

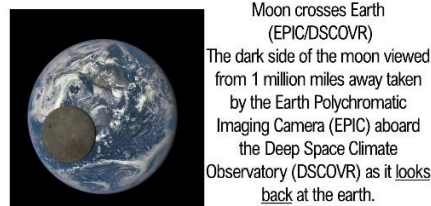
**“Looking Back”**  
**Rev. Dr. RIM Massey**  
**December 1, 2024**

In 2009 the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter was launched by NASA to create a 3D map of the moon’s surface.



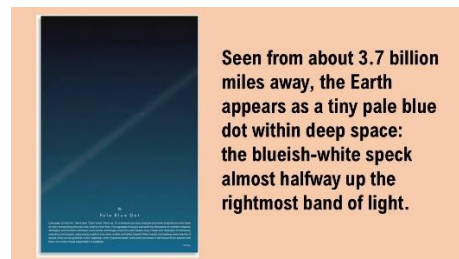
Our first picture is of Earthrise 2.0 taken Looking Back at the Earth from about 250,000 miles as the earth rises over the lunar surface. The beauty of the Earth against the black background of deep space is breath taking.

Our second picture



from 2015 shows the Moon crossing in front of the Earth (EPIC/DSCOVR) The dark side of the moon is viewed from 1 million miles away taken by the Earth Polychromatic Imaging Camera (EPIC) aboard the Deep Space Climate Observatory (DSCOVR) as it Looks Back at the earth. This view shows the size of the moon relative to the Earth.

Our third picture



is a photograph of the Earth taken on February 14, 1990, by the Voyager 1 space probe from an unprecedented distance of approximately 3.7 billion miles. In this photograph, Earth's apparent size is less than a pixel. Our planet appears as a tiny pale blue dot against the vastness of space. NASA wanted this picture taken as a result of the advocacy of astronomer and author Carl Sagan. This photograph was interpreted in Sagan's 1994 book, *Pale Blue Dot*, as representing humanity's minuscule and ephemeral place amidst the cosmos. Voyager 1 was

launched thirteen years earlier in 1977 with the initial purpose of studying the outer Solar System.

After fulfilling its primary mission and as it ventured out of our Solar System, the decision was made to turn its camera around to Look Back and capture one last image of Earth. You can barely see Judi and me celebrating our 19th wedding anniversary in this photo.

Looking back at our planet from 250,000 or 1 million or 3.7 billion miles away, helps put our place in the universe in some perspective.

We all know that looking back is dangerous  
Lot's wife, mentioned in Genesis 19, but not named,



is a figure in the Bible who is described as turning into a pillar of salt after looking back at Sodom. Genesis 19:26 reads “But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

But when I look back today I see the choir.  
I do believe I am safe in doing so, as I am not turning into a pillar of salt.

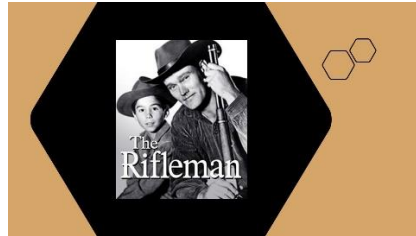
Luke 9:61-62 “Yet another said,  
“I will follow you, Lord, but let me first  
say farewell to those at my home.”  
Jesus said to him,



“No one who puts his hand to the plow and  
looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

In retirement I get to watch a lot of Television.

I like Perry Mason, Matlock, Hogan's Heroes, the Lone Ranger and the Rifleman. In the Rifleman Chuck Connors played Lucas McCain and Johnny Crawford played Mark McCain, Lucas' son.



I like a line from the 1958 episode of The Rifleman entitled "The Sharpshooter".  
 In that scene, Lucas McCain says,  
 after Mark McCain turns around and  
 looks behind him  
 "There's no lookin' back. We've come too far".  
 Mark responds,  
 "I wasn't really lookin' back, I was just remembering back".

So today I am not so much looking back as much as I am remembering back.

I remember 1985



when I was called to be Trinity's pastor.  
 Pictures make looking back or remembering back so much easier!

I remember Superbowl XX and the Bears'  
 Superbowl shuffle and 28 Superbowl parties.  
 I remember 1988 when we celebrated  
 Trinity's 30th anniversary.  
 I remember 1990 when we had  
 our first worship in this sanctuary.  
 I remember December 29, 1990 when  
 the first wedding was conducted  
 in the new sanctuary.

I look back (remembering back, if you will)  
 at the building committee

under Norm Gysbers leadership.  
 For me there are people's names associated  
 with so many things in this sanctuary.  
 Sadly many of those folks have died.  
 Because blue is my favorite color I remember  
 Trinity's 45th (Sapphire) anniversary.  
 I look back with fond memories of Trinity's  
 50th and 60th anniversaries.

But today I want to look back (remember back) at October of this year.

On Sunday, October 6th we celebrated World Communion.  
 The Rev. Dr. Bill Young preached a sermon based on Psalm 30 and Luke 7 entitled "Joy Comes in the Morning."  
 His text was, "Weeping my linger for the night, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5b)  
 We sang "Morning Has Broken," Ted Groshong's favorite hymn and "Lord of the Dance," the late Joan Bays' favorite hymn

In the children's message we all sang,



"He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

The communion service reminded me of those first three pictures looking back on Earth. God has that pixel size pale blue dot in his hands.

On October 13th Judi and I worshipped at The First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe, New Mexico. We didn't see any of you there. Of course we were at the 8:30 service.

The Rev. Dr. Harry Ebert preached about Peter's Denial of Jesus focusing on the trauma Peter experienced. We all experience trauma when stressful, frightening or distressing events occur in our lives, like an election!

Most of us will experience events in our lives that could be considered traumatic. Dr. Ebert had attended a class on trauma. His instructor told him that the two best ways to avoid trauma were:

- #1 - Put down your Cell Phone
- #2 - Turn off the television News

Since I don't carry my cell phone and because I watch old, old TV reruns, I don't feel that I have been too TRAMATIZED.

The 3rd thing he encouraged Christians to do was for us to Prophesy - that is to tell people about the Love of Jesus. The adult Sunday school class featured Victor Nelson, a therapist and trauma specialist.

On October 7th the Church posted this: “Victor Nelson, a resident of Santa Fe, will lead a class on trauma, considering the election that is upon us. He is a retired Lutheran pastor, marriage and family therapist, church and non-profit consultant, mediator, and author of two books.” The service included the blessing of animals. The highlight of the service for us



was the lighting for prayer candles by members of the congregation.

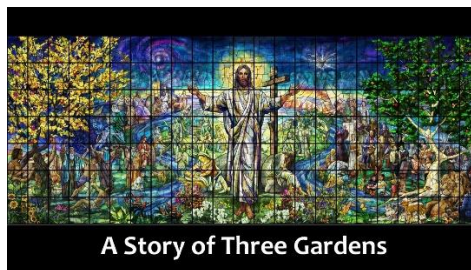
That part of the service was very meaningful to both of us. On October 16th we enjoyed a ride on the Durango-Silverton NGRR –

Durango - Silverton



beautiful scenery with Lynn and Jan from Blacksburg, VA. GO HOKIES. That is for Rob Humfeld.

On October 20th - United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, This is their stained glass window

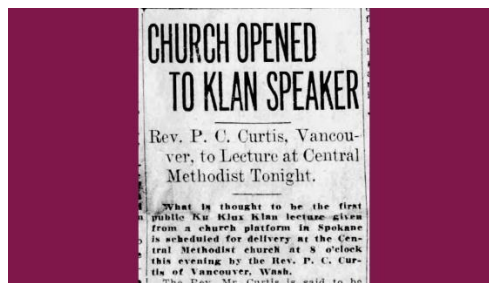


that is about the size of a basketball court. The Rev. Adam Hamilton preached on Christian Nationalism - He spoke about the Nazis and

the KKK. He was concerned about the Methodist church's part in that history.



He warned of the dangers of putting country above the teachings of Jesus found in scripture. While he was preaching my mind wandered. You know the way your minds wander while I'm preaching.



I thought of the Jewish and Roman Nationalism that crucified Jesus almost two thousand years ago. Looking back, I wonder about how little we have advanced in those two thousand years.

The Rev Adam Hamilton reminded the worshippers that it will be four years until we have another Presidential election. He asked us to pray for our nation and I am sure we will all continue to pray for our nation and the world. We also got a yard sign for the political season to remind us of the golden rule.



Matthew 7:12 reads

'In everything do unto others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.'

May the Lord help each one of us to DO UNTO OTHERS as we would have them do to us. May God help each one of us to increase and abound in love for one another regardless of differing political views.

The Apostle Paul in our Romans text for this morning wrote:

‘The commandments, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Paul continued, “Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers;”

On October 27th we worshipped at the Boonville Presbyterian Church. New members - a Baptism - Potluck dinner - army of God travels like every other army - on its stomach. Looking back on the shared intern program with Trinity and Boonville that helped the Boonville congregation revitalize their ministry and purpose was great fun.

Looking back - remembering back - is fun and pictures help so much.

But this is Sunday, December 1, 2024 is The first day of Advent -Today we begin a New Church year - The Apostle Paul tells us “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” “Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Advent is a time to look ahead, not back. Advent is the season of anticipating and preparing for the coming of Christ. Advent is the season that gives voice to our yearnings, our desires, our hope for the return of Jesus. Because we yearn for the return of Jesus, we can live into this season of Advent looking ahead.

Advent should ring true for all of us, for all of us who long for the return of our Lord and Savior. Jesus as quoted in Luke’s Gospel tells us

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud ’with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Jesus continues, “When you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.” Friends and neighbors, today we know what it means to dwell in lowly exile here. We have certainly sung with integrity when we voiced these familiar words of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

Why? Because we know about war, and we know about the rumors of war, and because we know the endless background noise of almost-war, we were able to sing,

"dear desire of every nation,  
enter every trembling heart.”

Because we are a people. who live in deep darkness, we know how we long to see a great light. Let me repeat that last line.

“Bid all our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace”

In his letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul wrote:

“For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers;”

Jesus said, “So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.” Today, on this First Sunday of Advent, we know “our Salvation is nearer.” “The kingdom of God is nearer,”

We rented a car to go on vacation. Judi did all the driving. It turns out that if Judi is in the car, she is driving. She does not like the way I drive, so I get to sit in the passenger seat a lot. Occasionally, I like to look back. So, I check the passenger side rear view mirror.



I read this message. “Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear”

Looking back - Remembering back “our Salvation is nearer. “The kingdom of God is nearer,” Friends, The Kingdom of God is closer than we may think. Remember the first hymn we sang today, “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come” Hear anew its final stanza.

Even so, Lord, quickly come,  
bring thy final harvest home;  
gather thou thy people in,  
free from sorrow, free from sin,  
there, forever purified,  
in thy presence to abide;  
come, with all thine angels, come,  
raise the glorious harvest home.

Friends, The Kingdom of God is closer than we may think.  
Alleluia - Amen!