



FIRST

VISIONS

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THE PASTOR PONDERS



"VALUING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE CHURCH"

It's no secret in our local church (and nationwide) that money has become tight. We experienced a much leaner year, financially, in 2009 than in any of the prior years I've been among you. This has not yet become a "crisis" in this church, but it's certainly a cause for concern.

Just before the end of December I was discussing our financial difficulties with an older, long-term member of LA-FUMC. And as pastors often do I was trying to put a "positive spin" on things. I pointed out that, despite our monetary shortfall, we were seeing increasing numbers of children and youth in our church, especially at the 8:30 AM worship service. This older member immediately dismissed my comment thus: "So what? Kids don't pay tithes."

I've "pondered" this older member's acerbic comment for some time now. And I've come to the realization that this local church, like most others I've known, is "schizophrenic" in relation to young people. We regularly bemoan the low numbers of children and youth in our midst while, at one and the same time, we really don't seem to place significant value upon the children and youth we have. For example, I invite you to think on these queries: When was the last time you personally sat down with a third grader at LA-FUMC to sincerely ask his/her opinion about anything? We "confirm" youth as young as sixth graders to be "full members" of this church, but how many youth serve in leadership roles here?

More than two decades ago, while I was pastor there, St. Mark's United Methodist Church in El Paso had a small problem. The rope lanyard for its 28-foot-tall flagpole in front of the church had broken. A new rope needed to be threaded over and through the roller at the top of the pole so that flags could again be hung. We first called the El Paso Fire Department,

which in the past had assisted us with reaching the top of the pole, but they apologetically told us that new insurance regulations now forbade them helping out in such a way. So we contacted a couple of local companies that we knew had cherry-picker buckets. The prices quoted were truly outrageous; one firm wanted \$600 to attach the rope to our pole, the other a full \$1,000. We were stymied.

My middle child, son Jonathan, overheard my wife and me talking about this problem. Jonathan loved to climb; he could climb before he could walk. He was just six years old at the time, but he eagerly volunteered himself. "Dad, I can climb that pole and put that rope where you want it."

Without telling the members of the church's Board of Trustees, who would have been horrified at the prospect, I took Jonathan and the new rope to the pole out in front of the church. He grabbed the rope, shinned up the pole, and attached the rope through the roller. In less than five minutes he was back on the ground, proudly smiling at his accomplishment.

When I told St. Mark's Board of Trustees how the problem had been solved, they insisted on giving Jonathan \$100 for his labor. I put it into his college fund. At age six my son had earned his first actual income, employed for the Church of Jesus Christ. And at a pretty good hourly rate: \$100 for five minutes' work!

In Luke's gospel, Jesus is recorded as saying, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for of such is the Kingdom of God." Let us take care neither to overlook nor undervalue the skills and talents of our children and youth, thereby depriving ourselves of the benefit of their ideas - and their fresh outlook on life itself.

Dave King

PENNIES FOR PEACE

What is Pennies for Peace?

Why should we participate?

Pennies for Peace is a mission opportunity for children. It was designed by Greg Mortensen, author of *Three Cups of Tea*, a New York Times best-seller since January, 2007. Mr. Mortensen builds schools, primarily for girls, in remote places in Pakistan and Afghanistan. There are now 131 schools, serving 58,000 students, 44,000 of which are females. Local people are fully involved in every project, including government, political and religious groups.

"If boys are literate, they leave the village. If girls are literate, they stay to make the change in villages." Haji Ghulam Parvi, Pakistani operations manager in Baltistan, Pakistan.



The Pennies for Peace program teaches children:

1. Compassion - there are children in other parts of the world who have no school, no classroom, no teacher, no paper and no pencils.
2. Gratitude - our schools, classrooms, teachers, paper and pencils should not be taken for granted.
3. Hunger for edu-

cation - where there is no education, there is a hole in life; providing education to children promotes peace and a better life.



4. Philanthropy - gifts of pennies can help children on the other side of the world, and when enough pennies are contributed, they can build a school.
5. Tolerance - Others may speak different languages and wear Different clothes, but we are all the same inside.
6. Determination - Greg Mortensen shows us that one person can make a difference and initial failure can make your goals clearer.
7. Peace - What could it be like to live in a world of peace?
8. Pride - Be proud of compassion within themselves, their schools and community for raising money to help other children.
9. Knowledge - Learn about children in other parts of the world.
10. Collaboration - By working together we can accomplish amazing things.



SPECIAL FEBRUARY DAYS

Birthdays:

Doris Blackstock 02/01
Bob Collom 02/05
Aaron Goldman 02/08
Stacey Eaton 02/12
Francis Naffziger 02/15
Sarah Kelly 02/18
Lance Eaton 02/20

Anniversaries:

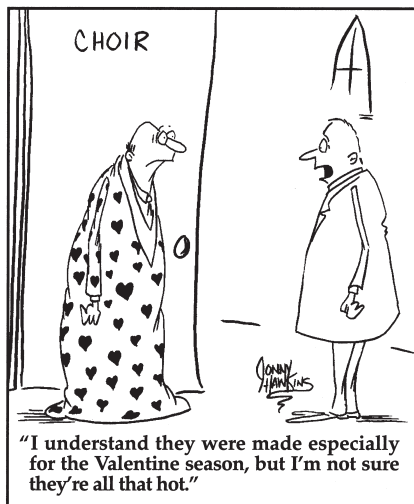
February 17
Cathy & Darin Westley



THE FAMILY CIRCUS



"Home is where the heart is. Especially in February."
from *The Joyful Noiseletter*
Reprinted with permission of Bill Keane



"I understand they were made especially for the Valentine season, but I'm not sure they're all that hot."

from *The Joyful Noiseletter*
©Jonny Hawkins
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THE MISSION STUDY FROM UMW

this year is entitled "The Beauty and Courage of Sudan: Why a Dream of Peace is Possible". Opal Lee and Dennis Gill will lead us in an extended portrait of Sudan. We will get an overview of the history, the main ethnicities, religions and languages, possible causes for the wars, and a look at how the Sudanese women are contributing to the peace process. The study starts Jan 19 from 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM, with follow on sessions Jan 25 and Feb 1, again from 11:00 AM - 1:00pm. A soup luncheon will be served.

ARK SUNDAY SHOWCASES

Chapel songs that the children sing each Friday. Even the babies come if they are awake! The children love to dance and sing to the familiar songs and Pastor Dave shares a kid friendly Bible lesson as well. We also celebrate our birthdays in Christ at Chapel. At Ark Sunday, the director Lorri White also presents a power point that shows what activities the Ark has done throughout the year. The pictures of the children are always cute and quite entertaining! Ark Sunday will be during both servic-

PRE-CONFIRMATION CLASSES

--Beginning on Sunday morning, Feb. 28, 2010 Pastor Ring plans to offer a series of four sessions of Pre-Confirmation Classes for those in grades six through ten who are interested in exploring the topic of church membership. These will be held during the regular Sunday School hour, 9:45 to 10:35 AM, and will meet in the pastor's office. If interested, please let him know on/before Feb. 21st.

UPCOMING EVENTS Highlights

Sermon Titles

Sunday, January 24, 2010 -
ARK Sunday,
Pastor Ring's Sermon:
"I John 3"

Sunday, January 31, 2010 -
Children and Youth Sunday
Pastor Ring's Sermon:
"I John 4"

Sunday, February 7, 2010 -
"Souper Bowl" Sunday Pastor
Ring's Sermon: "I John 5"

Roller Skating

Friday, January 22, 5:30 pm in
the Fellowship Hall

MF

Sunday, January 24, 4 pm in the
Senior High Room

UMW Mission Study

Monday, January 25, 11 am, in
the Friendship Center

Disciple III

Monday, January 25,
6:45 pm in the Friendship
Center

Finance

Monday, January 25, 7 pm in
the Library

Staff

Tuesday, January 26, 10 am in
the Library

Ark Staff

Tuesday, January 26, 5:30 pm,
in the Mid-High Room

Church Council

Tuesday, January 26, 7 pm, in
the Friendship Center

Newspaper Articles Due

Wednesday, January 27

Disciple III

Wednesday, January 27, 3 pm
in the Library

Adult Bible Study

Wednesday, January 27, 6 pm
in the Friendship Center

Choir

Wednesday, January 27, 7 pm
in the Sanctuary

City-Wide Worship & Prayer

Thursday, January 28, 11:30 am
in the Sanctuary

Boy Scouts

Thursday, January 28, 7 pm in
the Fellowship Hall

1st Light

Thursday, January 28, 7 pm in
the Sanctuary

Roller Skating

Friday, January 29, 5:30 pm in
the Fellowship Hall

MF

Sunday, January 31, 4 pm in the
Senior High Room

UMW Mission Study

Monday, February 1, 11 am, in
the Friendship Center

Emmaus Gathering

Monday, February 1, 6 pm, in
the Fellowship Hall

Trustees

Tuesday, February 2, 6 pm in
the Library

Disciple III

Tuesday, February 2,
6:45 pm in the Friendship
Center

Disciple III

Wednesday, February 3, 3 pm
in the Friendship Center

Adult Bible Class

Wednesday, February 3, 6 pm,
in the Friendship Center

Choir

Wednesday, February 3, 7 pm
in the Sanctuary

City-Wide Worship & Prayer

Thursday, February 4, 11:30 am
in the Sanctuary

Boy Scouts

Thursday, February 4, 7 pm in
the Fellowship Hall

1st Light

Thursday, February 4, 7 pm in
the Sanctuary

First United Methodist Church
called to:

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

The next edition of *Visions* will be dated February 5.
The deadline for articles is Wednesday, January 27.

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Ark Child Development Center
Lorri White, Director
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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.