



White Rock Presbyterian Church

Overlook

An informative newsletter published by the White Rock Presbyterian Church

December 2013

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends,

The winter sky on a crisp, clear night in northern New Mexico, with the aroma of burning pinon in the air, takes my breath away. Some nights I will find a dark place, get out of the car, look up, breathe in, and feel swept up into the wide, vast universe out there. It is a world that I will never fully fathom or understand. Whether it is the hush of winter, or the dark of the season, or the air of anticipation of it all, I am not sure. But *something*, this time of year, prompts me, again and again, to look up - into the night sky - expecting it to reveal a little of its mystery to me.

Stars, constellations, planets, comets, moons, and all that beckon from beyond the pavement beneath me seem so silent and luring as I gaze beyond my world into theirs. Maybe that is why stars are such an important symbol for me this time of year. They not only represent light in the darkness, but also seem as if God is breaking into my preoccupied world to remind me of his cosmic gift and sacrifice; to lure me beyond what is familiar and safe into possibilities of his universe.



Ann Weems, poet and wife of a Presbyterian minister, has touched many lives with the insight and faith of her poetry. You may know of her *Kneeling in Bethlehem* or her *Kneeling Jerusalem*, books of poetry concerning the journeys of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. Her poem about stars is a favorite of mine:

STAR-GIVING

*What I'd really like to give you for Christmas
is a Star...*

*Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep
in the pocket of your jeans
or in the pocket of your being.*

*Something to
take out in times of darkness,
something that would never
snuff out or tarnish,
Something you could hold in your hand,
something for wonderment,
something for pondering,
something that would remind you of what
Christmas has always meant:*

*God's Advent Light
into the darkness of this world.
But stars are only God's for giving,
and I must be content to give you
words
and wishes
and packages without stars.
But I can wish you life
as radiant as the Star that
announced the Christ Child's coming,
and as filled with awe
as the shepherds who stood beneath its light.
And I can pass on to you the love
that has been given me,
ignited countless times by others
who have knelt in Bethlehem's light.*

*Perhaps,
if you ask,
God will give you a star.*

As this Christian year begins to unfold and Advent opens to Christ's birth and the epiphanies of seekers become clear, I want to give you a Star. As people of

White Rock Presbyterian Church you have been a bright light in my 2013 that isn't likely to dim for many, many years. Thank you for the light you have cast into my faith and future, even as you welcomed me among you.

With the coming of the Christ Child, most of us also anticipate a newness, a fresh start, a whole new bundle of opportunities. Your new chapter, as a church, exciting and scary as it may be, is being drawn into the light this Advent, as well. God is giving you a gift – another gift. And as the darkness is conquered by the Light, God's bundle of opportunities and challenges and blessings will begin to unfold.

Rev. John Guthrie is only part of that bundle. Another part is the fresh hope and energy each of you can bring to Christ's mission through the work of this church. Other items within the bundle will surely be revealed, in time, but one thing is certain: there is bound to be at least one star in there to guide all of you as God leads you into the future.

May God bless and keep you in his Light, now and forever more.

Rev. Elizabeth Graham

WRPC Contact Information

White Rock Presbyterian Church is located at 310 Rover Boulevard, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544. The pastor, Rev. Elizabeth Graham, can be reached at 575-770-6881 or by email at sweetp217@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, Desire of the nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind;
bid every strife and quarrel cease
and fill the world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel,
shall come to thee o Israel!*

from Neale & Coffin Trans. of *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, c. 1850

WRPC Calls Rev. John Guthrie



On Nov 17, the White Rock Presbyterian Church voted unanimously to call Rev. Guthrie to be the Designated Pastor of White Rock Presbyterian Church. John and Nancy have found a home in Los Alamos and John's first Sunday in the pulpit will be January 5th.

The congregation then voted to dissolve the Pastor Nominating Committee—its work having been concluded. The committee gives thanks to God for guiding us to John and to the congregation for its patience as we searched.

John is a native Texan. He spent most of his early years in San Antonio. He holds a bachelors degree in physics from Austin College (Sherman, Texas) and a Masters and Ph.D. in physics from the University of Texas at Dallas. John is a second-career pastor. His first career was invested in software engineering and in research in his specialty of chemical physics and kinetics. He taught physics for seven years at the University of Central Oklahoma.

Before starting seminary studies at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, John served the church as a deacon, ruling elder, Bible study leader, new church development team member, and in other capacities. He responded to a persistent call to begin theological study in 2003, and graduated from Austin Seminary in 2006. He has served two churches since that time, a 65 member church in Lake City, Colorado and a 160 member church Cedar City, Utah where he is currently the solo pastor. John is a third-generation Presbyterian pastor.

John has been married to Nancy Guthrie for thirty-three years. Nancy pursues a career in social and community services. They have four children, both biological and adopted: Robert (27), Elizabeth (23), Zach (20), and Kyle (18). The Guthrie family has lived in New Mexico, Maryland, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Utah over the years.

Bob Reinovsky

Letter from the Editor



On August 4, 1914, German armies invaded Belgium and France with the aim of quickly conquering the French and removing a perceived military threat from Germany's western borders. After a month of heavy fighting they were finally stopped near the

outskirts of Paris by French and British armies at the First Battle of the Marne. When the German advance stalled both armies dug in and the war degenerated into a stalemate, with neither side able to penetrate the defenses of the other. Over subsequent months the defenses were expanded and deepened so that by the end of 1914 an unbroken line of defensive trenches and fortifications extended from the North Sea to the Swiss border. In this way the most terrible war the world had ever known began, what we call World War I, which many called the war to end all wars.

Trench warfare as practiced on the Western Front during World War I was a horrible experience for the participants. The death and misery experienced by soldiers on both sides simply cannot be comprehended by people today. Casualty levels were unbelievable, with the war ultimately claiming millions of soldiers on both sides. And yet, even in the midst of all this death and destruction miracles occurred.

As Christmas of 1914 approached some British soldiers stationed near Ypres, Belgium, began to notice Christmas trees on some of the German trenches opposite them. Individuals and then parties of German and British soldiers began to shout seasonal greetings and songs between their trenches. In some cases the tension was reduced to the point that individuals could actually walk across to their opposite numbers bearing gifts. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day groups of soldiers from both sides entered "no man's land" where they exchanged gifts and shared pictures of their families. The Germans sometimes gave beer to the British, while the British gave tobacco and canned meat in return. Some meetings ended in the singing of Christmas carols. The break in hostilities allowed fallen soldiers to be recovered and joint services were held. In some areas soldiers from opposing sides engaged in friendly games of football (soccer).

The Christmas Truce of 1914 was completely unofficial and spontaneous, occurring by the actions of the common soldiers themselves. It occurred on various portions of the front, lasting through Christmas Day in some areas and through New Year's Day in a few sectors. The truce was regrettably not repeated in subsequent years. It is well documented, both in newspaper and magazine articles at the time and in summary documents written since.

It is remarkable that in 1914 the Christmas spirit was able to penetrate through all the death, destruction, and misery of a horrible war to give a few hours of respite to its participants. But it is also true that the Christmas season is filled with miracles. A simple Google search will reveal dozens of stories and testimonials about amazing things that have happened to people and about incredible things that people have done to benefit complete strangers. Christmas just seems to bring out the best in people. Literature is also full of miraculous Christmas stories, the classic example being, *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens, in which the miser was saved.

But the 1914 Christmas Truce was real and it occurred in the midst of appalling circumstances. It shows that even in the worst conditions that the Christmas spirit can reach us and teach us that we are all basically the same and have the same needs and desires. Do we really have to wait for Christmas for this to happen? Wouldn't it be a good thing if this spirit infected us at other times? The answer is certainly, "Yes!" But the Christmas season is special because the spirit seems able to reach us in spite of ourselves. And in this the Christmas season is indeed miraculous.

May each of us be infused with the Christmas spirit and may it linger with us throughout the coming year.

Dick Heaton

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Session News

While the highest priority item of business for the Session and Congregation in recent weeks has been receiving the report of the Pastor Nominating Committee and preparation for the visit of candidate Rev. John Guthrie and Nancy Guthrie several weekends ago, we've been active on a couple of other fronts as well. (You'll see a final report from the PNC elsewhere in this Overlook.)

With the able efforts of Treasurer Susan Buxton we have begun preparing the 2014 financial budget, which will be shared with the Congregation at the annual meeting late in January. A critical input to that process has been the stewardship campaign that reached near conclusion on December 10, with Consecration Sunday and a catered lunch for the entire WRPC family at which the pledge results were announced. We have received a few pledges since Consecration Sunday and are still awaiting a few more. If you intend to pledge for 2014 and haven't yet done so, PLEASE get your pledge information to Susan Buxton. And THANK YOU to Sumner Barr and his assisting volunteers for directing the New Consecration Sunday campaign effort. Sumner's recommendation to the Session is that we should continue to use the New Consecration Sunday process for at least a few more years to realize its full benefits.

The Session has also been considering participation in a PCUSA church revitalization effort known as New Beginnings, and we have decided to proceed with the effort beginning early in 2014. The Presbytery of Santa Fe is making this process available to all churches in the Presbytery at a very attractive financial cost. Ken and Jennifer Holmes heard the process described at the Presbytery meeting in October and recommended it to the Session. Terry Buxton, Bob Reinovsky, and George Callaghan attended an informational meeting on the process in Albuquerque and have been in touch with pastors at other Presbyterian churches that have gone through the process. You will hear more about New Beginnings as we get into 2014. In the meantime feel free to contact any of the WRPC members cited above to get a preview and evaluation of the process.

George Callaghan

Holocaust Torah Restoration Project Comes to WRPC

Imagine an adventure story involving hidden treasure. "Raiders of the Lost Ark," minus the Hollywood special effects and the snakes, might come to mind. In Europe, a document dating back some 4,000 years, detailing a part of human history in the ancient Near East, with guidelines for living a good life, was copied down 350 years ago. The process took a full year as a scribe carefully and reverently copied each letter, by hand with a quill pen and special ink on parchment, from a previous version following a mystical tradition. Now imagine how this scroll of wisdom, teaching, and history was revered and how many upheavals the people who treasured it endured. Finally, by the time of World War II, the community to which it had been entrusted could no longer keep it safe, so it was hidden until the winds of war passed. Unfortunately, the community itself did not survive the Nazi Holocaust. The resting place of their sacred text was lost, locked behind the Iron Curtain in Czechoslovakia.

How was it found? How was it liberated? How did it find its way from its hiding place to London, England, and from there to, of all places, Santa Fe, New Mexico?

This is just a taste of the story of the Holocaust Memorial Torah Scroll (the Five Books of Moses), which is now on permanent loan to Temple Beth Shalom in Santa Fe. It represents a heritage important to all three Abrahamic religions and is, in fact, a community treasure.

At 4:00 pm on Sunday, January 26, Rabbi Schwab of Temple Beth Shalom will tell the fascinating tale of this scroll's journey, its near destruction, and its restoration, at White Rock Presbyterian Church. Save the date, come meet Rabbi Schwab, and hear this amazing story.

Terry Buxton



December Birthdays



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

Treasury Notes Where Your Money Goes

Imagine living in your home and having no electricity, no heat, no running water, no place to refrigerate or cook your food, and no money to do anything to fix the problems – not just for the occasional power outage, broken furnace, or hot-water heater problem, but season in and season out, even when the cold winds blow. These are some of the conditions seen by a few of our WRPC folks who visited some elderly Grandmas, in their 70s, 80s, 90s, and even 100s, on the Navajo Reservation in early November.

We teamed up with Lorraine and Fred Thomas and several other couples from the House of Fellowship (HOF) near Gallup, NM, to deliver loads of firewood and boxes of groceries (some of which we brought from Los Alamos), and to pray fervently in Navajo and in English with those we visited. We were warmly welcomed into their clean but sparsely furnished homes.

Our hearts were moved by how these elderly women were dealing with having no heat (because their wood burning stove had a rusted out flue or ash pan and no chimney) or because they had no wood to burn in their wood stove and no money to purchase wood. And we responded by helping purchase a new wood burning stove for Alice, who has a grown physically challenged daughter living with her. HOF members installed the stove, flue, and chimney before Thanksgiving. HOF

installed another wood burning stove with their Korean Missionary friends for one of the Grandmas with a rusted-out stove. We have also sent money to HOF to purchase some wood for delivery to these Grandmas.

We saw how another Grandma had no money to buy a range stove on which to cook food, although she did have electricity. WRPC responded by purchasing a new GE range stove and HOF installed it for Irene before Thanksgiving.

House of Fellowship has a small ministry of cutting and delivering firewood to those Navajos referred to them by their members. However, their wood cutting was limited by lack of good chainsaws. WRPC responded by purchasing two chainsaws, a larger one that can be operated by the men and a smaller one that can be used by women. Fred and Lorraine have a gas operated wood splitter that we used on the first day of our visit to split seasoned logs they had cut earlier this year.

We saw one small home with a roof cobbled together with only corrugated metal, scrap plywood, and plastic sheeting, held down by old tires to keep the wind from blowing it all away. Another home had a large section of shingles missing and severely warped plywood that let in rain and dust and made it impossible to use one of the home's two rooms. One Hogan had leaks around their wood burning stove chimney that could be fixed with new caulking and flashing and leaks around the foundation caused by wind eroding the soil. Some of us will be returning soon to Gallup to join hands with HOF in fixing these problems.

Thank you for your monetary gift that allowed us to purchase the stoves, chainsaws, and firewood so that our neighbors can have heat this winter. Thank you for your help in cutting and gathering wood for the HOF firewood ministry. Thank you for your prayers, joined with HOF members, to help show an example of Christ's love of his children.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory to judge all the people of the world, Jesus will say to the righteous at his right hand, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

Susan Buxton

Facilities News

I think we have all noticed the bad condition of the sidewalks leading from the parking lot to Memorial Hall and the main building. This was caused by the tree roots growing under the sidewalk. Some of the roots were six inches in diameter, and will provide a little more wood for the House of Fellowship firewood ministry.

A recent accident pointed out how dangerous a buckled sidewalk can be. So now, just in time for more winter weather, we have a little safer walkway. Cisneros Concrete removed the buckled and cracked sections and poured the new sidewalk.

Terry Buxton

*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 8:6

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Christmas Bells

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*And thought how, as the day had come
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep.
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men!"*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(written during the American Civil War)