



The Circuit Rider

Life in the Big Bend Episcopal Mission – January 2004

“Coach Cool” Tackles Big Questions

When Beth Garcia originally asked Seth Burgess to help with teaching “life skills” at the Big Bend Youth Club, Seth was thinking of things like “how to balance a check book” and “how to buy a car.” The youth club serves mostly Junior High kids and they are still struggling with who they are and what life is all about. For the past few months Seth, A.K.A. “Coach Cool”, has been working with the kids on questions of concern to their age group.

“We started out by talking about the job all teenagers have, to figure out what is ‘cool’ and what is ‘not cool’ and what is ‘real’ and what is ‘not real.’ I asked the kids ‘What is the coolest thing you can think of?’ Answers included, ‘traveling,’ and ‘muscle cars.’ Elephants were also in the running.



We looked at some television commercials and talked about what is real and what is not. I gave them a list of ten questions and asked them to pick three they wanted to talk about. The three selected were ‘Why are there so many rules everywhere we go?’, ‘What do teachers really want?’, and ‘Why do we have to go to school?’ We discovered that ‘rules make stuff possible.’ For instance, the rule that says everyone on the highway should stay to their right makes it possible for us

to drive without running into each other (most of the time.) With the help of Marcy Reed, who teaches school, we talked about the pressures teachers are under and how to approach teachers when you have a problem. Jack and Judy Probst helped explore why going to school is necessary, if we want to live in a complex society. After Christmas, Seth will be starting a series about “relationships.” What kinds of relationships do we have with each other? What kinds of feelings do we have about each other? What should we do if we like someone or don’t like someone?

The Big Bend Youth Club is making a real difference in the lives of the kids. It is your financial support that is helping to keep the club going in this critical start-up phase. It’s not too late to donate to the special Christmas offering which is helping the club this year. Just mark your check “special Christmas offering” or “youth club”, mail it to the Big Bend Mission, drop it in the collection plate, or give it to Judy or Elaine.

“When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins, to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among people, to make music in the heart.”
— Howard Thurman

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Meet the Whitleys

Ken and Shere Whitley have been married for 41 years, but just started attending church in the Big Bend Mission in 2002. Ken is from Oakdale, Louisiana and Shere



is from Waco, Texas. They are retired and enjoy writing, reading, crochet, music, travel, yoga, art, and theater. They are active in the community, in church/volunteer activities, and in the St. Paul’s study group.

The Whitleys moved to Marfa after living in Houston for 33 years. Marfa, suits them just fine, but they look forward to going to the city from time to time. Their favorite city destinations are Austin, home to their son Kevin and Minneapolis, home to their son Jay. The Whitleys have two grandchildren.

**Dates set for Annual Mission Retreat:
February 27th through February 29th**

(see page 2)



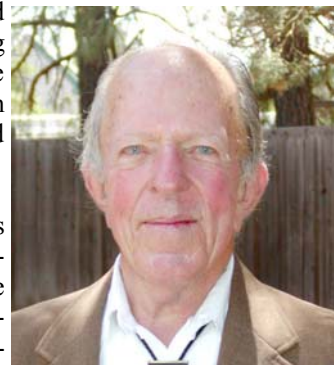
Big Bend Mission Annual Retreat, February 27-29th

Mark your calendars for the annual Big Bend Mission retreat. It will start Friday evening, February 27th and end Sunday noon, February 28th. Activities will include worship, group study, an optional desert hike, plenty of time to enjoy each other's company, and time for individual activities. Terlingua Ranch Lodge will be hosting the retreat again this year. Rooms at the lodge and R.V. spaces will be available. Pets are allowed. To reserve a room or R.V. space, call 432/371-2416. There is no fee to attend. You will be responsible for the cost of your room and meals. Scholarships are available.



The Treasurer Baton is Passed to Aurie West

After seven years of wonderful service to the Big Bend Mission, Al Hoyle is retiring as treasurer. The Big Bend Mission would not be what it is today without the faithful service of Al Hoyle. The job of treasurer can be thankless and tedious at times and Al has performed with dedication and persistence. Thank you Al!



The Bishop's Committee has elected Aurie West as Al's replacement.



Aurie has been assistant treasurer for some time and is ready to take over the job of treasurer on January 1, 2004. Bookkeeping for the Big Bend Episcopal Mission is a bit more complex than it would be if there were only one church. Both Aurie and Al ask for your patience during the transition.

Excellence in Ministry

Excellence in ministry is the stated goal of most churches, but achieving excellence can elude even those with the most dedicated intentions. The Big Bend Mission is blessed to be achieving excellence in ministry. Christian fellowship, worship, and mission projects in the mission would be the envy of many churches of equivalent size. Our recipe includes two ingredients missing at many churches, leadership support and financial backing.



Too often congregations have an adversarial relationship with their leadership. They seem to think the way to achieve excellence in leadership is to select leaders and then complain about their weaknesses. The Big Bend Mission appreciates strengths in its leadership and provides helpful support for leadership weaknesses.

Excellence in financial support has similar pitfalls. Too many churches think that the way to excellence in financial support is to "nit pick" and cut the budget until it matches incoming donations, leaving only worries about how to make ends meet and no resources for excellence. The Big Bend Mission believes that excellence in ministry requires excellent financial support. Giving in the Big Bend Mission responds to the call to excellence. - Seth

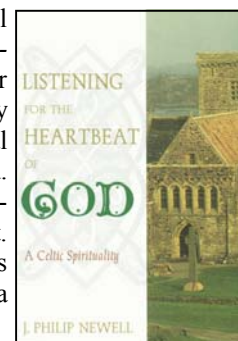
Last Month's Question: Why is the Eucharist called a sacrifice?

Answer: Because the Eucharist, the Church's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, is the way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and in which he unites us to his one offering of himself.

This Month's Question: Why do we pray for the dead?

Study Group at St. Paul's Starts New Book

Right after the first of the year, the study group at St. Paul's will start reading *Listening for the Heartbeat of God - A Celtic Spirituality* by J. Philip Newell. The book presents a spirituality for today, modeled on the vital characteristics of Celtic spirituality through the centuries. There is an emphasis on the essential goodness of creation and of humanity made in the image of God. Anyone may participate in the discussions. Some group members bring their lunch and meet at noon on Thursdays at the St. Paul's parish hall. However, attendance at group meetings is optional. Some participants join the discussion by email. For a copy of the book, contact the vicar.



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**The Glory of the Cross at St. James' in the Setting Sun
Announced Christ's Coming on Christmas Eve.**



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