



White Rock Presbyterian Church

Overlook

The monthly newsletter of White Rock Presbyterian Church

June 2014

From the Pastor's Desk



Being a Missional Church

Most of you have probably heard the term “missional church” by now. That term has been around for quite a while, perhaps for as many as twenty years. Theologian and missiologist Darrel Guder edited a book with that title in 1998, and the movement has grown rapidly in the intervening years.

There is a substantial debate among church people about what a missional church is, or should be. If you Google the term you will find thousands of online articles and opinions. Most folks active in the missional church movement agree that the movement is largely about working to discern what God is doing locally or globally, and moving the church to engage in that mission. The missional church movement is emphatically a movement focused outwards, into the world, away from the internal concerns of particular churches.

A missional church is often contrasted to a “maintenance church” in which the maintenance of existing ministries and programs is the (or a) prime driving force in the dynamic of the church. Everyone recognizes that there may be faithful and effective ministries in every particular church, but the missional church model invites churches to examine what they have been doing, to see if it corresponds with the perceived mission of God, nearby and far away.

Furthermore, it is fundamental to the missional church way of thinking to move congregational effort and resources away from internal concerns, and toward community or global concerns. At the core of the movement is a conviction that the church can no longer “do church” the way it did in the 1950’s. American and global culture has changed radically since that time, and younger generations (Gen X and Millennials) have a new set of values and driving interests.

Everyone seems to agree that, in a church’s zeal to become more missional, it cannot neglect those ministries that serve to strengthen and uphold the church. Churches cannot abandon projects that provide life, fellowship, and discipleship within the church. Rather, healthy churches find a particular balance between inward-focused and outward-focused ministries, led to that balance by careful attention to the Holy Spirit.

As you might imagine, the New Beginnings process in which White Rock Presbyterian is currently engaged, includes a strong encouragement for participating churches to examine their missional commitment and focus. Remember that New Beginnings will not prescribe or even recommend any particular directions for WRPC at the end of our time of self-study. However, the small group process in which we will engage beginning in August will encourage thought and discussion on what it means for our church to be missional, today, in White Rock/Los Alamos and the world. That thinking and discussion, it seems to me, bear much promise for reinvigorating our ministries in our community and beyond, and for renewing the life of White Rock Presbyterian Church.

I eagerly look forward to the movement of the Holy

Spirit as we carry out those small group meetings, and in the ongoing work of transformation which will follow, as we together continue our journey as disciples of the living Christ.

Peace to you all,
John

WRPC Contact Information

White Rock Presbyterian Church is located at 310 Rover Boulevard, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544. The pastor, John Guthrie, can be reached at 505-709-8207 or by email at jguthrie@wrpchurch.com. Our church office administrator, Gillian Erickson, can be contacted at the church office (672-3682) Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. You may email her anytime at officemanager@wrpchurch.com.

Letter from the Editor



Ross Douthat recently wrote an editorial for the New York Times entitled, “The Christian Penumbra” (March 29, 2014). The title piqued my interest so I read on. In the article Douthat notes a recent case study in which demographers show that regions of the country with

heavy populations of conservative Protestants had higher than average divorce rates. Similar findings were noted for other social indicators, for example, out-of-wedlock births. At first this just seems weird, but in fact it is only part of the story.

Another study shows that *practicing* conservative Protestants have much lower divorce rates and generally divorce less often than the non-religious. But among so-called “nominal” conservative Protestants—those who identify themselves as such but who attend church less than twice a month—divorce rates are higher than even among the non-religious. The author notes that, “The social goods associated with faith flow almost exclusively from religious participation, not from affiliation or nominal belief.” He also notes that in the absence of active participation the remnants of religion may actually be socially damaging. Wow!

It is this community of “nominal” conservative Protestants that the author calls the “Christian Penumbra.” It is the community of people who consider themselves Christians but who are not actively or fully engaged in a church or other religious organization. That actively involved Christians are more effective in sustaining conservative values doesn’t surprise me. I have always considered the church to be a community of people with shared beliefs and a common set of values. It makes sense that such a community would be self supporting and would sustain its members through trials and hard times. To do otherwise would be no church at all. However, the notion that vestiges of religion without active involvement could be harmful is more troubling. I suppose that one could rationalize this by saying that religious expectations remain but without the necessary support networks for people trying to live up to them. But I think a more important issue is what this says about America’s churches and our own church, in particular.

Why are members of this penumbra not more actively involved in some church? More important, why are these “nominal” Christians not receiving the support they need to stand by the values they claim to accept? Surely a healthy religious community can provide at least some support for the loosely affiliated. If not, then what kind of community are we? What must present day churches do to become more effective in supporting Christian values among believers in their surrounding communities?

These questions deserve careful consideration as we, as White Rock Presbyterian Church, move forward in revitalizing ourselves. Los Alamos has a vibrant penumbra community. It contains lots of people who have only tenuous affiliations with a local church or who drift from one church to another without ever taking root and becoming fully engaged. And because we are not very good at reaching (or retaining) young working people, this community is expanding. So perhaps our first challenge might be to find more effective ways to reach out to this community and encourage their active participation. But I think it may be equally important to figure out ways to influence and support our surrounding community in more positive ways.

Dick Heaton

I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

John 15:5-8

Session News – June 2014

Community visibility and facility improvements have been the focus of Session attention for the past several months.

We especially thank Nancy Guthrie for her efforts on a new Facebook page and a soon-to-be printed brochure for WRPC. In addition Craig Kelley has made updates to the WRPC website. We are also looking at how we can have a more prominent on-line presence in the community through the LA Post. Take a look at all of these examples to see how we are working to make WRPC more visible in the community, and don't hesitate to suggest other ways to assist in this effort!

You have read (for example in the last *Overlook*) about the Facilities Planning Team (Susan Buxton, Nancy Guthrie, Joyce Haven, and Craig Kelley) which the Session has charged with making preparations and coordinating efforts to improve our physical facilities. The Session has provided some broad priorities for the various projects that have been proposed. This work leaves much planning and many decisions still before us; not least of these are the decisions about funding.

Finally, at the May Session meeting, the Session, acting on authorization provided by the Congregation at the January 26 Annual Meeting, elected officers for the Corporation of White Rock Presbyterian Church for one-year terms beginning June 1. The officers are Bob Reinovsky, President; Jennifer Holmes, Vice-President; Susan Buxton, Treasurer; and George Callaghan, Secretary. Susan and George were elected Church Treasurer and Clerk of Session respectively; that action makes them (according to our by-laws) Corporate Treasurer and Corporate Secretary.

George Callaghan

Presbyterian Women activities are on hiatus for the summer. However, the women are planning to have a social gathering at some point, perhaps in July.

The Weekly Bible Study will continue to meet. Contact Carol Honig for information on the time and hostess for the studies.

The cookies that were shared with the Crisis Center/Family Shelter in Espanola for Mother's Day were greatly appreciated as the residence was fully occupied at the time.

We continue to collect your donations of product **Labels for Education**, including: Bic, Campbell's, Franco-American, Pace Pepperidge Farm, Post Cereals, Prego SpaghettiOs, Swanson, V-8, and Wolfgang Puck. Also **Box Tops for Education**: Betty Crocker, Bisquick, Juicy Juice, Cheerios, Chex, Green Giant, Pillsbury, Hamburger Helpers, Old El Paso, Progresso, Ziploc, Avery, and Hefty. Complete lists of accepted products can be found online, or by the donation basket on the table in the hallway.

Thinking ahead: in lieu of the fall Mini Harvest Market, perhaps the Presbyterian Women could share excess garden produce on summer Sundays, with small financial donations to PW for on-going mission commitments? Perhaps another "Souper Supper" in September or October?

Please pray for safe travels and a happy summer for those in our church family, with their families and friends.

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!

Seeking Truth in Science and Faith

An ecumenical group has been meeting since March with the objective of creating an interfaith outreach to young adults, many of whom come to Los Alamos over the summer through work at the Lab. The ecumenical group includes interested persons from at least seven Los Alamos churches including Bethlehem Lutheran, IHM Catholic, the United Church, Trinity on the Hill Episcopal, First United Methodist, the Church of Christ, White Rock Presbyterian Church, and the Los Alamos Jewish Center. The common interest of the group members who are themselves practicing or retired scientists, pastors and other people of faith, is exploring the intersection of faith and science, especially in the context of living and working in Los Alamos. The target audience for the program is young adults, college age students, graduate students, and post-docs.

This summer the program will take the form of a series of ten Wednesday evening discussion sessions (with food!) beginning June 4 and running through August 6. The weekly meetings are scheduled from 6:00 to 8:00 PM, and the location is the United Church in Los Alamos. The weekly program will include dinner, followed by a brief “catalyst” presentation and small group “table talk” providing an opportunity to discuss what it means to be both a scientist and a person of faith today. The program offers an opportunity to explore these questions in a safe, open, environment, inviting participation by young adults who may be persons of faith (and certainly not limited to Christian faith), persons seeking answers to faith questions, and persons who are not convinced that faith is a viable pattern for living but who want to hear what others think.

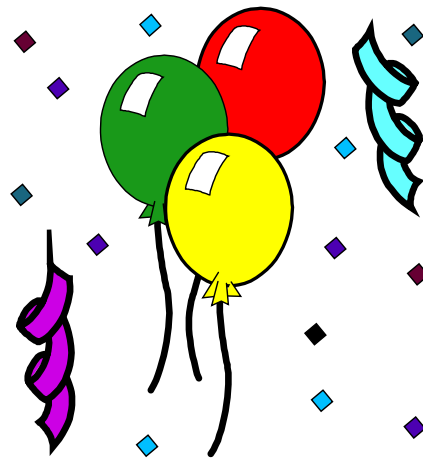
Beyond the summer of 2014 the ecumenical “faith and science” group aspires to sponsor one or more immersion events on the relationship between faith and science, including participation by world class experts on the topic.

More information is available on Facebook by searching for “Seeking Truth in Science and Faith in Los Alamos.” More in-depth discussion is available at <http://scienceatlanl.blogspot.com>.

Want to be a part of the action? First, look for information soon on how WPRC plans to provide several meals for this summer series. Then spread the word to young adults you know who might be interested. Help distribute the poster for the event. Contact John Guthrie or Bob Reinovsky for more information or to volunteer to help.

Bob Reinovsky

June Birthdays



Margie Lehman	1
Reuben Goettee	4
Wayne Meadows	5
Sabrina Kelley	16
Joyce Haven	18

New Beginnings Update

The next major element of the New Beginnings initiative for White Rock Presbyterian is a series of six weekly small group meetings, called “house meetings,” ideally in the homes of selected members or friends of our church. As a result of the recent congregational poll regarding the best time frame for the house meetings, they will take place in August-September.

The New Beginnings Team (Bob Reinovsky, Christine Haven, Jennifer Holmes, Ken Holmes, Nancy Guthrie, and John Guthrie) will do its best to determine days and times that work optimally for the members and friends of our church. The Team plans to organize at least three small groups, for the convenience of as

many members and friends as reasonably possible. The New Beginnings staff strongly encourages participation by at least half of the regular worshippers of each participating church.

What are those meetings all about? Each of the six meetings has a particular focus and goal, which can be summarized as follows.

- **Session 1. Vitality and Discipleship.** What can WRPC be “best at” given our context for ministry? What resources do we have to carry out ministry? What are our passions for ministry? How would we describe the White Rock/Los Alamos community?
- **Session 2. Interpreting the New Beginnings Assessment Report.**
- **Session 3. Examining Our Community.** (With the benefit of the Assessment Report.)
- **Session 4. Our Church in God’s Mission.** What is God calling us to be in our community? How can we as a church become more effective in making disciples (not just members)?
- **Session 5. Discovering Our Options.** Given the discussions in the previous sessions, what are the best options for WRPC in moving forward?
- **Session 6. Navigating Change.** As a result of the discussions of the previous sessions, what “bold decision” seems to make sense for WRPC right now? What does the group most want to communicate to the New Beginnings Team and the Session? What concerns does the group have about possible changes for the future?

You can probably gather that each session has a carefully designed purpose, with each session building on the previous ones. The ultimate goal of the house meetings is a set of ideas and recommendations from each small group, to the New Beginnings Team and the Session.

Your prayers, right now, for the New Beginnings process, and for the movement of the Holy Spirit in and through that process, are most certainly welcome and appreciated.

Pastor John

Photographs Needed

Joan Barr and Nancy Guthrie are collecting digital or printed photographs of WRPC church life over the past few years, to go on the church website and Facebook page. If you have either kind of photo, please see or call Joan or Nancy. Thank you!

New Facebook Page

White Rock Presbyterian Church has a new Facebook page, thanks to the energy and expertise of Nancy Guthrie. Nancy will be working to provide almost daily updates to the page, which are critical to the success of any group Facebook page. You can find the page here: www.facebook.com/wrpchurch. Your ideas for new content are very welcome; just let Nancy know!

Prayer Request

Please keep Joyce Berzins’ grandson Jacob in your prayers. You can follow his status online at: <http://jacobdrury.com/blog>

New Carpet Update

Great news! Your donations have swelled the “carpet fund” to \$26,100. The estimated cost for the carpet (from *The Finishing Touch* in Los Alamos) is \$24,000.

The Facilities Planning Team (Susan Buxton, Nancy Guthrie, Joyce Haven, and Craig Kelley) is currently narrowing the astounding number of possibilities for color and pattern to two or three, which will then be available to the congregation for comment and expression of preference.

The final choice will be communicated to *The Finishing Touch* so that the carpet can be ordered and the installation scheduled.

New carpet is only one of more than a dozen facility improvement projects so far identified and roughly prioritized by the Session. The Facilities Improvement Team will be working with that list and its priorities to recommend to the Session new projects in the near future. Your suggestions for facility improvement projects are most welcome. See any member of the Facilities Improvement Team.

Meet Mission Co-workers Farris and Thelma Goodrum



Farris and Thelma Goodrum are PC(USA) mission co-workers serving in the city of Vitória, in the southeastern Brazilian state of Espírito Santo. Farris was commissioned to mission service in 1982 and Thelma in 1989.

Farris and Thelma are professors at the Center of Theological Formation Richard Shaul and at its extension in Colatina, Espírito Santo. Thelma also works in the business office of the denomination, and Farris also works in Christian education and music in the nine churches of the Presbytery of Vitória.

Brazil's diverse population includes Europeans, Africans, Asians and indigenous people. Around seventy-five percent of Brazilians are Roman Catholic. The other 25 percent include traditional Protestants and members of growing evangelical churches and African religions.

Farris was born and grew up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the son of missionaries Garland and Eleanor Goodrum. He earned his bachelor's degree in music from the University of West Georgia, and holds a graduate degree in Christian education from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, and a graduate degree in music from Georgia State University in Atlanta.

Thelma, a native of Brazil, received her undergraduate degree in pedagogy with a major in literature from the University of Guarujá, São Paulo. She graduated in 2007 with a degree in theology from the Independent Presbyterian Seminary in Londrina.

Bob Reinovsky

Save the Date and your Rummage!

The Service Ministry Team is planning a Rummage Sale for Saturday, August 23. Helpers are needed the week before, during the sale and afterwards to help clean up. A sign-up sheet will be available closer to the date.

Start saving your unneeded, but usable items! Please dust, wash, or otherwise clean items so it's easier to prepare for the sale. Limited storage space is available at the church and in Los Alamos for those who need to get stuff out of their home before the sale.

Contact Mary Medendorp for more information.

Thank You

Thanks to John and Nancy Guthrie for assembling this month's newsletter while I am away.

A special thanks is also due to the many church members who faithfully contribute articles each month. Without your help this newsletter would not be possible.

Dick Heaton

Important Contacts

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June 2014

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