

Living Water

Five Rivers District Office Newsletter

REFLECTIONS FROM RON

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It's about this time of year that we ask, "Where did the last year go?" It's also the time that we begin to implement our plan for the year that's upon us. Now, if you're asking, "What plan?," then you're probably like thousands, maybe millions of others who realized that the end of one year and the start of a new year were rushing headlong towards each other without realizing that we were the ones lying bound hand and foot on the tracks between the two. Before those two trains collide, we need a plan to implement — something to get us out of the way of the collision. But as is usually the case, many of us will begin the New Year the same as we ended the last one — without a plan. And the result is we have no way of knowing whether we've grown appreciably from the last year (or at least done those things which would

have cultivated growth). And on the other side, without a plan to implement for the New Year we have no way to determine our means of growth for the year that's coming.

The blessing in this New Year is that it is new. And the newness of everything is ripe with opportunities and yet to be realized challenges. It has yet to see the corruption of too many days of meandering, mindless, hit and miss chances to do ministry. It is at the same time new enough to allow some thoughtful, provocative, and creative excursions into how God might be working to reveal Christ's presence in our world. Without a plan, each day is dependent on the direction that life takes us. With a plan we can give some direction to our life. We might still be pushed in a different direction by life, but only as life seeks to distract us from where we might be headed by design. And when those distract-

tions arise, it's much easier to find your way back if there was a way charted, a plan laid out, or a given destination to which we were headed.

So, as we give ourselves over to the newness of the year, along with the newness of possibility, the newness of opportunities, the newness of challenges, and the newness of an adventure with God, let's also give ourselves over to the newness of a year with a plan to cultivate Christian growth. If there is not yet a plan in place, then let's give ourselves over to designing one that will lead to our own growth and perhaps the growth of others. Let's remember that the day and the year are new, and resolve to approach this New Year with at least this plan:

¹² Not that I have already obtained this, or have already reached the goal; but I
Continued on pg. 4

2009 Mileage Rates

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2009 the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

55 cents per mile for business miles driven.

24 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes.

14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

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WE ARE CALLED TO EMBODY GOD'S LOVE

By Kansas Area Bishop Scott Jones

It was the poet Edgar Guest who wrote, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day." His point, while mistakenly undervaluing preaching, has some real significance.

This month we celebrate Christmas, and I will hear sermons preached—and preach a few myself—that talk about the meaning of this important holiday. Many of us will tell congregations that Christmas is a celebration of God's gift of love to all humanity.

God cared enough to send the very best—God's own self, the second person of the trinity, the eternal Son of God, to be born as a baby in Bethlehem of Judea. As the Nicene Creed puts it, "For us and for our salvation he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary."

"Incarnate" means in-fleshment. The God who is eternally spirit took on human flesh to live as one of us. The eternal Christ became Jesus of Nazareth, who lived, taught, died and rose again for the salvation of the world.

As John 3:16 puts it, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Sermons that carry that basic gospel message are crucial because they teach people the ultimate truth of the universe. There is a God, this God loves the world, and God became human in Jesus, who is the savior of the world. Getting that message across is important in the process of any individual coming to faith in Christ and setting out on the path of Christian discipleship.

Yet I also know Guest's point about "seeing a sermon." As important as words are, there are times when I know they are cheap. Some words are easily spoken as if the speaking were all that was needed. That is never true. Speaking the word, even the word of God, is preliminary to action—acting out the word of God.

We are called to embody the love of Christ for the world.

The life of Christian discipleship is a life of action. We are called to love our families well—and sometimes that is not easy. We are called to share our resources with the poor—and finding the most effective way to share is often difficult. We are called to verbally share our faith with those outside the church—and faith sharing is scary. We are called to give of our talents to make the church stronger and more missionally effective—and time is often what is most precious to us.

I believe the love of God is transforming the world and that God uses us to embody his love.

I hope the Christmas season makes a difference in your life. I hope your faith, your hope and your love for God and your neighbor is stronger at the end of this month.

How are you going to embody that faith, hope and love so that the world is transformed?

Reprinted from the Kansas East website, Bishop Jones Column dated 12/17/08

[Www.kansaseast.org](http://www.kansaseast.org)

January 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- Jan. 1st Happy New Year District Office Closed
- Jan. 6th Epiphany Day
- Jan. 9th Extended Cabinet Consults
- Jan. 12-13 Extended Cabinet Consults
- Jan. 13-15 Kansas Area Professional Ministry Seminar
- Jan. 15-16 Extended Cabinet Consults
- Jan. 16-17 Lay Speaking Courses Offered at Topeka University UMC see page 4 for details
- Jan. 19th Martin Luther King Day District Office Closed
- Jan. 22nd Leadership Team Meeting, Ottawa 1st, 7 p.m.
- Jan. 23-25 **CCYM Spiritual Life Retreat**, Brenda Davids bdavids@kansaseast.org
- Jan. 24th "How Shall They Hear?" Preaching workshop, Garnett UMC 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Jan. 26-27 Appointive Cabinet Inventory

District Prayer Calendar

- Jan. 4th Waverly/Prairie View UMC, [Rev. Karel Ramsey](#)
- Jan. 11th Hiattville UMC, [Pastor Mary Akins](#)
- Jan. 18th Wesley KU Ministries, [Rev. Holly Snyder](#)
- Jan. 25th Iola: Trinity, [Rev. Connie McKee-Smith](#)

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Cultivating Christian Growth

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We're on the web at
www.fiveriversdistrict.com



Reflections from Ron continued from pg. 1

press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly {Gk [upward]} call of God in Christ Jesus.

That's a marvelous beginning to a plan worthy of implementing.

Agape and shalom,
Ron

Lay Speaking Course Offered:

January 16-17th

Topeka: University UMC
1621 SW College
Topeka, KS

Registration Deadline is: Friday, January 9th

Fees: \$50.00 This fee covers meals, snacks, class materials (except the book for only the Basic Course and instructors.)

Basic:

This is a pre-requisite to all courses.

Advanced courses offered:

Pastoral/Congregational Care
Evangelism/Witness
Stewardship

Contact Jada D.L. Hodgson at legalbgl@micoks.net or David Wasserfallen at davidwasserfallen@embarq.com

Clergy Birthdays In January

Mary Akins	1/04
James Stigall	1/15
January Kiefer	1/26
Billy Hughes	1/30