



FIRST

VISIONS

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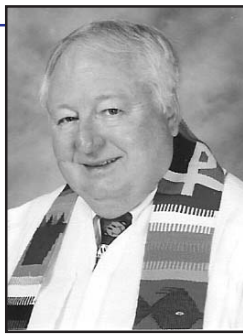
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The Pastor Ponders



"SWEET MUSIC OR DISTURBING NOISE?"

by David Ring

"Even musical instruments, like the flute or the harp, though they are lifeless, are examples of the need for speaking in plain language. For no one will recognize the melody unless the notes are played clearly." - (I Corinthians 14:7, New Living Translation)

As one human being observing it from the outside, the Muslim faith is daily becoming less and less attractive. While I was never particularly enamored of Mohammed and his doctrines, I used to accept the simple fact that the Muslim faith was one of this world's major religions. But the more Sunni's and Shia's fight with and kill one another and the more primitively tribalistic the multiple Mideast factions show themselves to be, the less respect I have for the Muslim persuasion. To even call it "religion" gives religion a bad name. At least that's how I, Dave Ring, presently see it.

With that preface, I invite you to consider how millions of secular people today might view the Christian faith. While Christians have recently stopped actually murdering one another (except perhaps in Northern Ireland) over their differences of opinion, the cacophony of criticism of various Christian "tribes" (Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Lutheran) by other Christian "tribes" (Pentecostal, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Charismatic) continues unabated. Even within these established Christian tribes (yes, I know that we within the faith call them "denominations") there is continuous backbiting and internecine conflict. Right now

the Anglican Church is in the process of fragmenting into five or six warring factions; the Southern Baptist denomination is likewise flying apart. Christians spend far more of their time and resources combating one another than fighting real evil. To someone outside the faith, do these constant Christian conflicts make faith in Jesus appealing and attractive? I doubt it.

January 18-25 is known in church circles as the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity." How can the world know that Jesus really is Lord - unless Christians fervently pray for unity? How can the world see that we're serious about Jesus - until we begin to proclaim Him clearly, plainly, and harmoniously?

Can you find it in your heart this week to bless a Baptist? How about congratulating a Catholic? Or lauding a Lutheran? Maybe even praise a Presbyterian? We often sing "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love" for one another. (I think Jesus said that first - you might want to check out John 13:35.) Let's actually do it, fellow Christians. And then maybe the world will begin to be interested in the Jesus whom we claim to follow!

Dave Ring

New Study

sponsored by the United Methodist Women

Shalom, Salaam, Peace



Article taken from <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umw/work/mission-education/mission-studies/spiritual-growth/shalom-salaam-peace/>

Shalom Salaam Peace, three words which mean "peace" from the three "Abrahamic" religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, provide the foundation for our 2006-2007 spiritual growth study. The author, Alison Stokes, and study guide author, Pat Patterson, accompany us as we think about these three traditions, each of which seeks peace. Each tradition has a history of neighbors living at peace with neighbors and urges its followers to seek inner peace. Each tradition has a history of violence which cries out for explanation. In the name of "Truth" wars have raged.

Questions abound. Why does religion foment such violence? Why is God portrayed as violent in sacred scripture? Do we worship the same God as Abraham? Has God "divided" since then? What is the path to peace? Must we ignore the world and seek inner peace, or does God call us to embody peace on this world? What is the price of peace? Is there peace when there is force?

Jesus pointed to the Samaritan as the model for neighbor in his day. The Samaritans were a people of Abraham who were condemned as apostates by the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day. They had intermarried with foreigners, they worshiped differently, and they had different beliefs. In short, Jews and Samaritans hated each other. They did not even speak to each other and avoided contact whenever possible.

Jesus is speaking to us today as we delve deeper into the story of the Good Samaritan. Violence and hatred between religions and sects is increasing. Everyone claims the founders-- Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, etc.--but everyone accuses the other of not worshipping God correctly. The Samaritans were scorned but Jesus held him up as the model of mercy. Where is mercy today?

Who was the injured stranger? Today would he be a Jew? A Muslim? A Christian? To whom should we show mercy? Who, or which group, is practicing religion correctly?

How do we live in peace in such a violent world?

This study will be led by Margaret Gibson and will discuss understandings of peace in Jewish, Muslim & Christian traditions and interreligious peacemaking.

Times: 10:30 am-12:30 pm on Monday, February 5th, 12th, and Tuesday, February 20th in the Friendship Center followed by a soup luncheon with many delicious soups.

Everyone is invited. Come even if you can only spare enough time for lunch!

2006 Christmas Season

Mitten Tree Contributions

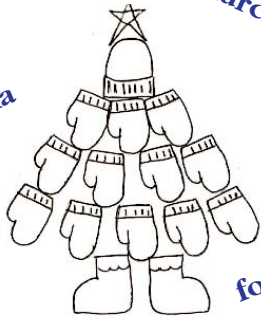
More than Eighty Items Received

for Navajo Church in Pinedale

for Crisis Center in Española

for Christmas Boxes

God's Way Church in Albuquerque



Hats**Slippers**Scarves**Mittens

Thank You!



Cantata by Chancel Choir and Orchestra
Festival of Lessons & Carols



Christmas Caroling



Christmas Boxes

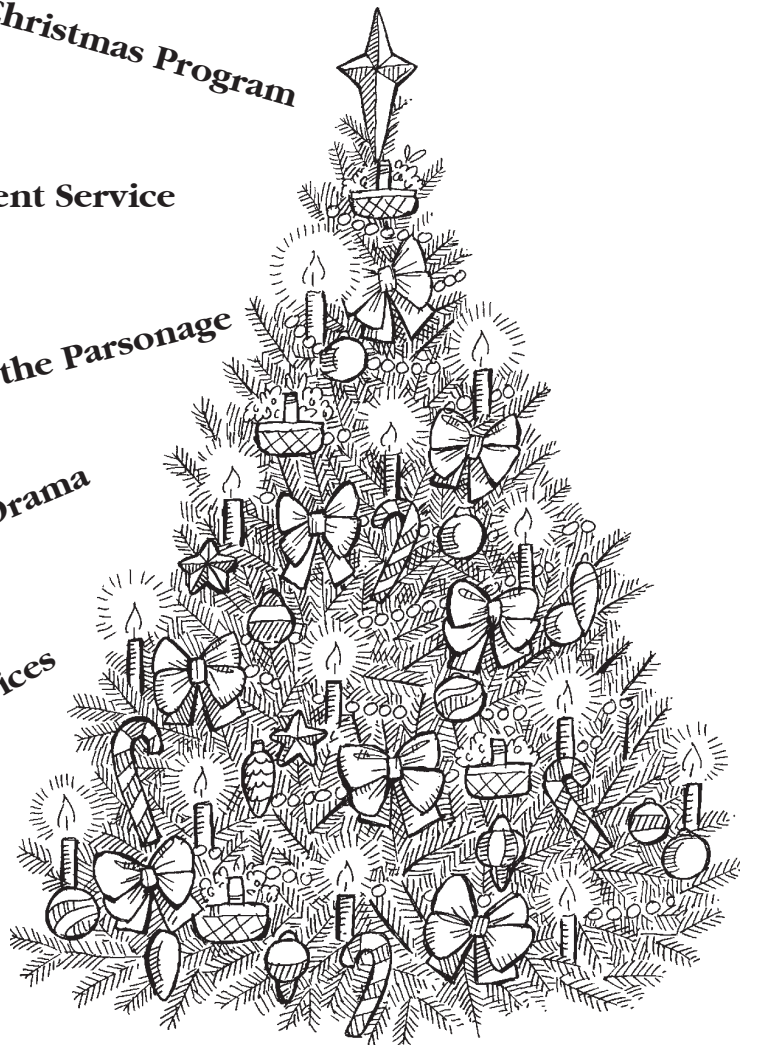
Ark Christmas Program

Advent Service

Open House at the Parsonage

Christmas in Reverse Drama

Candlelight Christmas Eve Services



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

Mission Movie Brother Sun, Sister Moon



Join us for fellowship
 and a movie on
 January 29th at
 6:30 pm.

We will watch a
 movie about
 St. Francis of Assisi
 which is set in the
 beautiful countryside
 of Italy and looks at
 the life of an important
 man of God.

First United Methodist Church
 called to:

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

The next edition of Visions will be dated January 26.
 The deadline for articles is Friday, January 19.

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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

At the beginning of the New Year 2007 we would like to look back to 2006 and thank all of you who contributed to the welfare of this church throughout the year, especially those who were not noted through this col-

umn. Even if the writers of "Our Applause" were unaware of your contribution, the work that you did was important to this church. We want to thank you for it.

If you greeted a stranger at church, or threw a piece of

trash away that was left on the floor, or held open a door for someone, or gave a bright smile to someone who needed it, etc.,

thank you.

Upcoming Events Highlights

Sermon Titles

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

January 21: "Building a House of Faith"; I Corinthians 3:9-15

January 28: Ark Sunday



SPRC

January 12, 7 pm, in the Asbury Room

MF Youth Group

January 14, 4 pm in the Senior High Room

IAF Crafts

January 14, 4 pm in the Friendship Center

Church/Ark Offices Closed

January 15--Martin Luther King, Jr Day

IACares

January 15, 6:30 pm in the Library

Outreach

January 15, 6:30 pm, in the Library

God & Science

January 15, starts back up at 7 pm in the Mid-High Room

ARK Board

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

Finance

January 16, 6:30 pm in the Library

PNO (Parents' Night Out)

January 19, at 6:30 pm

Handbells

January 21, 6:30 pm in the Friendship Center

Martha Circle

January 23, 11:30 am at the home of Sheila Enemark for a potluck lunch and gift exchange; bring a \$5 exchange gift

Reception for the Armstrongs

January 28, 11:45 am in the Fellowship Hall

Mission Movie

January 29, 6:30 pm in the Friendship Center--"Brother, Sun, Sister, Moon"

Spiritual Formation Workshop

February 6-8 in Glorieta--informational brochures in the kiosk

Bringing in the New Year . . .

Baptism of Cade Miller
 December 31, 2006