

All eyes will be on Pastor Warren

Evangelical pastor Rick Warren is President-elect Barack Obama's choice to deliver the invocation at the Jan. 20 inauguration. I would assume as a minister, Pastor Warren will invoke the name Jesus Christ. I would be surprised if he didn't. But in some quarters of this great and at times confused land, mention of Jesus Christ in a public place is an absolute no-no! And they are raising all kinds of noise about it. I guess we'll just have to wait and see how this situation unfolds. I would assume the First Amendment would give Pastor Warren the green light to pray as he would on any other day.

Four presidents and a president-elect gathered at the White House this week. They were former Presidents George Herbert Walker Bush, William Jefferson Clinton and Jimmy Carter, sitting President George W. Bush and President-elect Barack Obama. While the five were posing in front of the television cameras, something struck me as kind of strange. If you recall in the 2008 presidential campaign some people tried awfully hard to classify candidates who didn't wear American flag lapel pins as unpatriotic. Using that same guideline, then former Presidents Bush, Clinton and Carter fall into the unpatriotic crowd as they didn't wear U.S. flag lapel pins, while President Bush and President-elect Obama did. And what does this have to do with anything? Nothing! It didn't back then and it doesn't now. See how silly that mess looks today?

How foolish we can sometimes sound. I was reading about a lady who took advantage of "Black Friday" to get her Christmas shopping done early and at bargain prices. She boasted about the items she was able to buy for herself, and recited the list for everyone in the line to hear. One gentleman was mentally keeping track of her purchases, that totaled well over \$1,000.

But the clincher was this comment, "While walking around the store I came across a display of crockpots on sale for \$4. I remember my mom saying all she wanted for Christmas was a new crockpot, so I bought one for her." The gent keeping tabs of her purchases thought to himself, "Hmm. A thousand bucks for me and \$4 for mom."

Yep, we can sometimes sound really foolish. "Cheap," to put it another way!

What does the sale of monkeys have to do with the Wall Street bailout? It was explained to me this way: One day a man appeared in a village and said he would buy monkeys for \$10 each. The villagers,

Good Evening Norton
Tom Dreiling



seeing that there were many monkeys around, went out to the forest and started catching them. The man bought thousands at \$10 and, as the supply started to diminish, the villagers stopped their effort. He next announced that he would now buy monkeys at \$20 each. This renewed the efforts of the villagers and they started again catching monkeys.

Soon the supply diminished even further and people started going back to their farms. The offer increased to \$25 each and the supply of monkeys became so scarce it was an effort to even find a monkey, let alone catch it! The man then told the villagers that he would buy monkeys at \$50 each! However, since he had to go to the city on some business, his assistant would buy on his behalf. In the absence of the man, the assistant told the villagers, "Look at all these monkeys in the big cage that the man has already collected. I will sell them to you at \$35 and when the man returns from the city, you can sell them to him for \$50 each."

The villagers rounded up all their savings and bought all the monkeys for 700 billion dollars. They never saw the man or his assistant again, only lots and lots of monkeys!

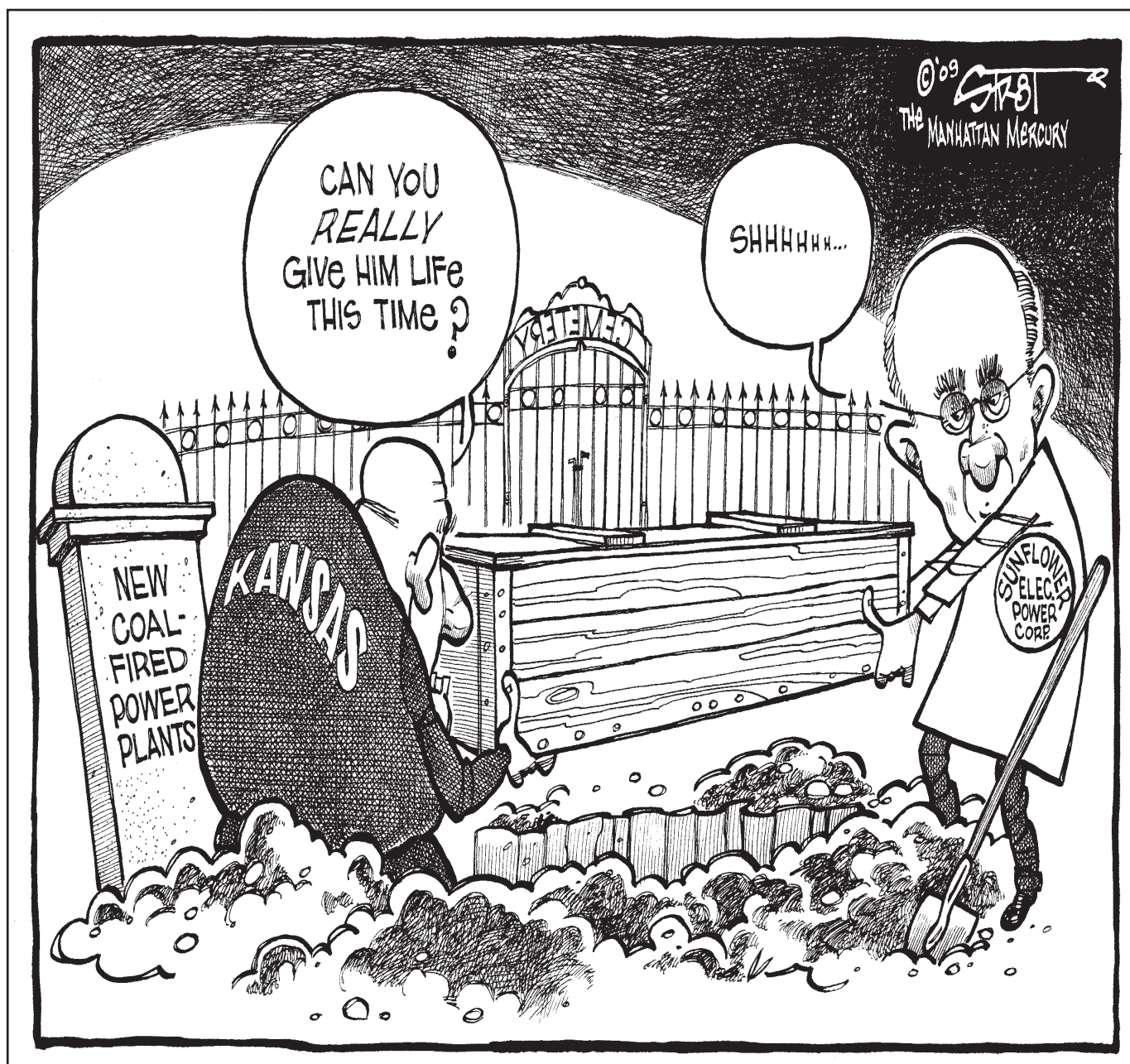
Now you have a better understanding of how the Wall Street bailout plan works.

Can it get any clearer?

Might mention again that the deadline to file for city council or school board is noon on Tuesday, Jan. 27. School districts in our area are USD211 (Norton), USD212 (Almena) and USD213 (Lenora), plus a portion of school districts in Decatur and Phillips counties that are located inside Norton County. City council elections involve the following communities: Norton, Almena, Lenora, Clayton and Edmond.

Santa has come and gone, but for one little guy he has this advice for next Christmas: "Tell Santa not to make so much noise with his sleigh and reindeer when they land on our roof. I couldn't get any sleep, something my parents told me I need in order to receive any gifts!"

Have a good evening! While you prepare to attend the worship center of your choice this weekend, apply going to church with what the little guy above said, in part, "...something my parents told me I need."



All too often, this is a losing battle

In this modern day world of electronic gadgetry one of the things that annoys me most is automated phone systems. I WANT TO TALK TO SOMEONE!! I cannot believe it costs more to hire someone to answer the phone than it does to set those silly systems up. Especially when you consider the loss of goodwill.

It can take lots of time to negotiate one's way through a menu; often being cut off before accomplishing anything.

I have spent more than 20 minutes on hold, being reminded every couple of minutes how important my call is and being admonished not to hang up because it only increases the time I will have to wait. Usually the reason I am making this type of call is because something has gone wrong. Leave me on hold that long and a gentle simmer can become a full fledge boil!

Settling up a bill at the hotel after the recent family wedding put me directly into automated phone hell. From past experience, I anticipated that even though I had her extension number, the gal would not answer her phone. Over eight months of planning and she never had! I got voice mail telling me she will be out of the office from Tuesday to the 29th. It was Monday, Jan. 5.

My options are: leave a message or dial 0 for an operator. I didn't want to leave a message because not only does she never answer her phone, she has a poor track record of returning calls! Besides she wouldn't be back until the 29th. (I guess?) So I dial 0. I explain to the operator I want

Back Home
Nancy Hagman



to talk to someone because extension 351 does not answer. "One moment," he says. The phone begins to ring; I get the voice mail for extension 351. I hung up.

All I want is for someone to listen to me, to say they are sorry about my problems. It doesn't matter if they can solve the problem. It doesn't matter if I come out of the conversation worse off than I was before. I want someone to talk to me!

Which finally happened after I repeatedly dialed the number, then the extension, hung up when I got voice mail and dialed again! It only took about half an hour! What else do I have to do?

Later I was trying to order some photos on-line. I had some problems checking out. There was a number to call. The first choice on the automated answering system was: Do you have a question about an order? So I dialed that extension. A second list of options presented itself. There were about seven, none of them matched my problem. I didn't know what to do. The options were repeated. I decided my question was not really an order question. It was a check out question, so I hung up and called again. I listened to the first set of choices again. None of them seemed

appropriate. Then I remembered hearing that one way to cut through the automated phone red tape is to just dial 0.

In this instance it worked! A real live person was there almost immediately to answer my questions! But what she said my computer screen should say and what it said were two different things. We had to go through the process of fixing things several times. Each time we tried something that didn't work, the woman would say, "I'm sorry," and give me further directions.

As gratifying as I had expected hearing "I'm sorry" to be, her apologies did not quite ring true. I think she was reading off a card. (My call was possibly being monitored for quality control!) Rather than apologizing to the same customer four times because the website does not work how about hiring someone to fix it?

Too simple a concept? It's sort of like having an actual person answer the phone!

What really gets me is when those automated systems call me. We are on the do not call list but sometimes they sneak through.

Recently I got one about vinyl siding. The guy began by saying he is taking a survey. He started asking some questions about our siding. I told him we were on the do not call list. "Well," he said in a huff, "I'm just trying to have a nice conversation with you, I'm not selling anything!"

My only regret: He hung up before I could say, "I'm sorry!"

Sound Off

Apartments I have known, not particularly loved

Reading Liza Deines' column about early apartments brings back memories of a few apartments I have experienced along life's path. My first one was while I was still in college. This was in the fifties and they had moved some old barracks buildings in and partitioned them off into four apartments each to accommodate married students. Two of the buildings were available to single women and I rented an apartment in one.

These had no insulation of any kind and heating them in winter was a heavy task for the small heating stove in the living room. Hot water came to us from the power plant several blocks away on the main campus. Whenever I wanted hot water for dishes, I turned on the hot water faucet and did something else for half an hour until the hot water reached me.

Looking for an apartment can be an adventure of its own. I went with a couple of friends who were looking for an apartment and, at one place, you had to climb some stairs built on the outside of the house. The owner just gave us the key to go in and look at it. When we turned on

the light, the walls moved. I don't think there was a place in that whole apartment where you could put down a finger without squishing one or two cockroaches. The patter of little feet was something I felt I could live without.

A number of apartments were in older houses (usually two-story). I had an apartment on the second story of a house. One of the tenants on the ground floor didn't empty her garbage very frequently and a nice, healthy colony of cockroaches got started and proceeded to expand their holdings. I was unaware of the problem until I found that all the glue had been licked off my postage stamps by the one that was camping out in my desk drawer.

It seems to me that most landlords remain blissfully unaware of the existence of insulation. Not only does the tenant have to pay high heating bills, but noise from others in the building also makes its way around to the other apartments. For a few months I lived on the fourth floor of a large apartment building in Lincoln, Neb. One night the tenants below me threw a

party and the noise was considerable. I decided to see what would happen when I counteracted with some noise of my own. I took the speakers of my stereo and placed them face down on the floor. Then I put on a bagpipe record and set the needle on a fourteen minute lament. Now, I like bagpipe music, but a fourteen minute lament has to be heard to be believed and I have yet to last through one. I turned the volume up and let those below me enjoy. After it was through, I noticed the noise from the party had subsided a great deal.

Then there was the apartment I had where the guys in the apartment across from me asked to borrow my vacuum cleaner. A few days later, when I was vacuuming, the machine started to spit out BB's.

I asked one of the guys about it and he said they had been doing a little target practice in their apartment and my vacuum must have picked up the BB's that had gotten lost in their carpet.

'Nuff said.

June Prout

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