



FIRST

VISIONS

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INSIDE
FIRST VISIONS

THE PASTOR
PONDER'S
VIM TO RUSSIA

1^A

FAITH WORKS

4^A

WOMEN'S RETREAT

5^A

SPECIAL OCTOBER
DAYS

UPCOMING EVENTS

8^A

THE PASTOR PONDER'S



"THANK GOD, OUR MOOD IS LIGHTENING"

Christians are supposed to be "in the world, but not of the world." That's a paraphrase of John 17:16 which I've heard voiced hundreds of times over in my years of association with the Church of Jesus Christ. My personal way of saying it is, "I have only a temporary resident visa for this world."

This past fall, as the economy of the world around us began to crumble, I rapidly noticed the effects thereof upon the membership of Los Alamos First United Methodist Church. Smiles on the part of folks entering and exiting worship were fewer and more fleeting. Everyone seemed in a hurry to get in and get back out of church - barely pausing to talk with one another. Folks who had never before complained about anything began to be upset by virtually everything. "Pastor, you need to tell those parents to shut their screaming kid up!" "Pastor, your sermon was completely off base. I disagreed with everything you said." "Pastor, it was too cold (or too hot) in the sanctuary this morning." "Pastor, I don't like the anthems the music director picks." "Pastor, why don't you pray longer (or shorter) prayers in worship?"

The "bottom" of this economic slide was reached this past March and, by then, the cacophony of negativism at LA-FUMC was virtually constant. It further manifested itself in tangible ways, with decreased worship attendance, giving, and participation in the various other activities of the church.

Since about May, however, things have begun turning around. Our attendance has gradually crept back up toward prior levels; our giving is catching up with 2008's. Folks are actually beginning to smile again. They're chatting with each other, milling about more normally as they come to and go from church, enjoying one another's fel-

lowship. I'm presently hearing fewer personal criticisms of my ministry and more affirmations.

Perhaps I had never before really paid close attention thereto, but I'd not previously realized how vulnerable the people of God are to the conditions of the secular world around us. In the realm of politics it's often said that people "vote with their pocketbooks." Now I'm beginning to believe the same may be true in the realm of religion. This world's economy went sour, and the Body of Christ followed the downward path along with it.

Thank God, the worst appears to be past. The mood of our world, our country - and our church - is lightening. Joy, and love, and hope are making at least tentative reappearances.

I honestly wonder how our Lord views all this. Did God become less faithful last winter -- and is God now returning to trustworthiness and reliability? Or is God really the same, yesterday, today, and forever, as the Bible claims?

Christians are in the world but not of the world, or at least that's how we're supposed to be. Ever and always, praise the Lord!

Dore Ring

VIM TO RUSSIA - JULY 2009

I've been asked to write a short summary of my Volunteers in Mission trip to an orphanage in Pavlovsk, Russia. On September 10th I gave a rather complete report but if you missed that perhaps you would enjoy reading a shortened version.



I was asked to give a couple of my most memorable impressions. First, I was totally impressed with the way these "cognitively delayed children" were being cared for in this orphanage. The children were well dressed and seemed well fed and seemed very happy. We saw several programs which showed that they are trying to help them to develop to their potential. There seemed to be plenty of staff to be with the children. The children at this orphanage ranged in age from babies to 18 years old.



Something else that made a very large impression on me was a trip into St. Petersburg to see a memorial to the defenders of Leningrad in the World War II years. They experienced a 900 day siege at the hands of the Nazi and one of the ladies, the chairman of the Peace Fund which coordinates all the volunteers that come to the St. Petersburg area to help in orphanages, was a survivor of that terrible event. Why I was so impressed

MISSION REPORT



con't. on Page 8 Russia

22 September 2009

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I almost hate to say it, but there is something about this church that is downright conducive to sin. There, I've confessed it, and I feel better. But let's be specific. It's the sin of pride I'm talking about. It's true - I can't help but be proud that I'm a member of this congregation, when I think about all the things that you all have done this year for the kingdom of God. You all embody countless gifts of service, commitment, talent, energy, determination, love, generosity, and faith, and you are not reluctant to put them to use for Jesus Christ. And the good thing is that, fortunately, so many of you devote so much time, prayer, money, and creative energy to His work around here, that I'm humbled when I think about my own contribution - so that sort of cancels out the pride factor, a little bit!

So now when we're thinking about stewardship, looking ahead to next year, it might be dangerous to review all that we have allowed Christ to do through us in 2009, lest we develop any excess self-esteem. But since the Stewardship Committee is going to ask you to invest your time, talents, and treasure in this church again next year, we owe it to you to look back at the track record of the organization. So here is a brief and incomplete recap of some highlights.

For one thing, this summer's Vacation Bible School was a triumph of planning, hard work, and the commitment of many, many people. More than 100 students enrolled (the largest number in many years), and over 50 adult volunteers helped out. The impact of that event in introducing youngsters to Christ is hard to measure, but must be enormous. Our response to Relay For Life, the fundraiser of the American Cancer Society, was also inspiring. More than 20 people from our church participated on the team, and they raised more than \$3000, making us the 2nd largest contributor in the county.

About a week ago was the Ministry Fair, a creative way to display the activities of our church to its members. So much is going on around here that it's easy to lose track of the diversity and number of ministries, until you see them all represented in one place. Some of our activities, like prison visitation, care of the needy, worldwide outreach, prayer initiatives, and adoption touch people far outside the boundaries of our own congregation. Other activities are for us here at First UMC - church administration, Christian education, and worship music, for example. Maybe the biggest impact we have on the community is through our ministry of the Ark Child Development Center (closely followed by United Skates!), a vital support to the parents of Los Alamos and an unparalleled opportunity for witness and demonstration of a Christ-centered life. Church members devote volunteer time to helping run the Ark through service on its board of directors and maintaining its (and our) physical plant as well as making up part of the paid staff.

Apart from the time devoted in service, there are also the material resources you all provide so generously. I'm talking about money. In a year when the world is wandering through an economic wilderness, and giving at most churches in our conference is down by 20% or 30%, you have kept your level of support almost equal with last year - it's down by a miniscule 1.4% the last I heard. This is such a great testimonial to your faith and confidence, and the seriousness with which you take your pledges! You show clearly that you know God's promise to Abraham applies to us today - we have been blessed by God to be a blessing to others.

The Trustees labored tirelessly behind the scenes, overseeing remodeling and renovation at the parsonage and our Education Wing, running the work days, keeping the lawn maintained and irrigation system going, and planning for new initiatives like a fire-alarm system for the Ark and a replacement for the sanctuary's hail-damaged roof. The Care and Crisis ministry comforted and cared for more than 20 ill and bereaved members of our church community this year, often on several occasions for each, through gifts of meals, cards, books, and flowers. The Christian Education ministry made a whole smorgasbord of offerings available to us for strengthening our discipleship.

The youth group blossomed further as Travis Knapp returned for another summer, accompanied by his wife Elisa. It grew in size and launched off into lots of activities like a rafting excursion, a mission trip, a car wash, a youth band, and a sleepover. Thanks to the commitment of many adult volunteers, this ministry flourishes even while Travis and Elisa are off at graduate school. And there's a good chance that God will lead them back here for a longer return engagement beginning next year.

2009 brought sorrow as well as joy. We watched in admiration and responded in grief, sympathy, and love as our members courageously wrestled with death, disease and injury. We went on mission to Window Rock, Four Corners, Nicaragua, Peru, and Russia. We had retreats, picnics, and work days. We had live chickens in church. We resolved not to sit on our couches and watch life go by. We received the Cinco Estrellas award from the New Mexico conference for the third year in a row. We attended to God's business on the multitude of committees that keep our church going. We sang, prayed, danced, clapped, praised, worshipped, listened, learned, and pondered. We sought God, shared Christ's Word, and served His world. We had an impact for God.

And just think of what lies around the corner. We're considering hiring a new full-time youth director/music director. More of us will go on mission trips and visit prison inmates on behalf of Christ. We'll offer new classes, welcome new worshippers, make new friends, sing new songs, and see fresh evidence of God's working through us in His world.

So I'm humbly proud. And I can advise you confidently that this congregation of God's church is a worthwhile investment of your stewardship resources again in 2010.

In faith, hope, and love -
Nels Hoffman
For the Stewardship Committee

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord...

1 Corinthians 15:58



faith
WORKS



WOMEN'S RETREAT: CASA DEL SOL

Sixteen women from LAFUMC and Santa Cruz UMC attended the Women's Retreat at Casa del Sol, the retreat center of Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, N.M. Sept. 18-19. Pastor Cecelia Lorenzen and Ann Le Page led the group in prayer, Bible study and examination of women's roles in the Bible and society.

The Casa del Sol is a beautiful place which lends itself to rest and reflection. The group tried a new prayer technique called Praying with the Hands, which helps focus attention and asks for God's direction and healing. We laughed a lot and prayed a lot, and ate a lot! Many thanks to Carol Mead and Cecelia for their edible donations.

We enjoyed meeting new faces from Santa Cruz and hope we can continue our new friendships.



SPECIAL OCTOBER DAYS

Birthdays:		James Barefield	10/15
Jon Sollid	10/01	Gerald Collom	10/18
Emma Jean Mader	10/01	Susan Hodgson	10/20
Michael Hundley	10/02	Ray Trimmer	10/20
Doris Jackson	10/02	Ella Leschnitzer	10/22
Matthew Ricketts	10/02	Edith Potter	10/27
Nels Hoffman	10/04	Dave Scudder	10/29
Alice Carter	10/05	Charles Knapp	10/30
Geniece Courtright	10/08		
George Balog	10/12	Anniversaries:	
Susannah Rousculp	10/12	October 8	
Peggy Goldman	10/13	Fred & Hazel DeVries	
Don Zickert	10/14		

con't. from Page 1 Russia



is that she was 10 years old when that began in 1941 and I couldn't help but compare because I was also 10 years old that year. It turns out that we were just one month apart in age. On our visit to this memorial I realized what terrible memories this woman had since she had survived that.

You may wonder what I could do on this trip besides play with children.

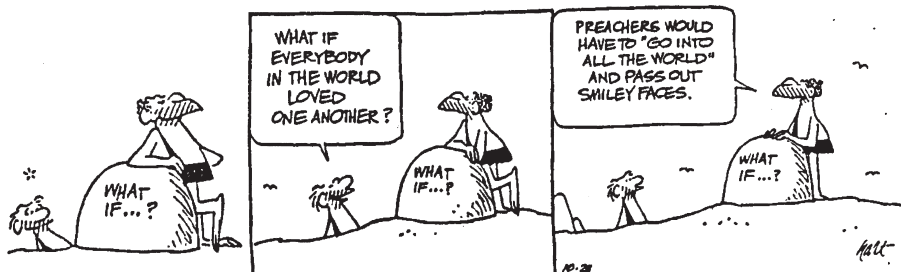
We were asked to scrape old paint off of flower boxes in the front of the building where we were housed and refresh the paint. So, Sharon - a volunteer from Albuquerque - and I busied ourselves scraping with a simple scraper until we felt the flower pot was ready to receive some new paint. I could do this.

If you would ever decide to go on a similar mission trip, you can contact Missions/Outreach and they will help you find the right person to connect with. Scholarship money for mission journeys is also available for those who need it through our church's Mission/Outreach.

Alice Carter

B.C.

by Johnny Hart



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FUTURE SPECIAL DATES:

Please Mark Your Calendars for Two Important Upcoming Fall Events
 Saturday, Nov. 7th, 6:00 PM Potluck Dinner for All Church Leaders in Fellowship Hall
 Our new District Superintendent, Dr. Tom Nagle, wishes to speak to us.
 Sunday, Nov. 15th, Noon - Annual Charge Conference for our church. Everyone invited

UPCOMING EVENTS Highlights

SPECIAL NOTE:

MISSIONS/OUTREACH WILL MEET ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 19TH THIS MONTH. PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATE. WE WILL MEET AT 6 PM IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL.

First United Methodist Church called to:

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

The next edition of *Visions* will be dated October 16.
 The deadline for articles is Wednesday, October 7.

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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.

Sermon Titles

Sunday, October 4, 2009
WORLD COMMUNION
 Sunday Pastor Ring's
 Meditation: "The Bond of Peace" Epistle
 Scripture Text: Ephesians 4:1-6

Sunday, October 11, 2009
 - LAITY UNDAY/CHILDREN'S SABBATH
 Crystal Densmore will bring the main message, recounting the story of she and Jeff's adopting infant daughter Zoe from Ethiopia

Sunday, October 18, 2009
 - Stewardship Emphasis Begins Theme:
 Stewardship Is a Matter of Trust Message #1: "Can I Trust God?" Old Testament Scripture Text: Proverbs 3:1-10

Roller Skating

Friday, October 2, 5:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall

MF

Sunday, October 4, 4 pm in the Senior High Room

Church Council

Sunday, October 4, 7 pm in the Friendship Center

Emmaus Gathering

Monday, October 5, 6 pm in the Fellowship Hall

Staff

Tuesday, October 6, 10 am in the Library

Trustees

Tuesday, October 6, 6 pm in the Senior High Room

Disciple III

Tuesday, October 6, 6:45 pm in the Library

Lay Leadership

Tuesday, October 6, 4 pm in the Asbury Room

Newspaper Articles Due

Wednesday, October 7

Disciple III

Wednesday, October 7, 3 pm in the Library

Choir

Wednesday, October 7, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

Men's Emmaus Walk

October 8-12

Explorer Museum/Ark

Thursday, October 8, check for time with the Ark in the Fellowship Hall

City-Wide Worship & Prayer

Thursday, October 8, 11:30 am in the Sanctuary

Boy Scouts

Thursday, October 8, 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall

1st Light

Thursday, October 8, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

Roller Skating

Friday, October 9, 5:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall

MF

Sunday, October 11, 4 pm in the Senior High Room

LAF Crafts

Sunday, October 11, 4 pm in the Friendship Center

Columbus Day

Offices Closed

Monday, October 12

Staff

Tuesday, October 13, 10 am in the Library

UMW Exec Board

Tuesday, October 13, 1 pm in the Library

Disciple III

Wednesday, October 14, 3 pm in the Friendship Center

Choir

Wednesday, October 14, 8 pm in the Sanctuary

City-Wide Worship & Prayer

Thursday, October 15, 11:30 am in the Sanctuary

Dining Out

Thursday, October 15, 6 pm at China Moon

Boy Scouts

Thursday, October 15, 7 pm in the Library

1st Light

Thursday, October 15, 7 pm in the Sanctuary