



White Rock Presbyterian Church

Overlook

An informative newsletter published by the White Rock Presbyterian Church

December 2012

From the Pastor's Desk



Most of you know about my large red folder where I keep all of the “stories” that I have read to you over the past year at the beginning of our class time after worship and Fellowship Hour. I think I mentioned a week or two ago that, absent a fresh supply, I am now starting to repeat myself, but I am thinking that if I can't remember if I told them before, maybe you can't either, so I am safe!

However, there is one story of which I am especially fond, and which I am sure I haven't told you. Even if I have, it is worth repeating. It is called Keep Your Fork, and here it is:

There was a young woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. So as she was getting her things “in order,” she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in.

Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the young woman suddenly remembered something very important to her. “There's one more thing,” she said excitedly.

“What's that?” came the pastor's reply. “This is very important,” the young woman continued. “I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand.”

The pastor stood looking at the young woman, not knowing quite what to say.

“That surprises you, doesn't it?” the young woman asked.

“Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request,” said the pastor.

The young woman explained. “My grandmother once told me this story, and from there on out, I have always done so. I have also, always tried to pass along its message to those I love and those who are in need of encouragement.

In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, ‘Keep your fork.’ It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming...like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance!

So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder, ‘What's with the fork?’ Then I want you to tell them: ‘Keep your fork...the best is yet to come.’” The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the young woman good-bye.

He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the young woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She had a better grasp of what heaven would be like than many people twice her age, with twice as much experience and knowledge. She KNEW that something better was coming.

Perhaps you thought when you first began to read it that the story would be more apropos for Lent and Easter but, hopefully, by the time you finished it you realized that its message is

timeless, fitting into any season, because its message speaks of the hope and promise that can only come from God. Lent, Easter, Advent, and especially Christmas brings the Gospel news that God does love us so much that he gives us his Son, and his Son gives us his life, that we may have life if we only believe in that Good News.

Whether this story is true or not is unknown, but the point is made. If a young woman in the prime of life can face the end of her life with the confidence that she KNOWS something better is coming, then can we not look to our futures, and the future of WRPC, knowing the same thing? Advent speaks of light; Christmas comes with a shining star. Even Epiphany promises an illumination. But, we believers, and we who want to believe, must have hope first. Even a glimmer will do because God can do so much with so little.

So, keep the faith, and keep your fork. Remember, in this holy season, the best is yet to come....

Blessings to you,

DH

Letter from the Editor



Lately I've been pondering the mixed messages sent to us during the weeks leading up to the Christmas holidays. Even before the dishes and the leftovers from Thanksgiving are cleaned up the shopping malls are emblazoned with Christmas lights and

decorations and Christmas carols sing out from all the public address systems. The season is a consumer marketing extravaganza designed to get everyone to buy as much stuff as possible before Christmas. We have Black Friday, followed by Cyber Monday, followed by dire warnings of only so many shopping days left before Christmas. No expense is spared when trying to lure the consumer into the mall. We also have Christmas specials on television, and the exciting concluding episodes of the fall TV program series. Not to mention that we also have lots of sporting events, including a bewildering plethora of bowl games.

All this whirlwind of activities and expectations poses a problem for committed Christians, since the Advent season is supposed to be one of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Advent should be a time of quiet anticipation, of fasting and prayer, a time for reflection, a time for hope, and a time for penitence. Since early Christian times Advent was a season of fasting every bit as strict as Lent. In modern times the fasting requirements have been relaxed but Advent is still marked as a season of penitence.

The term, Advent, may also apply to the second coming of Christ. Thus the season anticipates the coming of Christ from two different perspectives, both the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah and the expectation of the Second Coming.

The notion of fasting and penitence may seem out of place when juxtaposed against the blatant commercialization and secularization of the holiday season in our times. This just goes to show how far apart modern expectations and traditional Christian concepts have become. How is one to preserve a "quiet anticipation" in the midst of all the distractions and noise of our surroundings? While there is certainly nothing

WRPC Contact Information

White Rock Presbyterian Church is located at 310 Rover Boulevard, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544. The pastor, Dr. Harry Cole, can be reached at 443 253 3871 or by email at hcole3@aol.com. Our church office administrator, Gillian Erickson, can be contacted at the church office (672-3682) Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM. You may email her anytime at officemanager@wrpchurch.com.

Office Hours for Gillian Erickson
Tuesdays and Thursdays only, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Latin, c. 12th century
Trans. John Mason Neale, 1851

wrong with buying gifts or watching a few football games, I wonder if we couldn't gain much by postponing some of the decorating and celebrating until Christmastide, or at least until closer to Christmas.

Harry Chronis would never permit the singing of Christmas carols until Christmas Eve. He always insisted on singing Advent hymns instead. I never liked this because (with a few notable exceptions) most Advent hymns are based on boring and unfamiliar tunes that I did not find inspiring. But in the back of my mind I always suspected that Harry was right and that this was one small step towards preserving the proper frame of mind during Advent. Viewed in this way those Advent hymns aren't so bad. And there are those notable exceptions.

Dick Heaton

Session News

Work on the Interim Process continues to be the main focus of much of the Session's activity, with preparation for 2013 budgeting a close second.

I'll echo a request I'm sure you'll see elsewhere in this issue of the Overlook. Please get your pledge of 2013 financial support to Treasurer Susan Buxton immediately so we can budget carefully and effectively for the coming year. And THANK YOU if Susan already has your pledge card.

The Church Nominating Committee is working on nominees for the Pastor Nominating Committee to be presented to the Congregation. We are very close to having a full slate. Some steps remain to be completed with the Presbytery of Santa Fe Committee on Ministry. We should be ready to propose PNC membership to the Congregation soon.

Reflecting on WRPC's interim process and a conversation I had with another WRPC member mid-November, I'm moved to share a personal observation on the process—thoughts I shared in morning worship on Thanksgiving Sunday. That conversation reminded me that many in our community aren't familiar with the interim process used in our denomination. It's been over a quarter of a century since WRPC called a pastor. Several in our community grew up in other denominations and have no experience with the process.

I've seen this process at work in several PC(USA) congregations and while I'm not a FAN of the process I have FAITH in it. For those of us who are feeling that this MUST be taking too long, my counsel is: Take Heart! Based on what I've seen before, WRPC is on a pretty normal track and timeline. Moreover, my observation is that the results achieved in our process so far—to which many of you have contributed—far surpasses what I've seen in other congregations in quality and congregational participation. We should feel good about the process to date, impatient for completion (after all, we're human), and confident that God is revealing his purpose for WRPC and working it out, most likely on His schedule rather than ours.

George Callaghan

2013 Pledges

Have you made your pledge for 2013 yet? It is not too late! The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is being formed and we are budgeting to possibly have a new Pastor-on-board in the last quarter of 2013. The Session and the PNC need the commitment of all our giving units so that we will know whether we will be able to support a new Pastor.

The Proposed 2013 Budget total is \$121,380. We are only half way to our goal, and have heard from less than half of our pledging givers regarding pledging for 2013.

A number of our members have taken advantage of the LANL matching of donations to WRPC through the United Way of Northern New Mexico Campaign. Their matched giving will bring in an extra \$13,190 toward our needed \$19,170 Faith Income.

We need to hear from EVERYONE regarding our 2013 Budget.

Susan Buxton

*but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

Isaiah 40:31

PW News

Our Wednesday luncheon, provided by the Wednesday Bible Study ladies, will be at noon on December 12 at the church. (Please note the change to the SECOND Wednesday.) All women are warmly invited and encouraged to join in.

We decided to defer our sharing mission for the Crisis Center Shelter of N.N.M. to Easter time. We do keep these families in our prayers for God's love and safe keeping.

The Thursday Bible Study/Circle will not meet in December.

Prayers and best wishes to all families for the blessings of Christmas all through the year!

Joyce Berzins

Go Paperless! Save a stamp! If you would like to receive your copy of the Overlook electronically rather than through the mail, just let our WRPC Office Manager know and make sure she has your correct e-mail address. We'll send you a PDF file at the beginning of the month. You'll get your Overlook quicker and it will be in glorious color as well.

December Birthdays



Esther Kopper	3
Honglin Zhang	6
Katrina Edelmann	11
Ann Heaton	23
Megan Kelley	28
Mary Diaz	29

Treasury Notes

The last day the church office will be open in 2012 will be Thursday, December 27. Please try to either take your 2012 pledged gifts to church on or before that day or have them postmarked by December 31, 2012, so that your contributions will be listed in 2012. Contributions received in the church office in 2013 or postmarked in 2013 will be credited to 2013 per IRA guidelines.

Pledged giving January through October 2012 is \$7,676.93 behind the amount promised and budgeted. Non-pledged giving is \$1,456.15 ahead of the amount budgeted. Expenses on the other hand have been at 98% of that budgeted. The actual budget income shortage is \$4,486.18 through October.

Our January through October budget income breakdown and expense summary is:

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income			
Pledged	78,106.37	85,783.30	-7,676.93
Non-pledged	5,926.15	4,470.00	1,456.15
Facility	1,887.25	1,910.00	-22.75
Interest	757.82	790.00	32.18
Applied Surplus	9,004.20	9,004.20	0.00
Income Total	95,681.79	101,957.50	-6,275.71
Expense Total	100,167.97	101,957.50	-1,789.53
Shortfall:	4,486.18		

We are using \$10,805.00 from the 2011 budget surplus in this year's budgeted income to meet expenses. The other half of the 2011 budget surplus will be used as income for our 2013 budget.

Your pledged or non-pledged gifts are so important to our church. If your financial circumstances have changed since you made your 2012 pledge last fall and it is difficult to meet your pledge, please let me know so that we can move funds to meet anticipated expenses.

Susan Buxton

*Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sin has been paid for,*

Isaiah 40:1-2

Important Contacts

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*A voice of one calling:
"In the desert prepare
the way for the LORD;
make straight in the wilderness
a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level
the rugged places a plain.
And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all mankind together will see it.
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*
Isaiah 40:3-5

*"The virgin will be with child and will give birth
to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which
means, "God with us."
Isaiah 7:14b and Matthew 1:23*

*The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.
Isaiah 9:2*

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6*

A Letter From Our Pastor

(The following letter was sent to members and friends of our congregation as I was assembling this newsletter. Because of its importance I have reproduced it here.)

November 29, 2012

Dear Members and Friends of White Rock Presbyterian [Church],

I am writing this letter to each of you to inform you of my intention to leave my position as Interim Pastor of White Rock Presbyterian Church at the end of this calendar year, December 30, 2012.

I have come to this decision through a long and thorough process of thought and prayer. Perhaps I can use the term, "by coming to terms with my own history," I am seeking to understand where I need to be and what I need to do in my own immediate future.

I want to express my deepest thanks for your care and support for me during this past year. I do not recall a congregation which I have served in the past which has served me in return in the way and to the extent that all of you have. And for that I am deeply and forever grateful. I also want to thank and affirm you for the work you have done and the actions you are taking to commit to a new future for the life of your church. Your dedication, insight, and courage are truly remarkable, and proof that the Spirit is alive and well in this place.

In taking my leave from you, I am aware of both the challenges that you face in the future and your ability to not only meet them, but to transform them into a framework for a new innovative ministry that speaks to the spiritual needs of the White Rock community and beyond, one which brings the timeless good news of the Gospel to a new generation of believers who will continue the mission of WRPC in ways yet to be envisioned.

Small as you are and as difficult as the call of Christ can seem sometimes, you are an extraordinary group of Christians, and with God's grace and blessings I am confident you will thrive and do God's will and work in the days that are to come.

Grace and peace to you all,

Harry A. Cole