kruse</i>	
<i>Maurice Sheppard</i>	12/25		

Parents' Night Out

TONIGHT

6:30 - 9:30 pm

Drop off your kids and have a great evening!



Mission Trip TO Cartagena, Colombia

Pastor Ring is currently recruiting a fifteen person Volunteers in Mission (VIM) team to build classrooms for a fledgling Methodist Church near Cartagena, Colombia. The travel dates are March 16-24, 2007. Contact the pastor for more details!



Want Ads

Sunday AM Nursery Worker(s) Needed--LAFUMC is in need of at least one additional adult to work in our nursery on Sunday mornings, 8 am to noon. Starting pay is \$9.00 per hour; a background check must be run. For more information contact Nursery Coordinator Linda Leschnitzer, 672-2729

Discipleship Coordinator Being Sought--The Staff Parish Relations committee is currently seeking applicants to fill this new, full-time ministry position. If further information is desired, a Job Description can be obtained from the church office.

First United Methodist Church called to:

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

The next edition of Visions will be dated December 29.
The deadline for articles is Monday, December 18.

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Pastor ~ Dr. Dave Ring
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
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 all of those who helped set up the front of the sanctuary on December 1st in preparation for the Christmas Cantata and the Christmas Drama. The effort was appreci-

ated by the choir, orchestra, and cast. Kudos to Rob Kelsey, who keeps our office computers and phones in good working order. A special thank you is expressed to Ron and Mada

Jones who purchased and decorated our sanctuary Christmas tree this year. The tree has a beautiful addition to our Christmas setting

Upcoming Events Highlights

Sermon Titles

December 17: "The Christmas Spirit/The Holy Spirit" Luke 2:1-20 first service; Christmas in Reverse Drama, second service

December 24: Christmas Eve Services--

9 am, First Service--**NOTE TIME CHANGE**

10:30 am, Second Service 4 pm, Candlelight Worship, less formal

7 pm, Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion

Christmas Drama Practice

Sundays during Children's Church in the Friendship Center

PNO (Parents' Night Out)
December 15, at 6:30 pm

Drama Full Rehearsal

December 16, 9 am, Sanctuary

Church Council Party

December 16, at 7 pm at home of Louise Mendius

Christmas Drama

December 17, "Christmas in Reverse", during second service, 10:30 am

Open House at the Parsonage

December 17, 2 - 4 pm

MF Youth Group

December 17, 4 pm in the Senior High Room

Christmas Caroling

December 17, 4:45 pm; refreshments following

ARK Christmas Program

December 19, at 5 pm in the Sanctuary

Finance

December 19, 6:30 pm in the Library

Healing Service

December 19, at 7 pm in the Sanctuary

Coffee Fellowship

December 24, at 10 am before second service

Church Office Closed

December 25-26 and January 1. It will be open only sporadically December 27-29. If you have a need that week, call Pastor Ring's cell phone, 412-3950.



Even Further Ahead . . .

Trustees Luncheon Meeting

January 7, 12 noon, in the Friendship Center

Church Council

January 7, 7 pm, in the Friendship Center

Emmaus Community

January 8, 6 pm, in the Fellowship Hall

Choir starts back up

January 10, 7 pm, in the Sanctuary

ARK Board

January 16, at 6 pm in the Mid-High Room

Trustee Meeting Announcement

Sunday, January 7, 2007, 12:00 (noon)

The Trustees (classes of 2006, 2007, and 2008) will welcome the class of 2009 with a sandwich lunch following the 10:30 service. The agenda will focus on introducing the

church property to the new Trustees and on formulating a schedule of action items for the coming year.

We look forward to welcoming the class of 2009: Ed

Brodnax, Jay Carnes, and Armond Stanley. We will reluctantly bid adieu to Gene Diedrich, Mary Keller, and Don Siebe who have faithfully served as the class of 2006.



Join Us for
Caroling

Christmas Caroling
We are scheduled to sing at:

Sombrillo

Aspen Ridge

Los Alamos Hospital

This Sunday, December 17 at 4:45 pm

Upon our return (about 6:30 pm), nourishing food and refreshments will be served to the carolers. Everyone is welcome to lend their voices to this effort!