

Pastoral Ponderings

“Good Questions”

One of my theology professors in seminary was a very practical man. His name was Harvey Potthoff, and he had answered his call to ordained ministry, attended college and seminary, and served churches as he prepared to earn his Ph. D. in Theology. By the time I knew him in seminary he was just reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70.

One Sunday Dr. Potthoff had been invited to preach at a small church in a small Colorado town. He arrived early, while most people were still in their Sunday School classes. As he approached the front steps of the church, he noticed a young boy sitting there. The boy eyed Dr. Potthoff rather suspiciously. You see, it was a small membership church in a small town. The boy probably knew most of the people in town, and he knew everyone in that church, and he saw a stranger standing in front of him.

He asked in hesitant sort of way, “Who are you, and why are you here?”

Dr. Potthoff said that those were the best questions that he had ever been asked at a church.

I think that it would be great if those questions were asked of us each time we came to worship. “Who are you?” “Why are you here?” How would you answer those questions?

There’s something about gathering in God’s House, and joining our sisters and brothers in Christ in worship, that reminds us who we are. We are God’s children, whom God loves enough to
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come into our hearts and lives through Jesus Christ (see John 1:1-14; John 3:16). We are the followers of Jesus Christ, whom he sent into the world to share his great light (see Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 28:18-20).

I hope that during the Sundays of Advent that you will make a point to come to worship, and join together in rejoicing and preparing to celebrate the birth of the One who knows who we are, and why we are here.

Have a holy Advent,



A Sunday Encounter

Come to the next “installment” of “*A Sunday Encounter*”, the monthly series that is filled with Praise Music and scripture study and reflection. This is a fast paced study that will be presented in many formats. If you like to sing the newest Christian music of the day, this is a study for you. The group meets once a month at 5 p.m. The next date is Sunday, December 14th. Everyone is invited to attend (in the Fellowship Hall) at your own risk.

Better yet, stay after 2nd service for the potluck luncheon and Christmas caroling at the homes of shut-ins, and then join us for “*A Sunday Encounter!*”

First United Methodist Church of Deming, New Mexico

Telephone: (575) 546-2791; Fax: (575) 546-2792

eMail: main@fumcdeming.com (General)

keath@fumcdeming.com (Pastor)

beth@fumcdeming.com (Pastor’s Assistant)

claire@fumcdeming.com (Secretary)

joe@fumcdeming.com (Music Director)

Visit us at www.fumcdeming.com

A Cantata Is A Comin'

The Christmas Cantata is a celebration that our music ministry will offer to the community on Sunday, December 7th, at 4:00 p.m., in the Sanctuary. This is a beautiful work that will surely put everyone in the mood for the season when we celebrate our greatest gift. The greatest gift is the gift of God's Son to the world.

It is with great joy that the Chancel Choir, Praise Team, Handbell Choir, and First Call continue a long standing tradition. We share the music of God with the people of God. The entire concert is approximately 50 minutes. Please invite your family, friends and neighbors to join you!

Did You Know?

Did you know the United Methodist Church is a *connectional* church? Because of our connection with other United Methodist Churches worldwide, our gifts become multiplied loaves and fishes, providing us a greater benefit than if we were working alone. That is what Shared Ministries is all about!

Shared ministries are funded through regular giving. To help meet our obligation, the Missions Committee will be presenting groupings of personally owned **Nativity Sets** during Advent. Baskets will be placed by each display, with the money collected being used for Shared Ministries. Our Shared Ministries will be combined with those from other United Methodist congregations to support *life-changing* ministries, such as Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso, TX. The displays will begin next Sunday. Your generous support will bless many, many people!

Let Us Give Thanks!

Even in the midst of trial and tribulation, we can always find something for which to be thankful. Share your thankful heart on Wednesday, November 26th, at our annual Thanksgiving Eve service, 6:00 p.m., in the Chapel.

TAKE NOTE December rehearsal schedules:

Week of December 1st:

Regular Rehearsal Schedule (Last week of rehearsals for SOUL
Kids and First Call)

**Extra Rehearsals for Christmas for Those Participating in the
Cantata:

Wednesday, December 3rd – 6:00-8:00

Week of December 8th:

December 8th: Party at the MacDonald House, 6-8 pm.

December 9th: Praise Band regular Tuesday Rehearsal

December 13th: Sing-a-long at Rockhound State Park

December 14th: Christmas Caroling, beginning with a potluck
luncheon in the Fellowship following 2nd service

Christmas Caroling

Join us on the afternoon of Sunday, December 14th, as we go Christmas caroling at the homes of our shut-in members. We'll begin with a potluck luncheon immediately following 2nd service. We'll then caravan/carpool to the homes of shut-in members to sing carols. Afterwards we'll return to the church for hot chocolate. Carolers are invited to stick around for December's "A Sunday Encounter" which will begin at 5 pm.

Angel Tree

Each year we participate in the Angel Tree program which allows parents in prison the ability to provide a Christmas gift for their children. The parents are selected by the prison chaplains. The child's caregiver provides the gift information. We then purchase the requested gift (listed on an angel tag) and return the wrapped gift, with the angel tag attached, to the tree. The tree is in the Fellowship Hall. Gifts should be returned by Friday, Dec. 19th, at noon. Thank you!





TAKE NOTE

Advent is here. This is my favorite time of year. We eagerly await the coming of Christmas. We prepare our hearts by remembering that we truly were a people of darkness. The good news of our faith is that we know that out of the wreckage of our past, we get to Christmas. Yes, Christmas. This is the time of year when we adore the miracle that came into our world. We worship the miracle of a child. The promise that God exclaims to us, in the form of a baby; that we are worth it!

The usual carols are being sung all around the world. Think about the text of many of your favorite Christmas songs. “Silent Night,” “Joy to the World.” “O Come, All Ye Faithful” are some of the many songs we hear and sing. Look at the words. They share our faith. This is our ministry. This is our mission. May these words ring true in our daily lives. My prayer for this season is that we may all remember the reason for the season. We celebrate the birth of Christ and joyfully and graciously come. Let us all together adore the holy one.

*Merry Christmas to All
Joe*

NOTE: The rehearsal schedule for all musical groups is on page four.

Christmas Eve Service

Join us on Wednesday, December 24, for our Candlelight Christmas Eve service, with Communion, at 6:00 pm. Plus there will be a special message just for the children.

This is a special service meant to be shared with family, friends, and neighbors. Come and enjoy the wonder of Christ!



Visit us at www.fumcdeming.com

UMW News

Three UMW members from Deming attended the 36th UMW Annual Meeting in El Paso at Western Hills FUMC. Our local unit won two awards, one for Mission Studies and one for a Bronze Mission Today Unit!

Our December Meeting (December 13th) will be our Annual Pledge Service led by Genie Wall. We will meet in the Chapel at 2pm, refreshments follow the meeting in Fellowship Hall.

Our Christmas Bazaar was a huge success. We had many beautiful items at great prices. Thanks to all who helped and contributed. We made \$1000 more than last year. All proceeds from the bazaar go to missions. Your participation will bless many lives!

Bithell Farms frozen fruit will be available again in January with Feb./Mar. delivery. Watch for order blanks in the back of the Sanctuary.

Methodist Men's News

As always, the members of this congregation share so generously with those in need. This year, thanks to your support and your donations, we were able to provide eighteen families with food boxes for Thanksgiving! We deeply appreciate your caring concern for those who might otherwise be overlooked or ignored. Thank you always for your support.

December Bread Basket

Our December Bread Basket offering will be split between the Methodist Mission Home in San Antonio, TX (they provide adoption alternatives for women, as well as teaching life skills to teens with disabilities) and the Methodist Children's Home in Waco, TX (they provide loving foster family group homes for troubled teenagers). Both of these ministries are part of our Methodist connection. Please help support them on Dec. 21st.

Remember to Greet Our Visitors! Your hello will make a difference in their world and yours.



Prayer List *Oct-Dec. 2008*

Velma Blandford, Linda Blazer
Baby Bruine, Shirley Bobo,
Marcus Boulden, Geri Buss,
Neal Cameron, Mary Chase,
Elaine Coffman, Helen Conger,
Travis Dodson , Dan Edwards,
Terry Fontenot, Christopher
Fredrick, Brandy Garrett,
Mildred Hackett, Betty Hansford,
Carol Hoefler, Bonnie Jean Hoge,
J.B., Joel Hunt, Jeremy Jasso,
Jeff, Fred Johnson, Jewel
Landrum, Jason Largo, Sean
McLaughlin family, Lisa Metz,
Bob Mudd, Lynde Murphy, Ann
Pettit; Brian Pettit, John Plant,
Mardena Randall, Pat Rogers,
Ray Sawyer, Gary Slayman, Oris
& Nina Spencer, Michael
Stephenson, Matthew Stevens,
Kathleen Swift, Sarah/Gregory
Swift, Ralph Tremper, Sam
Turner, Margaret Truax, Earl

Veeder, Sally & Leymon
Williams, Marlene Zachek
Men's & Women's Chrysalis
Journeys (1/16-19/09)

Families dealing with grief:
Rhoads, Humphrey, Hunt,
French, Lutonsky/Lambeth,
Deitz, Westbrook, Shafer,
Polley , Baker

Service men & women and their
units: Travis Dodson's unit,
Avilla Augustus, Alan Ballinas,
Alan/Brian Carter, Jake Corn,
Amber Dunnihoo, Steve Gilland,
Maj. Howard Gobble, Jason
Hammers, Conrad Hughes, Eric
Jasso, Shaun M. Jones, Jennifer/
John Lively, Robbie Luna,
Jennifer/Jarrod McGee, Michael
Nunley, Brian Park, Josh
Robertson, Andres Serna, L.
Charles Stanley, Aaron Steelman,
Greg Stube, Danny Symonds,
Van Welch

The prayer list will be updated in
January 2009. Please advise, in
writing, names to keep.

Hospice patients and their families; our nation; our leaders;
our armed forces; our Sunday School: for increased attendance,
people with a heart and passion for teaching to assist or
substitute in our classes, for faithfulness.

The church calendar may be found on the church website.
Paper copies are on the back sanctuary.

Oddfellows Enchilada Supper, Dec. 4th from 4-6pm at the
Oddfellows Hall on Gold Ave. \$5/plate to benefit scholarships.

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Simplicity adds meaning to the Holidays

It's January 7, and you say it again: "This year the holiday season is going to be different. We're going to simplify, to focus on the message, not the madness." Then November arrives, and the calendar squares start filling, and the to-do list lengthens and the shopping for presents and parties takes more and more time...and once again you're caught in the whirl.

This can be the year the simpler holiday season happens—it may *need* to be. For United Methodists seeking to be good stewards, simplifying is likely to mean less spending and more time to "focus on the meaning rather than the method of giving thanks or celebrating Christmas."

You can have a family meeting to discuss the importance and need for simplifying Christmas. Decide what traditions the family wants to keep. Look at last year's calendar and think about alternative activities with smaller price tags or no cost.

Other suggestions: *Fast in the middle of feasting.* Have the feast but consider fasting from radio, TV or the internet as preparation to be thankful. *Enjoy 'the day after'* (Thanksgiving) at home instead of going to the stores.

Have a disciplined Advent by praying and reading throughout the season. Prepare for the Christmas Eve service by being in worship throughout Advent. *Use the Christmas story* by serving people who are homeless or have other needs. *Go to church* to celebrate with your church family.

Give prayer; make simple gifts that are rich in meaning and prayer, not dollars and cents. Add a prayer note. Share memories with framed photos. *Do and be together!* (from the Nov./Dec. 2008 Interpreter magazine - available in the church library).

Women's Depression Support Group

This Support Group meets from 12 noon until 1:00 pm, at the church on Thursdays. Feel free to bring your lunch and join us as we share hope and encourage one another. All conversations are kept strictly confidential. Invite a friend or just come to observe if you want to find out how it works. Please call Beth Simpson at the church at 546-2791 if you have any questions.

Our Little Lambs

We are back in the swing of things and doing great. God watches over us and guides us along our way. Not only have we been studying our basic skills but we have gone pretending. We had a pretend trip to the circus and a trip camping. We studied about the special people in our community that help us all have a good life. The Deming Fire Department sent two very qualified fire fighters to talk about safety and show us their big fire truck. We even got pumpkins from Johnson farms in Columbus.

We're still learning about colors, numbers, letters, shapes, and all other things we need to know. It's fun learning things with your friends. We know each other's names and what our favorite colors are. It's really fun to think of what color we would make ourselves if we could.

We want to tell the church thank you for fixing our Little Lambs bathroom. It is wonderful. All the students from last year noticed the change and that is saying a lot. The tile is great and so much easier to keep clean. The boys are really enjoying the big boy toilet. Thanks so much.

Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good...Psalm 135:3

NOTE: We are always two months behind on Little Lambs news due to our deadline cut-off and the arrival of their news. The Trustees undertook the bathroom renovation in August (and it does look great!). The staff is looking forward to hearing a Christmas carol from the students this month.

The church office will be **CLOSED** Nov. 27 & 28 for the Thanksgiving Holiday. The office will be **CLOSED** December 26 through January 2 for the Christmas holidays. Blessings to you and your families!!

Volunteers in Mission Training

VIM training will be held December 7, from 2 to 4:30 pm at Western Hills UMC in El Paso, TX. The cost is \$10/person. If you are interested in missions training, please call Mary White at 915-581-3027 or 915-494-3177.

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From Bishop Max & Valerie Whitfield:

We sat almost spellbound as David and Lori Persons shared their many experiences of serving as United Methodist missionaries assigned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Dr. & Mrs. Persons serve at Mulungwishi in the southern part of the Congo. David teaches seminary students at the United Methodist University, and Lori teaches the wives of these seminary students. The Persons shared their stories and experiences during the past month in numerous congregations in the New Mexico Conference and a few congregations in the Northwest Texas Conference. They had specifically requested to meet with us in order to update Valerie on the Northwest Texas and New Mexico Conferences Spouses' Project to educate the children at Mulungwishi.

Lori handed Valerie a picture album. "I want you to see pictures of some of the children that are receiving scholarships," Lori explained. "You cannot imagine the joy and excitement when we tell the mothers, who knock on our doors, tears streaming down their faces, begging us to admit their children into the primary or high school." These mothers know it is the one real chance their children have of breaking the cycle of poverty. They also know there is no way they can afford the \$75 a year to pay the cost for their child's tuition, books, and uniforms. They are praying that some United Methodists care enough to give their child a chance they never had.

"The mothers kept coming and I could not turn them away. The cost is up from \$50 to \$75 a year and I agreed to help almost 100 children. I know this is more than you indicated you could raise, but I pray you can find a way. The needs are just so great," David explained.

I knew what was coming. Valerie has a heart as big as the entire outdoors. You mention children in need and she immediately affirms this will not be a problem. I remembered the number of times I arrived home and discovered numerous boxes of cookies, candies, magazines and almost everything else

From Bishop Max & Valerie Whitfield (continued
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the children in the neighborhood were selling. I knew she would agree to find a way to help raise the additional money. Then she immediately looked at me and asked, "Now how are YOU going to help me do this?" I requested a few days to see if I could find an appropriate avenue.

The avenue I chose was to make the need known in this brief article. The clergy spouses will contribute a major portion of the funds, but if there is not a dramatic increase, they will fall far short of the assistance necessary to provide these children with an education for the coming year. Therefore, I encourage individuals, Sunday School classes, and local churches to join in this exciting adventure of assisting a child in receiving a Christian education in a United Methodist school in Mulungwishi, DRC.

Imagine Valerie and Lori looking at those photos of these smiling, happy children who received a gift their parents could never give and imagine the joy of helping to make these experiences possible. You can make your checks out to the Conference Treasurer and mark them for the Spouses Children's Project. Gifts of any amount are appreciated.

Thank you for all of your help.

Grace & Peace,

--Max

Sacramento Methodist Assembly is offering a special holiday offer - come to the mountains, **choose your Christmas tree**, and spend a wonderful weekend at the camp (special rates), if you so desire. Call the camp at 800-667-3414 for details.

If you plan to be in Carlsbad, NM for *Christmas on the Pecos*, **Landsun Homes** staff will provide your church group with a complimentary soup and sandwich meal. Plus, you can tour Landsun Homes and visit with residents. Reserve your date today by contacting Marsha Drapala at 575-234-5869.

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First United Methodist Church
1020 S. Granite St.
Deming, New Mexico 88030

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THE FAMILY CIRCUS



*"Then the three wise men came to baby-sit while
Mary and Joseph went caroling."*

*from The Joyful Noiseletter
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