



# FIRST VISIONS

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## THE PASTOR PONDERERS

### "IT'S CHRISTIAN FAITH, NOT CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY"

Los Alamos being the notably intellectual environment that it is, there are a substantial number here who fall victim to the opposite error of that which I commonly found in the several Texas churches which I served. In those churches many there were who "gave their hearts" to Jesus, but largely failed to engage their minds for him. By contrast, here in Los Alamos there is an overarching tendency to intellectualize everything - including one's relationship to Christ. If it can't be apprehended rationally, with the human mind, it isn't real.

The danger in a purely intellectual approach to Christianity is that such reduces Jesus to simply another "great philosopher" among the significant proponents of thought throughout world history. Jesus becomes like unto Plato or Aristotle, whose wonderful ideas stimulated human mental development. Jesus is merely kin to Gautama and Lao Tzu, who taught and lived exemplary principles promoting good human relations. Jesus is a "good man" among many such, like Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr.

The greatest celebration in all of Christianity is upon us this weekend as we commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from death itself in what is commonly called "Easter." Easter, at its core, is unashamedly irrational. Logic tested by millennia of shared human experience clearly shows that no one has ever risen from death. Philosophically it's an impossibility. But Christian faith says it's reality - the greatest reality of all time.

Most of the time I can honestly say that I'm well-pleased to be a part of the unique community of Los Alamos, New Mexico. Los Alamos' overall intellectual penchant usually resonates with who I am. But when such extends to devaluing Christian faith down to mere Christian philosophy, I have to part ways with our local worship of human rationality. I believe that

Jesus rose from the dead. If I didn't believe that with both my heart and head, I wouldn't even dare to try to serve as a pastor on Jesus' behalf.

I deliberately don't often quote long passages of scripture in these "ponderings," but today I'm going to allow the carefully crafted thoughts of Paul, one of the great intellects of early Christian thought, to complete this article. The following is I Corinthians 15, verses 12 through 19:

<sup>12</sup>But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup>More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. <sup>19</sup>If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

Have a happy and blessed Easter, everyone!



## FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION

### FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF LOS ALAMOS

17 MARCH 2010

The First United Methodist Church Finance Committee wishes to report to you, the Congregation, the financial and programmatic status of the Church, and solicit your comments on that status. Your Finance Committee (FC) includes: Mark Hodgson, Chairperson; Louise Mendius, Vice-chairperson; Margaret Gibson, Church Treasurer; Don Siebe, Church Financial Secretary; Pastor Ring; Don Enemark, Chairperson of the

Church's software consultant, plays a significant role in the work of the FC.

The Finance Committee's major responsibility is to manage the fiscal support of the Church and its programs. We do this by building a yearly budget and proposing it to the Church Council. For the current year, 2010, the Church Council has authorized a budget of \$499,967 composed of the broad categories of Staff Support (51%), Facilities (30%), Programs (11%), and Conference Shared Ministries (8%). Depending primarily on your advice and recommendations to build this budget the FC works



Church Council; Michael Hundley, also serving as the FC's representative to the Ark Board; Shelley Morris, Ark Board Chairperson and that board's representative to the FC; Martha Zumbro, representative of the Staff/Parrish Relations Committee (SPRC) to the FC; Susan Ramsey, Church Treasurer in training; Ben Gibson; Dennis Gill; and David Janecky. Don Siebe as Financial Secretary is responsible for receiving and documenting your giving to the Church; while Margaret Gibson, the Church Treasurer, pays and accounts for all bills incurred by the Church. Since financial accounting is computer intensive, Sue Kinkead, the

close with the Stewardship Committee (chaired by Dennis Gill) to solicit the necessary funding, and, through the Church Treasurer, to meet and keep track of the Church's obligations.

As you are well aware, the true strength of our Church is you, and you remain a wonderful and wonderfully generous congregation. During the past year many churches have experienced significant drops in their income due to the economy. Your giving for 2009 was essentially flat-equal to your giving for 2008. The rub, of course, is that expenses were not flat. Our expenses exceeded our income by

Continued on Page 4

4/4	Easter No MYF
4/11	Paint Youth Room
4/17	McCurdy Work Day
4/25	Teen depression
5/2	Eileen Douglas, 2nd chaperone MYF Hiking with Ronda Jones, Ann L. 2nd chaperone
5/9	Mother's Day No MYF
5/16	'Lost Boys' mission movie @ the Rings
5/22	Open
5/30	Memorial Day No MYF

**FINANCE** Continued from Page 1

about \$8,000. However, out of a budget of approximately \$500,000, the difference of \$8,000 is a minor issue and was easily covered by a surplus from a previous year. By the way, these numbers do not include special offerings, in which you were especially generous. In 2009 you gave over \$80,000 to special offerings-which proves an important point: if the program strikes your heart, you are willing and able to step up and give toward that program.

In the midst of a worrisome economy, we in this church accomplished a very healthy program of ministries. We support missionaries in Peru, in Palestine, and our own missionaries, Dennis and Susan, in Nicaragua. We support many local outreach efforts in Los Alamos, the Espanola valley, the Four Corners area, and elsewhere. We sent out several Volunteers in Mission (VIM) teams in 2009 as well. We are known in the Conference as a mission-minded church. This year we sustained a tremendous outpouring of Christ's love to the people of Medenales through the Christmas Box program.

We continue to have a strong education program, including both Sunday school classes and other Bible Study groups throughout the week. We enjoyed an outstanding Vacation Bible School last summer under the gifted leadership of Camille Westcott who skillfully incorporated significant contributions from many of you. Our music and worship programs thrive. The First Light Praise Team, led by Nels Hoffman, sets the tone for an inspiring First Service. In the Second Service, when Sarah Kelly became ill and could no longer lead the Chancel Choir, three volunteers of enormous talent joyfully stepped forward to lead-first Herald Kruse, then Jim Beinke, and now Valerie Collins. Our youth program has grown and prospered this year, receiving a boost from summer intern Travis Knapp last summer, which, in turn, reenergized a nurturing effort from many of you volunteers. Rising from a program struggling to survive as recently as two-three years ago, the program now includes a nice core of youth attending and participating. The Care and Crisis Committee is a small program (financially) that has a huge impact on the church. Carol Mead with a very small budget of \$500 helps the entire congregation to feel loved and cared for, whether they are on the giving or the receiving end. As another example of the good will that underscores the life of our church, we are one of the few churches that contributes more than our designated share to the Shared Ministries of our Conference.

During the past year we have been truly blessed by a strong

Trustees Committee chaired by John Courtright. For example, through them we have managed to completely remodel the rest rooms of the parsonage, have repaid this year's portion of the bond that financed the new Sanctuary roof, and have laid the groundwork for a significant facelift to the Fellowship Hall. Under the auspices of the church but not directly reflected in our budget, Laurie White, the Ark Director, has persevered through trying times brought on by the exodus of many junior staffers from the Laboratory and a general downturn in economic activity peculiar to young families in Los Alamos. Under the strong leadership of Crystal Densmore, the Ark Board has adjusted the program to current and anticipated realities. Crystal has handed that leadership function over to the team of Shelley Morris, chairperson, and John Scott, Vice-chairperson.

So what does this mean for 2010? The budget of approximately \$500,000 is in line with the current giving levels and the expected expense levels, with two major caveats. First of all, the Outreach and Trustees Committee budgets were each reduced, by a total between them of \$35,000. This budget reduction was more than offset by an additional authorization of \$48,000 for the two committees from previous years' surplus funds. This is all well and good for 2010, but in 2011 there are no surplus funds to be used, so, if we wish to continue to support missions and trustees at the current level, additional funds must be generated.

The second issue is a wonderful opportunity for this church. A confluence of needs of this church and the availability of a very talented person to fill those needs can only be described as a "God thing". As previously mentioned, the service of Travis Knapp as last summer's intern provided a tremendous boost to our youth program. At the same time, we have need of a First Service Worship Leader and Chancel Choir Director. The Staff Parish Relations Committee has put together a full time position description for our church that includes the tasks mentioned above-Youth Director, First Service Worship Leader, and Music Director/Chancel Choir Director-and offered it to Travis Knapp. He and Elisa have accepted our offer and plan to begin work about June 1. What a great opportunity for our church to enhance these important programs. Although the 2010 Budget includes the offered position for seven months, we will need to increase the 2011 Budget to accommodate a full twelve months of Travis' effort.

Our church has many wonderful programs and activities. Most of these have specific ideas for enhancement and improvement in the coming years. And there will be

many new ideas for new programs that will warrant our urgent consideration. Our church has a positive future as long as we continue to serve the Lord faithfully.

So the Finance Committee respectfully asks you to consider the following question. What if every giver to this church increased his or her giving by 10%? Now that is not very much-if you are currently giving \$100 per week, it is only \$10. That certainly would not buy you two fancy drinks at Starbucks! But that same \$10 would have a huge impact on the programs of this church simply because you are "giving on the margin". By this I mean that the fixed costs are paid for in the current budget, i.e., the utilities are paid for, the staff is paid for, and the insurance is paid for. The modest increase in your giving would go to program enhancements, like those promised by the addition of Travis Knapp in our youth, worship, and music programs; like new and more outreach programs; like needed updating of our physical plant; and many other ideas we could explore. Your increase in giving of 10% would amount to a highly leveraged investment.

Certainly, God has blessed each of us with many gifts and talents, and each of us is an essential member of the Body of Christ here in Los Alamos. In closing, please prayerfully consider what you wish our Church to be and what giving from you that may require.

## GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

April 2

7 pm in the Sanctuary



## SUN RISE EASTER SERVICE

April 4

6:30 am

at Asbury Pond



# McMurry Chanters

Coming to our church

Sunday evening, April 11th "Potluck Fellowship

Dinner" at 5:30 PM

"Concert" at 7 PM



## SPECIAL APRIL DAYS

<b>Birthdays:</b>	Kathy Siebe	04/23	
Birthdays:	David Janecky	04/25	
Mark Hodgson	04/01	Mary Courtright	04/25
Dave Ring	04/01	Abby Wescott	04/25
Linda Leschnitzer	04/02	Camille Wescott	04/25
Becky Farnum	04/03	Gregg Janecky	04/27
Jan Taylor	04/03	Emily Collom	04/29
Daniel Swart	04/08		
Lee Weinland	04/08	<b>Anniversaries:</b>	
Sean Collins	04/14	April 8	
Randy Parks	04/17	Armond & Jeanie Standley	
David Siebe	04/17	April 8	
Don Casperson	04/19	Don & Harriet Zickert	
David Hodgson	04/19	April 20	
Michelle Aslin	04/22	Randy & Anna Parks	

## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2010 OUT OF THIS WORLD!

Plan to be here July 26-30! This is your chance to spread God's word in an exciting, fun way! At Galactic Blast VBS, cadets will voyage into outer space praising God. Through daily Bible missions, kids will see space like never before, gain a new perspective on our planet Earth, and learn easy "green" earth tips they can practice at home. Join us on this cosmic combination of faith and fun as cadets develop a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ! Register to volunteer at [www.cokesburyvbs.com/galactic-blast/LAFUMC](http://www.cokesburyvbs.com/galactic-blast/LAFUMC), or call Camille Wescott at 662-0905.

Join us July 26-30 9-12 a.m.



First United Methodist Church  
called to:

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

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS Highlights

### Sermon Titles

Friday, April 2, 2010 - 7 PM  
Good Friday "Tenebrae"  
Worship  
Sunday, April 4, 2010 - Easter  
6:30 AM - Community Sunrise  
Worship at Ashley Pond;  
8:30 and 11 AM -  
Communion/Worship at LA-  
FUMC Pastor Ring's Sermon  
Message: TBS

### Good Friday Tenebrae Service

Friday, April 2, 7 pm in the  
Sanctuary

### No Roller Skating

Friday, April 2

### No MF

Sunday, April 4

### Emmaus Gathering

Monday, April 5, 6 pm in the  
Fellowship Hall

### Staff

Tuesday, April 6, 10 am in the  
Library

### UW Exec Board

Tuesday, April 6, 6 pm in the  
Library

### Disciple III

Tuesday, April 6, 6:45 pm in  
the Friendship Center

### Newspaper Articles Due

Wednesday, April 7

### Disciple III

Wednesday, April 7, 1:30 pm in  
the Friendship Center

### Adult Bible Study

Wednesday, April 7, 6 pm in  
the Friendship Center

### Choir

Wednesday, April 7, 7 pm in  
the Sanctuary

### City-Wide Worship & Prayer

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

### Boy Scouts

Thursday, April 8, 7 pm in the  
Fellowship Hall

### 1st Light

Thursday, April 8, 7 pm in the  
Sanctuary

### Roller Skating

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

### LAF Crafts

Sunday, April 11, 6 pm in the  
Friendship Center

### MF

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

### McMurray Chanters

#### Potluck & Concert

Sunday, April 11, 6 pm in the  
Fellowship Hall/Sanctuary

### Trustees

Monday, April 12, 6:30 pm in  
the Asbury Room

### Disciple III

Monday, April 12, 6:45 pm in  
the Friendship Center

### Staff

Tuesday, April 13, 10 am in the  
Library

### Christian Education

Tuesday, April 13, 6 pm in the  
Friendship Center

### SPRC

Tuesday, April 13, 7 pm in the  
Asbury Room

### Disciple III

Wednesday, April 14, 1:30 pm  
in the Friendship Center

### Adult Bible Study

Wednesday, April 14, 6 pm in  
the Friendship Center

### Choir

Wednesday, April 14, 7 pm in  
the Sanctuary

### City-Wide Worship & Prayer

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

### Ark Board

#### Policy Meeting

Thursday, April 15, 5:30 pm in  
the Friendship Center

### Boy Scouts

Thursday, April 15, 7 pm in  
the Fellowship Hall

### 1st Light

Thursday, April 15, 7 pm in  
the Sanctuary

### Create & Discover

Thursday, April 15, 7:15 pm

### Roller Skating

Friday, April 16, 5:30 pm in the  
Fellowship Hall

### MF

Saturday, April 17, McCurdy  
Work Day

### Missions/Outreach

#### Note Date Change

Monday, April 19, 6 pm in the  
Library

### Ark Board

Tuesday, April 20, 6 pm in the  
Friendship Center

### Finance

Tuesday, April 20, 7:30 pm in  
the Library

### Martha Circle

Tuesday, April 27, 1:15 pm

### Ark Staff

Tuesday, April 27, 5:30 pm in  
the Friendship Center

### Church Council

Tuesday, April 27, 7 pm in the  
Friendship Center

B.C.



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