



FIRST VISIONS

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The Pastor Ponders



"STAR GAZING"

After this the word of the LORD came to Abraham in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward. But Abraham said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abraham said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars -- if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abraham believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. - Genesis 15:1-6 (New International Version)

Several times in my life thus far, including this past August, I've had the privilege of traveling across the equator into the southern hemisphere of our earth. I've been "down under" to both Australia and New Zealand, as well as to a number of South American nations. While there, my "preacher eyes" noticed one particular sight that was markedly different from here in the U. S., especially in the mountains of northern New Mexico. When I gazed up at the night sky, there really wasn't much to see in terms of stars. About the only constellation that's notable is the Southern Cross. But otherwise, there are relatively few visible stars in southern hemisphere night skies.

I checked this personal observation with a friend of mine who is an astronomer at McDonald Observatory in Ft. Davis, Texas and he confirmed what I'd noticed. There are only about 1/4 as many stars

visible to the naked eye from the southern hemisphere of our earth as there are to those of us who live in the northern half of our world. That well-known line to the theme song of our neighboring state, "The stars at night are big and bright, deep in the heart of Texas" could probably never have been conceived anywhere south of the equator.

Way back in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, the 15th chapter, there's a wonderfully appealing story of an encounter between Almighty God and Abraham, the father of three of the world's major faiths. God invited Abraham to look up at the stars of the night sky and try to count them. Then He promised Abraham that his descendants -- all of whom would be God's special peoples -- would be as many as that stellar panorama.

I looked at a globe to verify and, sure enough, Abraham's homeland (modern-day southern Iraq which, coincidentally, is situated at approximately the same north latitude as New Mexico) was located in the northern hemisphere of our earth. So the panorama of stars Abraham saw was truly impressive.

Modern science, moreover, tells us that the number of stars we can see with the naked eye, either from our own northern half of the earth or much farther to the south, is only a tiny fraction of those that are really there. The number of stars is nearly infinite -- and so also is the loving promise of God to the many, many, many descendants of our spiritual father, Abraham.

Ever and always, praise the Lord!

Dave King

United Skates Returns

Friday Night skating starts

September 7, 2007

First Session: 3rd graders & younger
5:30 pm - 6:45 pm
Admission \$2.00

Second Session: 4th graders & older
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Admission \$2.50



MYF

STARTS

SEPT. 9TH AT 4 PM

John Wesley Adventure

The "John Wesley Adventure" is a condensed, three-day dramatic presentation on the life and beliefs of John Wesley, the 18th century founder of the Methodist brand of Christian faith. Dr. Tom Fuller will be at our church October 14-17 to bring the "JWA" to us. It's a different sort of "revival," designed to help 21st century United Methodists recover our Wesleyan roots and thereby lead us toward church renewal and growth. Mark your calendars and plan to embark on the "John Wesley Adventure" in mid-October.



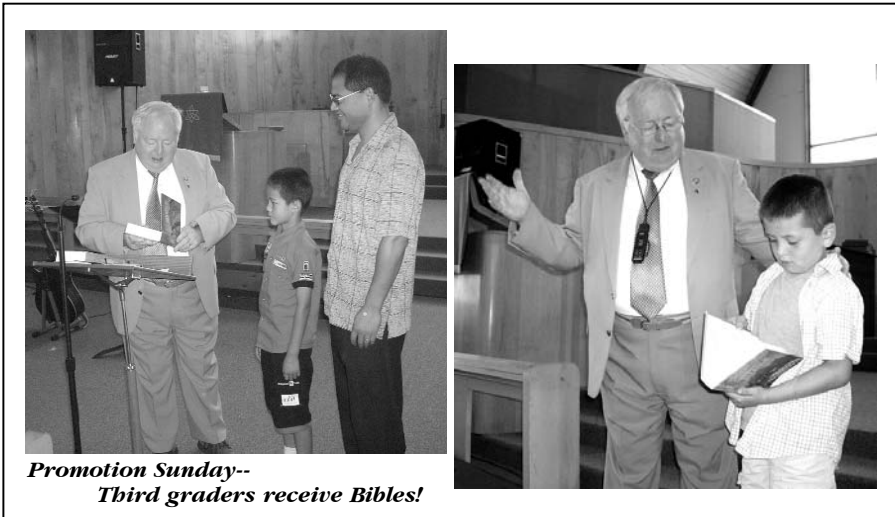
Events in Pictures



Church



Picnic



*Promotion Sunday--
Third graders receive Bibles!*



Healing
Prayer Service

Bake Sale--

to benefit
Almendra & Angel
Hernandez



ROUNDUP 2007--WORKSHOPS FOR U.M.C.

by Ann LePage

Jan Stong and I attended the educational workshop event sponsored by the Northwest Texas Conference of the U.M.C. in Lubbock, Tx. on Saturday, August 25.

It was held in the huge First United Methodist Church of Lubbock. I actually got lost once, that is how huge it is. The event was well organized and offered 72 different workshops on topics ranging from 'Art and Soul', Christian "Community" for the New Century to 'Striving for Joy: Living with Stress'. Jan and I took different workshops so that we could cover as many as possible.

I took: The Bible is a Green Book, Communicating Effectively with Children at All Stages, Resurrecting Reality in Youth Ministry, and Reaching the Emerging culture (a two-hour course). I enjoyed all of my classes and got some great ideas to share with our congregation.

We want to thank the congregation for sponsoring our trip. Not only did we learn new things for the benefit of the congregation, but we learned some new things about each other and enjoyed a great Mexican restaurant too.



by Jan Stong

Sometimes the information you need to do a better job can't be found in your office. Many of you who work at the Lab are well aware of that and find yourselves often making trips off the Hill to invest in someone else's information on how to better achieve your present production.

Last week Ann LePage and I made a similar trek to Texas where we attended the Roundup at First United Methodist Church in Lubbock. Seeing how other people accomplish the many tasks that occur in churches can enable us to improve our church's activities.

I attended classes about young adult ministry, internet church, the church home, and church history (archiving). These classes were very interesting and, hopefully, will add to the ministries of our church.

I was surprised to learn that we are working on some of the suggestions made about young adults and youth already. Bringing them into the regular activities of the church is a great way to give a young person a feeling of belonging in the church; let them share in the church services, reading the scriptures, sharing testimonies, etc.

The class on internet focused on Blogs. How many of you regularly visit a Blog or have ever visited a Blog or know what a Blog is or where you find it. If you are a teenager or young adult you probably do. I know what they are because I have three young adults in my family all of whom have their own Blog sites on the Internet on MySpace. It is something we need to be aware of and consider as a way of communicating with a large part of our community.



Church archiving was a two hour class covering a copious amount of material. How do we decide what material to keep, what to throw away? How do we preserve the important things? Where should they be kept and in what format? I learned that paper copies should be kept. CD copies which may last five years do not last nearly as long as a paper copy which may last up to a hundred years. Wow, there's a lot to know!



The following is an overview of the class I took at the Roundup, a day of educational events for Methodists in the New Mexico Conference.

THE BIBLE IS A GREEN BOOK

by Ann LePage

Author Lynn White argued that the way the Bible has been appropriated has directly led to the environmental problems we face today. Genesis 1:22-24, 26-28 was often quoted in industrial England of the nineteenth century as the justification of practices which began the pollution of our air, soil and water. In particular, Genesis 1:26 "...and let them have dominion" has been used to justify all man's practices as granting humans unlimited power and license to exploit nature. However, more modern theologians have interpreted the Hebrew word, rada, (the word previously interpreted as 'dominion') as more nurturing, and care-giving. As the image of God, humans should relate to non-humans as God relates to us, i.e., with a sense of responsibility.

There are three approaches to using the Bible in relation to the environment:

1. Re-constructionist:

Matthew Fox is one of the most well known proponents of this theory. Basically, the theory states that we should go back to Native American theology as it relates to the environment.

2. Apologists: These theorists believe that many passages in the Bible are not negative if read in the right way.

3. Revisionists: Modern thinking is that the Bible should be viewed in a new and 'dangerous' way.

This more dangerous way of interpreting the Bible looks at Genesis 2, the other creation story, especially verse 15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it" in a new way. Dr. Hobart says that this is a translation from the King James version, from the year 1611. At that time 98% of the people of the world were agriculturalists, therefore the word 'till' was readily understood. He suggests

a better translation of the Hebrew word, abad, is to serve, therefore the new translation would be to serve it and guard it. In this creation story man becomes the partner of God, not the Master of the cosmos.

Dr. Hobart, who did his doctoral dissertation on the book of Job, calls Job the first environmentalist. His logic is a little hard to follow, but basically he says that after God points out to Job that he is nothing (Job 38:25-39:30) and the world is more grand, mysterious and explosive than Job realizes, Job recants all he said previously (Job 42:1-6). This realization includes the knowledge that God is more wondrous than he had known, and he, Job, is not the center of the universe, God

is. God is not in the business of rewarding and punishing, God is serving His needs, not ours. We cannot understand God's mind. We are not the superstars of the earth and should serve God by tending his garden carefully.

The book of Romans refers to Jesus Christ as the first born of all creation and He is the 'glue' which can bond all creation together. Through Jesus, God was pleased to reconcile all things. What God had in mind for the creation is not just our salvation, but the salvation of all creation, with us as careful servants of that creation. Romans 8:18-23.



Special September Days

Birthdays:

Darryl Jackson 09/02
Ben Gibson 09/03
Opal Lee Gill 09/03
Jan Frensdorf 09/03
John Zumbro 09/05
Frances Hundley 09/06
Valerie Collins 09/09
Carol Mead 09/15
Rachel Sheppard 09/16
John Courtright 09/18
Dagne Sollid 09/22
Bob Bryant 09/30

Anniversaries:

September 2
Gail & Jim Little
September 12
Doris & Darryl Jackson
September 13
Peggy & Aaron Goldman
September 14
Eileen & Rod Doughlass
September 23
Marilyn & Jim Peek

SMALL ACTS OF FAITHFULNESS

by Ann LePage

Occasionally something happens that makes us decide we need to change our behavior. For example, when driving peacefully down the road, you see someone weaving erratically through traffic, endangering you and others. Others' driving habits often can make us into angry, judgmental people, yelling out "You Jerk!" (or worse). To effect changes in our hearts, we might consider letting in the Lord. Allow Him to give us an attitude adjustment, so that the next time we are cut off in traffic, we can say to our fellow man, "Bless you, dearly loved child of God". By actually saying this, over and over, soon or later, an attitude adjustment does occur.

A similar thing happens when we do the right thing, whether we want to or not. We may do something because we are being dutiful, watching a fussy child, caring for a cantankerous senior citizen. These acts may actually be more valu-

able because of the patience and control required. Being found faithful (to duty) is noticed by God and He blesses us for these small acts of faithfulness.

O God, change my heart. Transform the attitudes from which my actions grow that I may honor you. Thank you for accepting and blessing the acts we do daily just because they are the right things to do. Help us to notice and affirm those acts done by those around us. Amen.

From The Upper Room Disciplines 2007, Thursday August 9 and Friday August 10, 2007.

Special Recognition and Consecration of all

Christian Education Workers

Sunday morning,

September 9th

Please attend one of our regular services and be recognized.

Upcoming Events Highlights



Sermon Titles

September 9 Christian Educators Recognition Sunday Dr. Dave Ring "Get Involved!" Gospel Scripture Text: Luke 10:1-11, 16-21
September 16 16th Sunday after Pentecost Ministry candidate Susan Nava "Independence Day"
September 23 17th Sunday after Pentecost Dr. Dave Ring "What Is Lordship?" Gospel Scripture text Matthew 25:14-30

United Skates Restarts

September 7, 5:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall

Special Waste Day

September 8, in the parking lot next door

Christian Educators

Recognition Sunday

September 9, both services

LAFCrafts

September 9, 4 pm in the Friendship Center

MF Youth

September 9, 4 to 5:30 pm in the Senior High Room

Outreach

September 10, 7 pm in the Library

Christian Education

September 11, 6:30 pm in the Friendship Center

SPRC

September 11, 7 pm in the Asbury Room

Create & Discover

September 13, 7:15 pm at the home of Mada Jones

Newspaper Articles Due

September 14

MF Youth

September 16, 4 to 5:30 pm in the Senior High Room

LA Cares

September 17, 6:30 pm in the Library

Ark Board

September 18, 6 pm in the Mid-High Room

Finance

September 18, 6:30 pm in the Library

Parents' Night Out

September 21, 6 to 9:30 pm

Book Review: BURN OUT

by Ann LePage

Author Bill Kemp, in his recent book Peter's Boat talks about how church workers often reach a burn-out stage in their church ministry. We feel that our work is no longer so rewarding. We may experience conflicts which dampen our enthusiasm and trust of our fellow members. We feel that what we do is not so important, maybe even trivial. Endless meetings sap our strength and joy. The constant crisis of not having enough volunteers is a worry and a burden.

Most importantly, worship is not satisfying, though it may from time to time feel good.

Mr. Kemp suggests that blaming the church for the burnout is not where the blame belongs. Paul, in First Corinthians 3:11, 16 says, "For

no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" Individual cases of burnout are a prelude to the day when Jesus will test what each congregation has built.

Kemp relates the famous Martha and Mary story in Luke 10. His explanation is that Jesus accepts that Martha is stressed, but his solution is not in evening out the work distribution. Church workers often believe that all problems can be solved if everyone would just pitch in and do his fair share. But Jesus tells Martha that Mary has chosen the better thing, the spiritual and self awareness that Mary has to choose spending time with Jesus; or, it could sim-

ply be that instead of spending hours making dozens of dishes for the group, couldn't she have just made one?

This short book (104 pgs.) gives evaluation exercises, classifies types of church workers, describes leadership lessons, and addresses the addiction to work. The author also provides biblical back-up for his theories and writes in a clear, easy-to-read style. If you would like to borrow this book, please see Ann Le Page.

Peter's Boat: Renewing the Vitality of Burned-Out Church Workers, Bill Kemp, Discipleship Resources, 2007.

First United Methodist Church called to:

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

The next edition of Visions will be dated September 21.
The deadline for articles is Friday, September 14.

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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.