



White Rock Presbyterian Church

Overlook

An informative newsletter published by the White Rock Presbyterian Church

December 2014

From the Pastor's Desk



Advent:
Waiting. Watching.

Once again we enter the season of Advent, beginning with the fourth Sunday before Christmas and extending through Christmas Eve. During Advent we find ourselves experiencing the Christian journey in two

distinct but thoroughly related ways. First, we recall and share with the Jews of the first century their eager longing for the appearance of the Messiah, the Anointed One, the One chosen by God to bring redemption, salvation, and restoration to their nation and to the entire world. Second, we long with millions of contemporary Christ followers for the return of that same Messiah, in glory, to bring the final redemption, salvation, and restoration of the world and all of creation. We share in the waiting and watching of the ancient ones, and we practice our own waiting and watching.

This dual nature of the waiting/watching discipline leads us to read scripture texts during Advent that anticipate both the first and second coming (advent) of the Messiah. Thus we have passages like this one from Isaiah 64, for the First Sunday of Advent:

*O that you would tear open the heavens and
come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your
presence—*

*as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your
presence!*

The gospel text for the same Sunday, from Mark, chapter 13, gives us a warning from Jesus himself, to be awake and alert for his return:

*But about that day or hour no one knows,
neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but
only the Father. Beware; keep alert; for you do
not know when the time will come.*

Over the four Sundays of the Advent season we will explore in worship what it means to be awake, alert, and ready for the coming of the Messiah. May God bless your Advent season and your celebration of the first advent, the birth of the Messiah, God with Us.

Pastor John

WRPC Contact Information

White Rock Presbyterian Church is located at 310 Rover Boulevard, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544. The pastor, Rev. 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, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, from 8:00 am until 12:00 pm. You may email her anytime at officemanager@wrpchurch.com.

Letter from the Editor



This month will mark three and a half years since Rev. Harry Chronis departed from our church. During this time we have gone through seemingly endless exercises of introspection, self evaluation, and strategizing in an attempt to find our way forward. The results of the latest exercise, the New Beginnings Assessment, indicate that the best path forward for us involves “Mission Redefinition,” but is not very specific about what that redefined mission should be.

I was thinking about these things recently when we visited another church while out of town. During the service, the congregation took a few minutes to review and explain their mission statement. This occupied the spot during the service where we would do our affirmation of faith, but instead of affirming their faith, they affirmed their mission. And so I began to think about our own mission statement and what it says about us.

The first problem I encountered was finding our mission statement. It’s not on our web site, or least I couldn’t find it. It’s not on any of our bulletins or any of the documents that people normally read. It’s not even in our newsletter (although I can fix that!). I finally found it in the Church Information Form that was completed during the pastor search process. I suspect that many of you have never seen it. In any case, here it is:

We desire to glorify God by being a living, visible body of Christ in this place and time. Toward this end we strive to worship in humility and to serve with willing and loving hearts. We invite others into life with Jesus Christ, and we seek to equip ourselves and support his saints, near and far, for service to Him in the world.

Let me say that it is really hard to write good mission statements. It doesn’t help that it reminds us of those boring exercises that some of us were forced to do in our required management classes. Nevertheless, a well written mission statement can say a lot about its parent

organization and what motivates it. So what does our mission statement say about us?

I actually think this mission statement is a good reflection of our church body and what it is currently doing. It accurately describes how many of us feel. It fits us well. And it’s comfortable. Why shouldn’t we be perfectly happy with it?

As a matter of fact, it’s not working. It’s a milquetoast mission statement. Any Christian organization would be comfortable with it. It doesn’t distinguish us from any other local church. And it doesn’t challenge us to do anything except “to be.” It might be adequate in normal times, but in a static and aging community with an over abundance of local churches, we simply have to do better.

Perhaps I am being a little harsh. But if we are ever to break out of the self analysis doldrums that we’ve been in for the last three years, we will need to become more proactive in pursuing a mission and establishing our niche in the local community. We desperately need to decide on a mission/purpose and then aggressively pursue it. And our mission statement should boldly challenge us to do so.

Right now the Session, along with our Pastor, the New Beginnings Team, and concerned church members, is struggling with this issue. Soon they will bring their recommendations to the congregation. If you have any thoughts, suggestions, criticisms, or insights, now would be an excellent time to bring those to their attention. In the meantime they deserve our support and our prayers.

Dick Heaton



Christmas Eve Worship

Christmas Eve Worship is set for Wednesday, December 24, at 7:30 pm. The service will feature readings from the prophets and gospels, and singing Christmas carols. The service will conclude with the traditional lighting of candles and singing of Silent Night, Holy Night. Plans are underway for some special music, including possibly the WRPC Chancel Choir. Please plan to join us, and bring a friend, as we celebrate the birth of the Messiah, the Son of God.

New Beginnings Update

The New Beginnings discernment team continues its work, having recently identified some six or eight prospective initiatives for the immediate future of White Rock Presbyterian Church. None of the ideas under consideration are major departures from current WRPC ministries and programs, but some of them include new collaborations with other local churches and new ways of raising the visibility and profile of the church. The discernment team plans to have the list of proposed initiatives to the Session in January, and a more complete summary will be available shortly thereafter.

Pastor John

Equipping/Sunday School

New Bible Study Begins in January

A new study of the Acts of the Apostles will commence on Sunday, January 4, at the usual time for Bible Study, Sundays at 11:00 am in Memorial Hall. Pastor John will lead the new study. Experience has shown that a close-to-optimum schedule for study is two chapters per week, so this study will finish near the middle of April 2015.

Come and experience the trials and triumphs of the early church, guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, as the good news of Jesus the Messiah spreads "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8).

PW News

The Presbyterian Women, as a group, will pretty much be on hiatus through December. Therefore there will be no First Wednesday potluck luncheon in December. Also the Thursday Bible study/circle will not meet. For the weekly Bible study schedule, contact Mary Medendorp or Joan Barr.

We will not be sharing holiday cookies with the Crisis Center. We plan to visit in the spring, either on Easter or Mother's Day with goodies. Also plans for the annual "Souper Supper" are still in the works.

We will continue to collect Box Tops for Education and Campbell's Product Labels, although they may go to a destination other than Menaul School, which has notified us that they receive an abundance and have benefitted with many items from the program. Also many thanks for your donations of hotel-size shampoos, lotions etc. as we continue to share them with sources in need.

Great blessings of Thanksgiving to all and throughout the year!

Joyce Berzins

Advent Potluck Supper

Sunday, December 14, 5:30 p.m.

Join us for an Advent Potluck Supper on Sunday, December 14, at 5:30 p.m. Bring a covered dish to share that you enjoy during Christmas time. Bring a neighbor, family member, or friend to join you at this potluck celebration of this *Advent Season of Love, Joy, and Hope*.



We will have Memorial Hall decorated with Manger Scenes. Please bring a favorite (or several) of yours earlier on Sunday and set the pieces up for display on the tables around the perimeter of the room.

If your manger scene has a unique story or history, please write out the details for display with the scene(s).

Vernon Kerr

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Luke 2:15

Journeys in Faith Dialogue

The Journeys in Faith group is reading Stephen Jay Gould's book, *The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections on Natural History*. The next JIF gathering will be at the home of Bob and Selma Reinovsky on Thursday, December 11 at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome!

Advent Potluck

The Fellowship Ministry Committee has scheduled an Advent Potluck Dinner to be held on Sunday, December 14 at 5:30 pm. Please plan to come! Bring a friend and a dish to share. Please see or call Vernon Kerr for more information.

Consecrated Stewardship A Note of Thanks from the Pastor

Our 2015 stewardship season is now complete. In addition to the genuine gratitude of the 2015 Stewardship Committee (Susan Buxton, George Callaghan, and Sumner Barr), I want to express my thanks to you, as well.

At the center of the "New Consecration Sunday" stewardship ministry program is the fundamental assertion that financial stewardship is not about paying bills or salaries. Stewardship is, instead, a spiritual practice, a spiritual discipline, a spiritual response. Stewardship, in general, whether of time or talent or treasure, is one important aspect of discipleship. All of us are disciples of the living Christ, whose birth among us, and whose return, we anticipate at this time of year.

The journey of discipleship, also known by its ancient name, "sanctification," also known as "growing in Christ," is different for every one of us. No two individuals have the same discipleship journey. I have been convinced by quite a few years of reading, study, and prayer that the faithful stewardship of financial resources is especially critical for those of us who have been entrusted with a great financial trust from God, in the sense of the slaves who received different numbers of talents (Matthew 25:14-30). From those of us to whom much has been entrusted, much is expected.

My sense from being with you for nearly a year is that you understand all this. You grasp that essential concept of what stewardship is, and what it is not.

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
Ann Heaton	23
Megan Kelley	28
Mary Diaz	29

Save the Date!

Skype Meeting with Mission Co-worker Jan Heckler

On Sunday, December 7, at 11:00 am all WRPC members and friends are invited to a Skype meeting with PC(USA) mission co-worker in Madagascar, Jan Heckler. Jan is currently touring the United States but will return to Madagascar in 2015. Come learn more about Madagascar and ministry there, especially the educational reforms that Jan and her colleagues are promoting. For more information, call or see Jennifer Holmes.

Your response to this year's New Consecration Sunday ministry is another indicator.

Your pledging and your giving are not to White Rock Presbyterian Church. Both expressions of devotion are rather to the living God who creates and redeems each one of us. You get that. I am grateful to the same living God, and to you, for your joyful response, your demonstration of discipleship, and your strong willingness to take another step along that journey of discipleship. Your stewardship of God's resources is actually consecrated, made holy, by your joyful and faithful response.

Thank you, faithful saints.

Pastor John

Important Contacts

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Treasury Notes

Contributions & Donations for 2014



To receive credit in 2014 for your 2014 contributions and pledges, please *deliver* your final contributions for 2014 to the church office no later than 12:00 noon on December 31.

Or mail your contribution, postmarked in 2014. (The church office is open Tuesday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., excluding holidays.)



2014 Contribution Statements will be mailed early in January.

You may also submit to the Treasurer or office a list of items you have donated to WRPC in 2014, either valued by you or valued by purchase receipts. We will prepare a donation report for your tax records.

Susan Buxton



ADVENT

*Look how long
the weary world waited,
locked in its lonely cell,
guilty as a prisoner.*

*As you can imagine,
it sang and whistled in the dark.
It hoped. It paced and pattered about,
tidying its little piles of inconsequence.*

*It wept from the weight of ennui,
draped like shackles on its wrists.
It raged and wailed against the walls
of its own plight.*

*But there was nothing
the world could do
to find its own freedom.
The door was shut tight.*

*It could only be opened
from the outside.*

*Who could believe the latch
would be turned by a pink flower —
the tiny hand
of a newborn baby?*

© Pamela Cranston, 2011

A Christmas Message

from
Rebecca Young,
Mission Co-Worker in Indonesia



Rev Rebecca Young is a Mission worker in Indonesia, where she serves at the invitation of Jakarta Theological Seminary and works with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

Dear friends in Christ,

The holiday season is barreling down on us once again. For those of you back home, local stores are probably already decked with Christmas decorations. It's happening now in Indonesia too. Just yesterday at a Jakarta mall, where the majority of the employees are Muslim, the employees were wearing Santa Claus hats with "Merry Christmas" written on them.

Despite the decorations, it's tough to catch the holiday spirit in a tropical country. On Christmas Eve in 2012, however, my spirit got its fill. I attended a worship service at Saint Anthony Catholic Church in Yogyakarta.

Throughout the year, this church stays busy. About 2000 people attend each one of the five services every Sunday. At holiday time, those numbers increase dramatically with up to 5000 worshippers attending on Christmas Eve.

Inside the sanctuary, last year, was a life-size nativity scene. Traditional statues of Mary and Joseph stood by an empty manger. But, otherwise, the decorations had a special theme: sharing the news of Jesus' birth through electronic media! It was disconcerting to see computer-related symbols in the church. But the purpose was to remind us that modern technology can help spread the good news about Jesus. It's a modern way for Christians to "go tell it on the mountain."

The highpoint of the evening, however, was the visit of a group of clergy representing five major religious groups: Buddhist, Confucian, and Hindu priests, Muslim clerics, and a Protestant pastor. It was a special thrill for me when the Protestant pastor, who

happened to be a woman, took her turn in the pulpit, which is usually reserved for male priests, and conveyed a message of holiday greetings on behalf of the local sultan, a man named Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X.

Yes, you read it correctly. By the grace of God, on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2012, an ordained Protestant woman in a Catholic pulpit conveyed a sultan's Christmas wishes to 5000 Roman Catholics on behalf of a gathering of Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu, and Muslim leaders. I nearly wept with joy to witness this Christmas miracle.

To understand fully how miraculous the moment was, you need to know that some Muslim clerics had recently declared that Indonesian Muslims should not say "Merry Christmas" to their Christian family members, friends, and neighbors. The Muslim sultan in Yogyakarta decided to challenge the prohibition in grand style. The sultan contacted the Santo Antonius congregation asking for a few minutes during the Christmas Eve service to greet the congregation.

Sadly, on the morning of December 24th, a brother of the sultan's wife passed away. While in mourning, he didn't renege on his commitment. He sent the inter-faith delegation as his representatives, and they did not disappoint him or us. They acted warm, gracious, and were caught up in the holiday spirit along with the rest of us as they greeted the worshippers personally in a reception line after the service.

That night, the magic of Christmas happened once again. There, in a Javanese worship service, the infant Jesus miraculously brought together people from east and west, from north and south, to sit together in praise of the one God.

Merry Christmas to you and yours,

With love,
Becca



December 2014

Office hours: T, W, Th, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm +++ 672-3682, officemanager@wrpchurch.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
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7 9:15 AM Worship with the Lord's Supper 10:30 AM Coffee Fellowship 11:00 AM Bible Study 12:00 PM "Out-to-Lunch Bunch" <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i>	8 7:00 PM Prayer Group	9 7:30 PM Worship Ministry Team Meeting	10	11 7:30 PM Journeys in Faith Dialogue	12 6:30 AM PM in the AM	13																																																																																											
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