



FIRST

VISIONS

an edition of the United Methodist Reporter

Two Sections, Section A | 070665 | Vol. 158 | No. 36 | January 6, 2012

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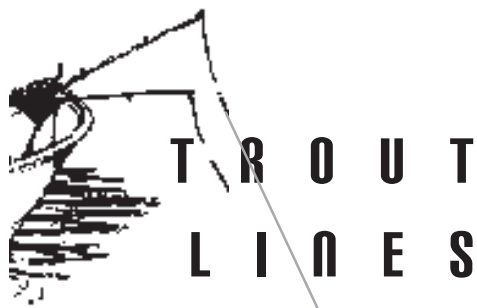
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SPECIAL JANUARY DAYS

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8^A



The gifts are all unwrapped, and the boxes put away. Some of the toys are already 'old.' We are packing to take our daughter and her family to the airport and then on to Colorado for a week of vacation. We hope to spend it quietly by the fire with a couple of good books and maybe a day of good skiing. I'm looking forward to the quiet; it will feel good for a change. Christmas is over, and there are only 6 days of 2011 left.

This is usually the time to reflect upon the old year and make resolutions for the new one. The old year is past, and I don't want to reflect on it. There was too much in it I want to forget. The one great thing about 2011 for me is that it brought Elaine and me to Los Alamos. I'm not much on resolutions either. I just don't stick to them.

What I will do, however, is try to project some directions I'd like to see us go in 2012. First, we need to continue improving our worship experiences. Worship is the heart of the Church's life. The goal is for our worship experiences to be weekly encounters with God. Worship should engage the mind, the heart and the soul. It matters not whether worship is contemporary or traditional. What matters is that there is quality, authenticity, and spirit. There are some physical and involvement issues that need to be addressed this year that will enhance worship. My goal is for us to be averaging close to 200 in worship in the last quarter of the year.

Next, we have to pay close attention to our education and small group processes. Our job as a church is to grow disciples of Jesus Christ. A Christian who is not growing spiritually is dying spiritually. One hour of worship a week or less does not grow a Christian. There is just not enough nourishment in one meal a week to sustain growth. A Christian needs

daily exercise and diet of the faith. Otherwise he or she is on a starvation diet. Prayer, Scripture, service, fellowship and group study and accountability is the recipe for growth. We have to provide opportunities for this.

Another direction for the new year is to continue growing in mission and service opportunities. We must continue to put legs on our faith. As Matthew 25 reminds us, serving others is serving our Lord. We do this inside the Church by volunteering to serve in even the most mundane tasks of work in the Church. We do this outside the Church in two ways. First, in your personal life by seeing the need of others close to you and finding a way to meet that need. Second, in our corporate life we find ways to serve others through mission work close to home and further a field. We will continue to find ways for this congregation to exercise its faith.

Finally, we need to move to strengthen our leadership. We do that by giving them the resources and the prayer they need to lead. We have done a good job in the United Methodist Church of using the secular leadership skills of people to serve the Church. We have not done a good job of preparing spiritual leadership. It is my goal this year to begin a spiritual leadership training program. This is to prepare leaders Biblically, theologically, spiritually, and emotionally to lead a spiritual movement. Do not be surprised if you are asked to join in this project.

I am looking forward to this coming year. I feel that the Lord is going to do great things with us in the future.

Your Friend and Servant in Christ,

Steve

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

The children (ages 2 - 10) during Sunday School this semester have learned ways to share God's love through giving. Every Sunday they take up an offering during their singing time. Alice Carter brought in a special collection container - a tube that holds \$70.00 in quarters! The children bring up their offering and then they sing the Doxology. This semester they have collected funds to purchase a flock of chicks, a flock of geese, and a honeybee hive through Heifer, International. The children voted on what gift(s) they could donate to help families across the globe. The children wanted to help several families, so they chose to give 3 gifts. The children love to bring up their quarters and watch the tube fill up. We will chose a new charity and begin our special offering again in January.

Our church is so blessed to have these children, who are eager to learn more about Jesus. And may God Bless their parents, and all the adults who so willingly give of themselves to bring these children closer to Jesus.

Karen Knapp

CHRISTMAS REFLECTION*

Reason and hope find little to say in the jingle jangle news of the day.
Patience with unanswered prayer runs out.
Maybe even God prefers a little peace and quiet.
But before it's too dark, too sad, or too late,
teach us to pray.

A haze of holiday habit conceals the bottom line.
Holy absence makes a heart grow hard,
then harder, without a purpose or design.
Teach us to pray, lest we who know the story best
become accustomed to this restless season.
Teach us to pray for a sign.

Scatter proud powers that refuse to imagine.
Shatter the loud towers of Hate, the high walls of Forget.
Lift the homeless whisper, the sigh that says, "Alone?"
Fill the hungry emptiness that echoes
in the marrow of our bones.

When times are tough, a rumor of angels is never enough.
We need holy terror to startle expectation,
and altar us with outrageous grace.
Wreck our rational designs with celestial encounters.
Let us hear the rustle of wings as we take out the trash.

Teach us to pray.
Gift us with a presence so potent
that life is conceived in mere hearing.
If we fail at first to believe, instruct us in sign.
But let us be the bearers of such mystery
that even our gestures give us away.
Teach us to pray...

God is with us in ways we can't fathom or imagine.

*Disciplines 2011, The Upper Room

SPECIAL JANUARY DAYS

Birthdays:	Tara Waldrop	01/17
Carla Breiner	01/01	Jensina Sheppard 01/19
Virginia Sowder	01/01	William Bradley 01/26
Betty Terrell	01/01	Jim Little 01/27
Dennis Gill	01/05	Eileen Douglass 01/28
Robyn Collom	01/06	Erin Brodnax 01/30
Caroline Rousculp	01/08	
Craig Siebe	01/08	Anniversaries:
Martha Zumbro	01/08	January 1
Lianna Dare	01/12	George & Beverly Faulkner
Bodil Brandow	01/13	January 3
Zoe Densmore	01/16	Dewey & Sharon Moede
Kyle Cash	01/17	January 4
Clare Leschnitzer	01/17	Howard & Kim Granzow



UPCOMING EVENTS Highlights

Sermon Titles

January 8,
January 15,
January 22,

Book Club

Friday, January 6, 9 am in the Library

Roller Skating

Friday, January 6, 5:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall

Resurrection Band

Sunday, January 8, 2:30 pm, in the Sanctuary

MF

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

Handbells

Sunday, January 8, 5:15 pm, in the Friendship Center

LA Prayer Network

Monday, January 9, 5:30 pm in the Prayer Chapel

Trustees

Monday, January 9, 6 pm in the Library

Newspaper Articles Due

Tuesday, January 10

Church Staff

Tuesday, January 10, 10 am, Lib

Christian Education

Tuesday, January 10, at 6 pm in the Library

SPRC

Tuesday, January 10, 7 pm in the Asbury Room

Adult Bible Study

Wednesday, January 11, 6 pm in the Friendship Center

Choir

Wednesday, January 11, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

City-Wide Worship & Prayer

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

Missions/Outreach

Thursday, January 12, 5:30 pm in the Library

Boy Scouts

Thursday, January 12, 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall

1st Light

Thursday, January 12, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

Create & Discover

Thursday, January 12, 7:15 pm, TBS

Roller Skating

Friday, January 13, 5:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall

Parent's Night Out

Friday, January 13, 5:30-9:30 pm in the Nursery

Resurrection Band

Sunday, January 15, 2:30 pm, in the Sanctuary

MF

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

Handbells

Sunday, January 15, 5:15 pm, in the Friendship Center

Martin Luther King Day

Monday, January 16, Offices Closed

Ark Board

Tuesday, January 17, 6 pm in the Friendship Center

Finance

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

Adult Bible Study

Wednesday, January 18, 6 pm in the Friendship Center

Choir

Wednesday, January 18, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

City-Wide Worship & Prayer

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

Alpha Study

Thursday, January 19, 5:30 pm in the Senior Center

Boy Scouts

Thursday, January 19, 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall

1st Light

Thursday, January 19, 7 pm in the Sanctuary

UMW Missions Study

Sundays, starting January 22 at 3:30 pm in the Friendship Center

Church Council

Tuesday, January 24, 7 pm in the Friendship Center

LA Cares Collection

Sunday, February 5

EPIPHANY

Last Sunday, January 1 was Epiphany Sunday in the Methodist Church. In Hispanic and Latin culture it is called Three Kings Day. It is a remembrance of the coming of the wise men, bringing gifts to the Christ child.



Epiphany is the climax of the Advent and Christmas seasons, and the twelve days of Christmas, which are counted from the evening of December 25 to the morning of January 6, the traditional date of Epiphany. The evening of January 5 is the "Twelfth Night" often a night of celebration in many cultures. A special "Kings' Cake" is made, with a tiny baby Jesus inside. Whoever gets the baby will have luck the whole year.

Christmas is celebrated as a

period of time, a season of the church year, rather than just a day. The Christmas season begins with the first day of Advent, four Sundays before Christmas. Advent is a season of expectation, preparing to celebrate the coming of Jesus. Christmas begins with Christmas Day, December 25, and lasts twelve days until Epiphany, January 6. The Sundays between December 25 and January 6 are called Christmastide. The Sundays after Epiphany are called Ordinary Time.

The colors of Epiphany are white and gold, the colors of celebration, newness and hope. After the day of Epiphany some churches change colors to green until Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday before Lent.

Symbols of Epiphany are three crowns or a single crown, or a more modern, globe or symbol of the world. In some cultures the lintels or doorways may be marked with symbols which signify a traditional prayer and blessing. The symbols are +C+B+H+, which are the ini-

tials of the three kings: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, or the Latin phrase *Christus mansionem benedicat* "May Christ bless the house". Numbers are added before and after the letters to designate the year, so 2010 would be represented 20+C+B+M+10.

The wise men or three kings were the first Gentiles to acknowledge Jesus as King. Their act of worshipping Jesus was one of the first indications that Jesus came for all people, all races, all nations and that the work of God would not be limited to a few.

Ann LePage



First United Methodist Church called to:

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

The next edition of Visions will be dated January 20.
The deadline for articles is Tuesday, January 10.

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United Skates Underway!
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.