



FIRST

VISIONS

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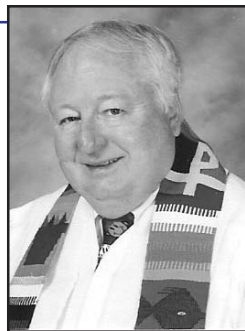
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The Pastor Ponders



"A Really New Year - OR Just a Re-Run?"

Before being called into the ordained ministry by God, as some of you already know I was educated for and practiced a very different profession. I was an electrical engineer, working for the Albuquerque counterpart of Los Alamos National Laboratories, Sandia Labs. There, early on, I was assigned the role of project leader for a particular endeavor, a job which required me to select personnel for my team. After looking over a couple of resumes which, to me, seemed virtually identical, I went to my boss for advice.

"I've been looking over these two men's resumes for possible assignment to my project team," I told him, "and I can't decide between them. They both have 15 years' experience with this kind of work." My boss' response was extremely interesting. He said, "No, they don't both have 15 years' experience. Mike has 15 years' experience. But Fred has one year's experience, repeated 15 times."

In the Christian faith, I've discovered that the same is often true. Some believers in Christ grow and mature in their faith throughout a lifetime of following Him. But many others simply relive and rehash the same experiences, over and over again, in a repetitive cycle that eventually becomes a rut. Such stuck-in-the-mud believers are pretty much dead weight upon the Body of Christ. But growing Christians make wonderful disciples, to the greater glory of our Lord.

The year 2007 is just ahead of us. For some, it will be a genuinely new year. For others, it will simply be a re-run. The difference largely depends upon our focus. If we insist on continuing to "live in the past," be it glorious or gloomy, nothing new can be permitted to disturb our pre-conceptions. But if we are open to the fresh wind of God's Spirit, who knows what might happen? Yes, it's probably easier to cling to the past. But it's a lot more exciting to be open to the future!

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past," says the Lord. "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 42:18-19a, NIV)

Happy New Year to all!

Dave Ring



May God raise you up

On eagle's wings,

Bear you on

The breath of dawn,

Make you to shine

Like the sun,

And hold you in the palm

Of His hand.

May God lead you

In all you do,

Grant you the grace

To know and do

His will

Throughout this new year.

(Partially taken from hymn #143, United Methodist Hymnal)

Christmas in Reverse!



by Jan Stong

This year's Christmas drama, presented on December 17th at the second service, asked a question we often forget to think about at Christmas time. That question is, "Why did Jesus come?" It certainly wasn't so we would have an excuse to get together or exchange presents.

The narrators, choirs, and actors led us back to the beginning, a "very strange place to start" a Christmas service. Well, it wasn't so strange after all because the reason Jesus came can be found in the Garden of Eden and through history leading up to Christ's birth. We needed a savior, the One who would save us from our sins.

I think they probably could have included today. We still need that savior to free us from our sins! That's a very good reason to celebrate the coming of Jesus. . . .And that's just what we did. We shouted out the name, Emmanuel.

This year's drama, as in recent years, was performed by a combination of age groups. This joining helps us recognize how we all together make up God's family and shows us how, when we work together, God's name is well praised. Often times we look very narrowly at our church world and forget that this church belongs to all ages.

Young people sometimes just think of older people as out-dated and unable to be silly. Older people sometimes only see misbehavior and silliness in the young. When we work together, we see so much more.



For example, Mada Jones, who filled in as the innkeeper at the last minute, sure showed how adults can pull together and be willing to be out front in an unusual position. On the young side the three and four year old dancers from the ARK enhanced the drama with their dancing animals on the Ark and showed us how the ARK can contribute to our church. Our church's Chancel Choir joined in to enrich and support our praise as did the congregation.

We give special thanks to our young people who contributed their time and voices to making "Christmas in Reverse" a notable service to the Lord: Corey Carnes, Bob Collom, Natalie Jones, Katie Weinland, Thomas Collins, Gerald Collom, Ella Leschnitzer, Val Hundley, Nalani Varela, Andrew Collins, Hannah Hallikainen, Sean Collins, Hunter Eaton, Walker Eaton, Amethyst Collins, Clara Leschnitzer, Ella Leschnitzer, Sarah Hutto, Lydia Kenamond, Hannah Mullen, Gracie Swensen, Matthew Gaurilov, Emme Mooday, Logan Bishop, Tessa New, Grace Lee, Sarina Borden, Casey Borden, Braeden Casados, Arianna Moldanado, Eliza Evans, Aidan McCleskey, Anna Clark, Nathan Taylor, Dana Urbatsch, Leah Marr-Lyon, Edward Rightley, Luke Rainey, and Emma Bulward-Kunde.

Thank you to everyone who participated in reminding all of us like the shepherds that "this Promised One came for shepherds, stinky shepherds"--sinners like us. "Admirabilis Deus, wonderful, wonderful God, Dominus, Dominus, glory to Christ the Lord!"

*Jesus!
Christmas!
Emmanuel!*

*Jesus!
Christmas!
Emmanuel!*

*Jesus!
Christmas!
Emmanuel!*

God is with us, now! God is with us, now! God is with us, now!

Special January Days

Birthdays:

Betty Terrell 01/01
 Jason Grider 01/05
 Ron Chavez 01/05
 Dennis Gill 01/05
 Robyn Collom 01/06
 Caroline Rousculp 01/08
 Craig Siebe 01/08
 Martha Zumbro 01/08
 Clayton Pearson 01/16
 Kyle Cash 01/17
 Clara Leschnitzer 01/17

Carrie Shuman 01/17
 Jensina Sheppard 01/19
 Virginia Lee Sowder 01/23
 Al Blackstock 01/25
 Jim Little 01/27
 Carolyn Pearson 01/27
 Eileen Douglass 01/28

Anniversaries:

January 12
 Kemp & Nancee Beebe



Welcome to
**Karen
 Knapp,**
 our
 newest
 member

Mark Your Calendars

The Rev. Jim Hawk, former pastor of this church and current District Superintendent of the Albuquerque District of the United Methodist Church, will help us kick off the New Year at LA-FUMC. He will lead worship on Sunday morning, January 7th, while Pastor Ring

attends the United Methodist Congress on Evangelism in Myrtle Beach, SC. Begin the first Lord's Day of 2007 in God's house and enjoy meeting or reacquainting yourself with Jim and Jean Hawk!

First United Methodist Church
 called to:

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

The next edition of Visions will be dated January 12.
 The deadline for articles is Friday, January 5.

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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

We thank all of the people who worked with our youth to make the Christmas drama, "Christmas in Reverse: Jan Stong, Pageant Director; Valerie Collins, Music Director; Robyn Collom, Acting Director; Melissa Balice, Ark Dancers Director; Sarah Kelly, Pianist; Emily Collom, Acting Director Assistant; Don Casperson, Sound System; Linda Bequette and Linda Leschnitzer, food and refresh-

ments; Jana Beery, Stacey Eaton, Mada Jones, Linda Bequette, and Linda Leschnitzer, Costuming; and Joyce Rybarcyk, who kept a careful eye out for the little ones. Thank you for the wonderful celebration of Christ's birth.

Thank you to everyone who helped put the sanctuary back to rights, especially Don Siebe and Gene Diedrich.

Kudos to all twenty-seven hardy singers who joined to give Christmas joy in carols to the people of our church and community on Sunday, December 17th.

Thank you also to Dave and Fran Ring, who opened their house to the congregation on December 17th. Their hospitality and good food were enjoyed by all. We were really impressed with your nativity scene collection.

Upcoming Events Highlights

Sermon Titles

December 31: "A Chance to Start Over" II Corinthians 5:16-20

January 7: Rev. Jim Hawk will conduct the service

January 14: "Why Can't We All Get Along?" a Message for Ecumenical Sunday Romans 10:1-13

United Skates

No skating on December 29

January 5: Skating resumes at 5:30 pm.

Offices Closed

December 29 and January 1

SPRC

January 12, 7 pm, in the Asbury Room

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

Outreach

January 15, 6:30 pm, in the Library

ARK Board

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

PNO (Parents' Night Out)

January 19, at 6:30 pm

MF Youth Group

December 17, 4 pm in the Senior High Room

Finance

December 19, 6:30 pm in the Library



Ho,
 Ho,
 Ho
 Merry
 Christmas!

Santa, whose first name is Dave, handed out gifts at the Ark Christmas Party on December 11th.