



FIRST

VISIONS

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THE PASTOR PONDER



"THE MEANING OF LENT"

The Christian season of Lent begins annually on Ash Wednesday, which this year fell on February 25th. Lent has often been a misunderstood and abused season of the liturgical calendar of the Christian Church. These misunderstandings have been illustrated in abstinence from things that really don't matter spiritually -- and the inner self-righteousness that follows as a result of thinking that something important has thereby been accomplished.

The Lenten season is intended for serious fasting, penitence, and self-examination. Fasting, a practice that does not receive much attention today, is simply the choice of not eating one or more meals or selected foods, letting the resultant hunger remind us of God who sustains us, and offering Him thanks. Lent is a time to truly consider the parts of our lives (attitudes and behaviors) that God would like to change. Anything that we choose to suspend doing during Lent must be done to the glory of God, not for self-satisfaction. On the positive side, Lent can also be a time to begin doing that which we already know God wants us to do.

Each year as we enter the Christian season called Lent, I wonder. I wonder if I will ever truly understand why Jesus did it. Why did He choose to die on the Cross for you - for me? It truly was a choice on His part. He didn't have to save us. But He did. He loved us so much that He just couldn't bring Himself to ignore our need.

Lent is a thought-provoking time of year. It's a time when Christians consider matters that are "heavier" than usual, when we ponder the "big questions" of life itself. But at the end of Lent there is always God's overwhelming, positive "yes!" Easter is God's loving victory - a victory good for all time!

-- Dr. Dave Ring,

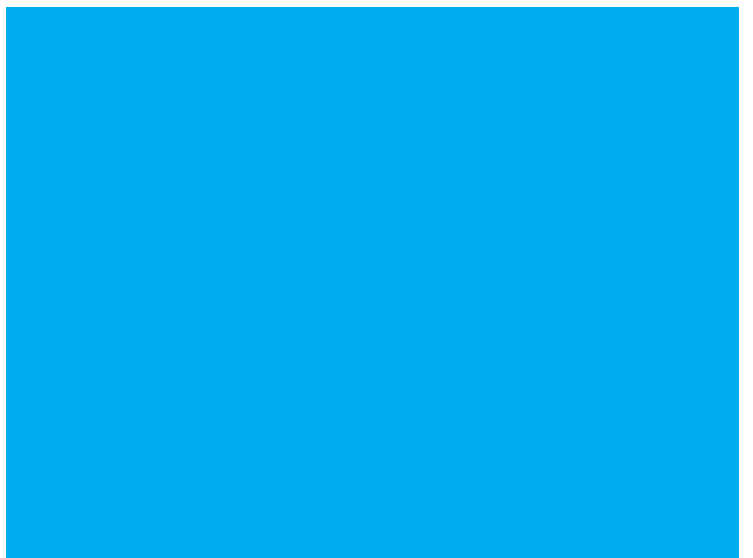
STEWARDSHIP OF TIME AND TALENTS

When I read the story in John 6: 1-9, it reminded me about using our gifts of time and talents. The little boy had 5 barley loaves and 2 fish and he was willing to share them. Andrew used his talent of evangelism to bring the little boy to Jesus.

Jesus took the boy's small gift and multiplied it in order to feed a huge crowd. It's very interesting to see what Jesus/God will do when we offer him gifts. Each of us has gifts and talents. We all have the same amount of time. This article is meant to motivate you to examine yourself and discover what you have that you could give to God's work. There are many needs - small needs - at our church which you could help with - such things as: remembering to return any item you take out of its place, close a cupboard or closet door that you opened, turn off lights that you turned on, scrub a sink in the kitchen, pick up trash that you notice. These are all small things but important. Some larger needs that take more effort and time are: teaching Sunday School with a team, phoning or visiting shut ins, stuffing envelopes for mailing, changing paraments or hanging banners, singing in the choir, or being a lay reader. Going a step further, you could volunteer to join a team for KAIROS ministry, or a team for a VIM (Volunteer in Mission) trip or going to help battered women at the Crisis Center in Espanola. God expects us to use the gifts He has given us to build His kingdom. What could you do with the gifts He's given you?

WISH LIST--Lorri and Ann have come up with a list of things we would like to have to make our church/Ark area look and 'feel' nicer. They include:

1. Replace curtains in Ark/Sunday School classrooms.
2. Replace broken blind in classroom (approx. 20 in. wide).
3. Put amenities in small Ladies rest room, by Chapel.
4. Volunteer to be an Ark Grandma or Grandpa.
5. Wash windows in classrooms, library and Friendship Center.
6. Clean large and small bathrooms.
7. Provide incentives (gift certificates, etc.) for Ark employee of Month.
8. Donate padded rugs for classrooms on west side of building.
9. Replace curtains in Fellowship Hall.



Ed, Lia, Erin, and Kathleen Brodnax pose with the welcoming angel from FUMC.

SPECIAL LENTEN EVENTS

SCHEDULE

AT NOON ON SUNDAY, MARCH 22ND, a special potluck Lenten Luncheon will be held in our church's Fellowship Hall. This will feature a dramatic "skit" on the meaning of Lent, directed by Marthe Sims, plus a DVD presentation describing the Central Conference Pension Initiative (CCPI).

ON PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 5TH, both regular morning worship services will include a palm processional by the children present. Be sure to bring your whole household. At the 11 AM service the Chancel Choir will present the Lenten/Easter season Cantata, "Redeemed," an original musical composition by our own Rev. Jim Beinke. (Holy Communion will not be observed on April 5th.)

HOLY THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 9TH AT 7:00 PM, there will be a celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, which will constitute our monthly observance thereof for April.

GOOD FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 21ST, "TENBRAE" WORSHIP will begin at 7:00 PM. This "Silent Service of Darkness" is quite different from every other form of traditional Christian worship. It has quickly become an annual "favorite" for those who choose to attend it. All ages are certainly welcome, but parents are asked to prepare their children in advance for an unusually quiet and contemplative worship experience.

EASTER SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 12TH, worship opportunities will begin with an ecumenical, community-wide Sunrise Worship at Ashley Pond, tentatively set to start at 6:30 AM. Contemporary Worship in our sanctuary will commence at 8:30 AM, Sunday School will follow at 9:45 AM, with Traditional Worship will be held at 11:00 AM.



PRE-CONFIRMATION CLASSES

Pre-Confirmation Classes for those in grades 6 through 9 who want to explore the possibility of church membership will be offered Sunday mornings, March 15, 22, 29 and April 5 during the Sunday School hour in Pastor Ring's office. Contact the church at 662-6277 if you'd like to enroll.



MISSION DROPLETS FROM NICARAGUA

HE WAS KNOWN AS SIMON THE LEPER...

What does a Leper look like? For me she is a cute little girl about four years old, her black hair tied back into two pigtails with small blue dirty and worn out bands. This month I sat next to her on a bench made of two small stumps watching Dennis and some men of the village repair a pump that had not been functioning properly for several months. Her face covered in dirt and grim from the lack of water for bathing and several hard days play in the village. Carved into the dirt was a trail of tears from some hurt or unknown sadness. When she smiled, you could see a mouth full of chipped, broken, black and rotted teeth. She wore a pair of old well-worn shorts a small white tank top with what appeared to be the remnants of a Disney design, Cinderella perhaps, and a pair of thin flip-flops. I do not recall asking her name, she was very shy and didn't speak much. As we sat there together, I happened to glance down at her small feet and on her legs were large sores, many of which had now turned white around the edges. The wounds were deep and I am sure very sore. I asked her what had happened she just dropped her head and did not answer. As I looked around, I noticed several children with the same sores.

On the way home, that evening we were stopped by a traffic officer for what we thought might be another "shake down" but instead the officer was assisting a local Doctor from the nearby free clinic to get a ride home. There were several miles of roadway to talk and I described to him the children of this village and the sores on their legs and arms. He said it sounded like Leprosy. I was shocked and stunned! I thought Leprosy was a disease long since gone. I had no idea it still existed in the world. Wasn't there a vaccine or cure? As we talked more, he explained that although they were making strides in the availability of medical treatment in the country it was still very difficult for many villagers to get to a clinic and getting medical personnel to the villages is as difficult with their limited resources. He added that even if they could get the medical personnel out to the communities the next hurdle is how to get the necessary medication, with the limited quantities available and the high costs.

All night my mind reeled with anxiety, were we helping in the most needed way? Were there other ministries more important and more needed that we should be involved in? Some time in the night, the answer came; there are many workers in the field each is called to their task yet all working together for His glory. There is no doubt, clean water is very important for improving the health of a village, it is not however the only problem that people face. All we can do is our very best in the area where we are called and have faith that the LORD will provide the necessary workers. We returned to the same village the next day and there was the same beautiful little girl face scrubbed clean and hair tied back neatly into two little ponytails wearing the same bows but this time sitting on her mother's lap. I asked her about the sores on her daughter's legs, she smiled and said, "they are so much better than they were, the ants here bite hard."

I may never know if the little girl suffered from leprosy or ant bites, but I know that when the medical teams arrive in the area they will need clean water to do their work.

Thank God for His Mercy and Grace!
Susan Nava

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Our church strongly encourages and supports mission outreach into our community, state, country, and the world. This year Missions/Outreach has designated several missions for our personal involvement. These include two more missions to Nicaragua (Living Water) in November and December, two missions to Four Corners-one in April with sewing and one June 13-20 for Youth, and one mission to UMCOR headquarters in Louisiana to work in the warehouse preparing emergency materials for delivery around the world either in the summer or fall. If you would like to be involved in any of these missions, please contact me to get on the lists. There are only a limited number of spots available.

Jan Stong, Missions/Outreach Chair



SEASON OF LENT

The season of Lent is a forty-day period (not counting Sundays, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection) before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday, February 25 and ends on April 11, 2009 which is the day before Easter. The word Lent comes from the Latin 'Quadragesima', meaning spring.

The custom of observing Lent began in the fourth century. Originally it was the time of preparation for those who were to be baptized on Easter. The fast was part of the preparation to receive the sacrament of baptism. Since the new members were to be received into a community of Faith, the entire community was called to preparation and those who had been separated from the Church would also prepare to rejoin the community. It was a time of sober reflection, penitence, fasting and spiritual reflection. The practice of including all Christians in the Lenten observance began after the acceptance of Christianity as the state religion in Rome. Since there were so many converts, all were required to observe the Lenten fast and practices of self renunciation, therefore the less zealous were brought securely into the fold.

In time the emphasis of the season turned from preparation for baptism to more penitential aspects of penance. The sorrows and suffering of Christ were shared by the self-denying Christian. Persons guilty of notorious sins spent the time performing public penances; at the end of Lent they were reconciled with the Church. In the middle Ages this was marked by an elaborate ceremony. In time penance came to be associated with all church members. Acts of penance were performed in sorrow for our sins, our failure to acknowledge and love God Himself, in others and in ourselves. The traditional forms of penance are fasting and abstinence; these help us to be less attached to the material things of this world.

Today, Lent is marked by a time of prayer and preparation to celebrate Easter. The purpose of the liturgical calendar is to relive the major events in Jesus' life in real time. We have a season of 40 days to imitate Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for 40 days to prepare for his ministry by facing temptations. All churches which have a continuous history extending before A.D. 1500 observe Lent. The ancient church believed the observance of Lent to be a commandment from the apostles.

The way of Lent is also the way of good works, the loving service of others. It is a time of prayer and preparation to celebrate God's wonderful redemption at Easter and the resurrected life we live and hope for as Christians.

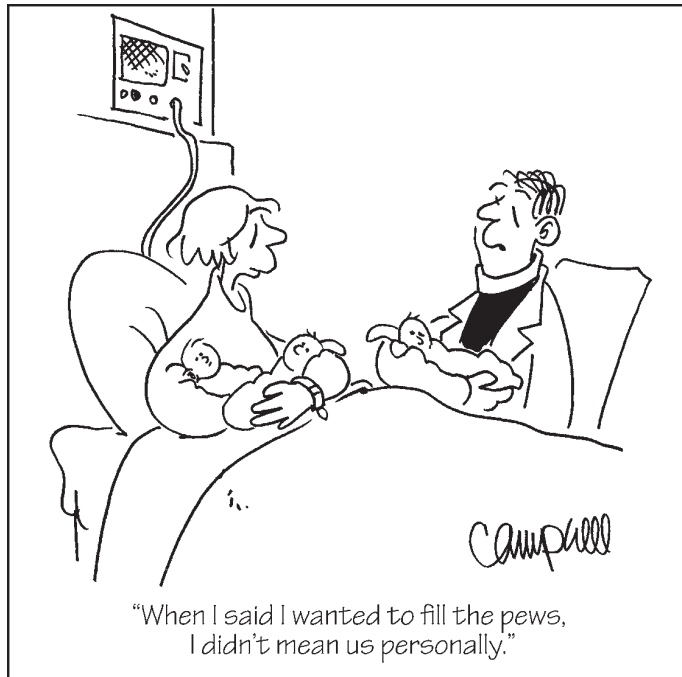
SPECIAL MARCH DAYS

Birthdays:	Anniversaries:
Ruby Meaders 03/05	March 31
Fran Ring 03/09	Don & Kathy Siebe
Cleo Byers 03/10	
Don Siebe 03/10	
Claire Harmon 03/12	
Thomas Beery 03/13	
Emma Barefield 03/19	
Vicki Ricketts 03/20	
Charlotte McQuillan 03/21	
Susan Sasser 03/22	
Rachel Granzow 03/23	

**TOMORROW
NIGHT
MARCH 7!!!**



UPCOMING EVENTS Highlights



"When I said I wanted to fill the pews,
I didn't mean us personally."

Sermon Titles

Sunday, March 8, 2009 - The Rev. Will Steinsiek, New Mexico Conference Archivist, will be guest preacher. His sermon is entitled "In the Midst of Not Knowing Why" based upon the New Testament Scripture Text of Luke 13:1-9

Sunday, March 15, 2009 - Pastor Ring's Sermon: "John's Gospel, Chapter 8"

Sunday, March 22, 2009 - "One Great Hour of Sharing" will be observed. - Pastor Ring's Sermon: "John's Gospel, Chapter 9"

Skates

Friday, March 6, 5:30 pm

CAF Crafts

Sunday, March 8, 4 pm in the Friendship Center

MF

Sunday, March 8, 4 pm in the Senior High Room

Missions/Outreach

Monday, March 9, 6 pm

Disciple II

Monday, March 9, 6:30 pm in the Friendship Center

Education

Tuesday, March 10, 6 pm in the Library

SPRC

Tuesday, March 10, 7 pm in the Asbury Room

Women of the Bible

Wednesday, March 11, 10 am in the Friendship Center

Choir

Wednesday, March 11, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

City-Wide Worship & Prayer

Thursday, March 12, 11:30 am in the Sanctuary

Boy Scouts

Thursday, March 12, 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall

1st Light

Thursday, March 12, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

Skates

Friday, March 13, 1:15 pm in the Friendship Center

Confirmation Begins

Sunday, March 15, 9:45 am

MF

Sunday, March 15, 4 pm in the Senior High Room

Disciple II

Monday, March 16, 6:30 pm in the Friendship Center

Staff

Tuesday, March 17, 10 am in the Library

Sister to Sister

Tuesday, March 17, Noon in the Friendship Center

Ark Board

Tuesday, March 17, 6 pm in the

Mid-High Room

Finance

Tuesday, March 17, 7:30 pm in the Library

Women of the Bible

Wednesday, March 18, 10 am in the Friendship Center

Choir

Wednesday, March 18, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

City-Wide Worship & Prayer

Thursday, March 19, 11:30 am in the Sanctuary

Boy Scouts

Thursday, March 19, 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall

1st Light

Thursday, March 19, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

Skates

Friday, March 20, 5:30 pm

Parents Night Out

Friday, March 20, 6 pm

Youth Lock-In

Friday, March 20, 7:30 pm

Lenten Lunch-African

Pastors' Fund

Sunday, March 22, 12 pm in the Fellowship Hall

MF

Sunday, March 15, 4 pm in the Senior High Room

First United Methodist Church
called to:

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

The next edition of *Visions* will be dated March 20.
The deadline for articles is Wednesday, March 11.

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Discipleship Coordinator ~
Ann LePage
Choir Director ~ Jim Beinke
First Visions Editor ~ Jan Stong
Ark Child Development Center
Lorri White, Director
(505) 662-4822

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.
Friday Roller Skating
First Session
5:30 p.m. to 6:45 pm
3rd graders & younger
Second Session
7 pm to 9 pm
4th graders & older

TALES OF TERROR, BRAVERY AND SUBJUGATION

WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO A SIX-WEEK BIBLE STUDY EACH WEDNESDAY, IN THE LIBRARY FROM CONTINUING THROUGH APRIL 1, 2009.

TEA/COFFEE AND GOODIES WILL BE SERVED. 10:00 - 11:00 A.M.