



FIRST VISIONS

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"WHY 2008 MAY BE A VERY GOOD YEAR FOR LA-FUMC"

As the New Year 2008 draws closer, I'm well-aware of huge amounts of "free floating anxiety" in the Los Alamos community. This being virtually a "one company town," the negative impact of Los Alamos National Laboratory's planned reduction (or reductions, depending on future actions of our U. S. Congress) in force pervades virtually every aspect of life here. Still, I am one person (maybe the only person, but I trust not) in Los Alamos who sees a "silver lining" beyond all of the "doom" and "gloom" I hear forecast for 2008. After three decades of service in ministry, I've learned to be a careful observer of "little things" that others might overlook. Let me share with you three of those "little things" I've seen in recent days.

The change in Sunday morning worship times initiated here on Nov. 4th - from 8 AM to 8:30 for the early service and from 10:30 AM to 11:00 for the late - is one little thing that I, frankly, didn't think would make much difference to our church. I was, therefore, neutral about the decision to change. But based upon two months' experience since, I was wrong in my before-the-fact assessment. Attendance at the 8:30 service has been, from the very first Sunday of the change, consistently "up" by 10 to 15 persons per week. And 11 AM attendance is unaffected. So overall we're moving into 2008 with rising attendance.

The combination of efforts by our Stewardship Committee (Alice Carter, Chair) and Connected in Christ Task Force (Sharon Sole, Chair) this fall has resulted in significant increases in both the number of pledges received to our church budget for 2008 and the overall percentage of the budget actually pledged. Both are now at record levels and still rising.

Conventional wisdom would say that under the external uncertainties posed by the Lab, this shouldn't happen. But apparently many of God's people at LA-FUMC are unafraid to financially commit themselves to this church's future ministries despite the turbulence around them.

One Friday afternoon in December I was asked by our member Ron Jones to "ring the bell" for the Salvation Army at the entrance to Smith's grocery store here in Los Alamos. I've been a bell-ringer for the Salvation Army many times before, both last year in Los Alamos and numerous prior years in several other towns. During the two hours I stood there, greeting several hundred folks with a hearty "Merry Christmas," I was amazed at how many stopped to put something in the kettle. My prior experiences had led me to expect that about 1 in 10 would do so. This year about 1 in 4 contributed. As I've thought about that, I realized it was another proof of the counter-intuitive nature of human concern for others. When times are "good" in the world at large, charitable giving goes down. But when folks themselves are feeling pinched, they open their wallets to the needy. That doesn't make logical sense, but it's how many people operate.

Several times over in the gospels, Jesus tells us that "Kingdom ways" and "worldly ways" are the very opposite of one another. From a secular point of view, 2008 looks like it will be a rough year for Los Alamos. But from the spiritual perspective, praise God, it might just prove one of the best years ever for Los Alamos' First United Methodist Church.

Dave Ring



Karen Dyson
Janet Strong
Corey Roubal Smith
Cathy Chindoff
Elaine Johnson
Wendy
Amy E. Lee
Nolan
Arturo Angles
Angela Hastings
Susan Stalton
Ann Page
Steve Ponce
Dave Ring
Teresa M. Gonzalez
Kitchen
Quinn
Quinn

Christmas Season

20



Christmas
Cantata
December 9th

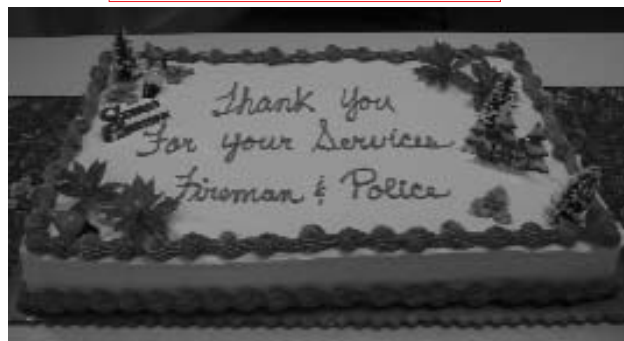


Photo Gallery

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Firemen and
Policemen's Holiday
Dinner
December 8th



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 Casb 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



Ark Students Pack Box for Christmas Box Program

LAY SPEAKING SCHOOL

Friday & Saturday Jan. 11-12 and Feb. 23-24

Lay speaker training courses are planned in Bloomfield on January 11-12. Classes will be the Basic Course, Lay Speakers Preach, and Lay Speakers Lead in Evangelism. Courses will also be offered in Gallup on February 23-24, tentatively Basic and United Methodist Heritage. Courses will also be offered at Glorieta Conference Center April 25-27 and in Belen on September 27-28. For more information check with 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 January 11. The deadline for articles is Thursday, January 3.

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 Discipleship Coordinator ~ Ann Le Page
 Choir Director ~ Sarah Kelly
 First Visions Editor ~ Jan Stong
Ark Child Development Center
 Lori White, Director
 Lorri White, Director
 (505) 662-4822

United Skates
 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
Sunday Services & Activities
 8:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship
 9:45 a.m. Sunday School
 11 a.m. Traditional Worship
Wednesday Activities
 Chancel Choir 7 p.m.

Incoming Work Area/Committee/Board Chairs Please Note

Los Alamos First UM Church is fortunate to have more than a dozen active ministry work areas, committees, and boards which regularly meet as groups, most on a monthly basis. That being said, historically only about half of the chairpersons of these various groups regularly notify the church office of their planned gatherings. Many assume that those of us in the church office know when every group is meeting and therefore

are able to publicize those meetings in our newspapers, bulletins, and e-mails. But we aren't always that savvy.

There are a number of you who are new chairpersons for 2008, while some are veterans. Either way, please let the church office know your meeting plans. And please don't assume that because, in the past "we've always met on the second Monday of the month," that date is "reserved" for your

group in perpetuity. Please communicate your meeting plans directly to the church office - and try your best not to "double up" (or worse yet, "triple up") on top of other groups that are already meeting. Thanks!

P. S. Verbally telling Pastor Dave isn't sufficient. The Church Secretary is the only one who has the "master" calendar. And she needs to be by the calendar to write it down.

Upcoming Events Highlights

Sermon Titles

December 30 Communion
 Sunday Sermon: "Darkness and Light" Gospel Scripture: John 1:1-14 Pastor Dave Ring

January 6 Epiphany Sermon by Susan Nava

January 13 First Sunday after Epiphany Sermon: "Truly Wise" Gospel Scripture Text: Matthew 2:1-1 Pastor Dave Ring

Offices Closed

December 28-January 2

Church News and Newspaper Articles Due

January 3

Staff Meeting

January 4, 9 am in the Library

UMW Palestine Study

January 7, 11:30 am in the Friendship Center and continues Jan. 14, 28, Feb. 4, 11, and 25. Bring a bag lunch, drinks will be provided

Emmaus Community

January 7, 6 pm, potluck dinner in Fellowship Hall followed by business meeting and worship in the Friendship Center

Christian Education

January 8, 6 pm in the Library

Disciple I

January 8, 6:30 pm in the

Friendship Center

SPRC

January 8, 7 pm in the Asbury Room

Staff Meeting

January 11, 9 am in the Library

Church Council

January 13, 7 pm in the Friendship Center

Trustees

January 14, 6 pm in the Friendship Center

Mission/Outreach

January 14, 7 pm in the Library

Finance

January 15, 6:30 pm in the Library



Parade of Lights

LAFUMC

Participants

December 1st