

The Messenger

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Encounters with Jesus: The March of Irony

Rev. Paul L. Escamilla

On the first day of March we gathered in a sanctuary that is becoming more beautiful by the day. Our reading from Matthew that morning told of Jesus in the desert, foregoing enticements and entitlements in favor of reliance on God's provision. We lifted up the metaphor of wilderness as our figurative way of understanding the journey through Lent, sharing Holy Communion as bread for that journey. "The first Sunday in Lent is a great feast," I quoted Thomas Merton as saying, "and it is in the Christ-sanctified wilderness that I discovered it."

Little did we know that by month's end the world would be enveloped in a pandemic, we would be unable to occupy our newly rehabilitated church building, and wilderness would have ceased to be a metaphor. Lent has become this year not merely a concept we borrow as an invitation to choose prayerful paths to God by way of Good Friday and Easter. Lent has become our existential reality.

Most in the Southwest are, for now, spared the blunt force of a virus that has proven so threatening and tragic in other parts of the country and world. Even so, we are near enough to the human face of suffering, even in distant places, and near enough to those whose jobs and vocations lead them into harm's way, risking health to serve their community, to be moved by the peril and toll of COVID-19.

Our beautiful sanctuary has become for us a stunning visual emblem of a once and future occupancy, grandly and quietly holding the space for our returning. Meanwhile our congregation, displaced for what may be a brief or protracted season, has risen to the occasion. We are worshiping and praying, giving and serving, loving and tending, reaching out to one another, looking out for one another, sharing best practices, practicing social distancing, offering skills and resources, hitting the streets and rediscovering our neighbors. In other words, we are being the church. In this difficult and precarious moment I am honored to serve as your pastor, in an even deeper way now than ever before. And I am awed by the ways faithfulness over years is sustaining us through these tenuous days.



Bonhoeffer once said that first love sustains marriage; then, over time, it is marriage that sustains love. Years and years of practicing the rhythms of life together in the praise of God and love of neighbor have readied us, steadied us, for such a time as this. Your love first sustained the church; now the church is sustaining your love for one another, the neighbor, the world.

How ironic is the march that has taken us seemingly overnight from the metaphor to the real, from imagining a Lenten wilderness journey to experiencing such a journey first-hand. In the midst of this very real wilderness—perhaps especially so—God is with us, and God's provision assured. If Lent has been real for us, then so, too, must be the hope and promise of Easter.

Grace and peace.

The Peril and Privilege of the Leading Edge

Rev. Jim Carr, Minister of Pastoral Care

In Jerome Berryman's Godly Play room, at the end of the shelf where there were no more stories to tell, there was a book with blank pages, like a diary or journal. Jerome would say, *"And this is the story you write. Someday, someone (maybe you) will use it to make a new lesson to share with others. And it will inspire them to write their own story."*

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are writing a new chapter in the story of God's people.

Whenever I stand and gaze at the newly refurbished exterior of our sanctuary, I am unfailingly drawn into its beauty. (Definition of refurbish: renovate, brighten.) The architecture of the building carries and communicates a vision from a century ago. It lifts and inspires, with both delicacy and strength. It's like finding an old book in the attic and discovering, when the dust is brushed away, a story of beauty and inspiration.

In order to create such a work, someone has to be aware that they are in the act of creating.

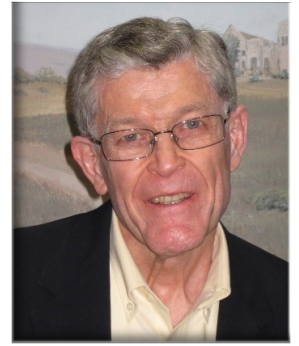
Awareness—consciousness of substance and meaning in the moment.

Creation—giving shape to consciousness in a way that expresses and touches the mind and heart.

Being made in the image of God—involvement in the creative process.

We stand before an open, blank diary-journal. The peril of this moment is that we will be unaware of the opportunity that lies before us, that we will live in unconsciousness, and that we will not be able to create anything of value, either for the present or the future. The privilege of this moment is that we can be aware that this moment is a gift from God, that we are conscious of the substance and meaning that are in this moment, and that we seize the moment to be involved in a creative process that reflects the image of God.

And so, peril and privilege. Will we build on sand, or on the rock? Will the new chapter we write in the story of the people of God be one that shares a vision that is ageless in its ability to lift and to inspire with its grace and strength, that shows forth beauty and can inspire this generation and generations to come? It is a big ask, but remember who is asking.



Music Time with Mr. David!

Check out these fun and creative videos from David Lindquist, our Director of Children's Choir!

Click on Mr. David's photo below, or go to www.laurelheights.org/online for a link to his full playlist.



Our Life Together

Laura Healy, Director of Program Ministries

In this time of staying home and social distancing, I miss my church family. I bet you do too!

One way we can stay connected is through the church's Facebook page. You can find it here <https://www.facebook.com/LaurelHeightsUMC/>.

As you go about your days at home, take a minute to record how you are spending your day. Send me a photo, a short video, a poem, some artwork, or anything you'd like to share with your church family. Send them to lhealy@mylhuc.org, post them directly to the Laurel Heights Facebook page, or post them to your own page and tag the church (@LaurelHeightsUMC).

Share your day and help us weave togetherness in this time of being apart!

Giving to Laurel Heights

Online Gifts: Please visit our website,
www.laurelheights.org/donate

Text to Give: Please text "LHUMC" to 73256.

Checks: Please mail to
 LHUMC, Attn: Bookkeeper,
 227 W. Woodlawn, SATX, 78212.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting
 Laurel Heights through this challenging season.
 Your generosity is deeply appreciated.

-The Finance Committee

For illustrated step-by-step online and text giving
 instructions, click [here](#).

In Hopes of the Harvest

Katie Myers, Lay Leader

Disruption isn't easy to embrace. Its literal definition is to break apart, to rend asunder, to forcibly separate. There is grief and loss inherent in the breaking. It is right and necessary to allow space for those feelings of sadness, of sensing ourselves unmoored from the things that previously tethered us, of mourning the pain and suffering we see in the world around us.

Yet in disruption there is also opportunity. How many of us have experienced the demise of an old car or computer or dishwasher and, after the initial shock of inconvenience and unwanted expense, found ourselves truly

delighted with the replacement we acquired? How many of us have remodeled our house and borne the disruption of living around the construction project, reaping the eventual reward of a house that is more home than it was before? How many of us have broken the surface of the earth to bury seeds in hopes that a garden of flowers or a bountiful harvest might be the result?

The public health measures necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted our life as the church at Laurel Heights. Yet in this disruption I see the planting of seeds that we have reason to hope will produce an abundant harvest. Connections among the congregation are being strengthened through an intentional program of congregational care. Our relationship with our neighborhood friends who join us for dinner on Wednesday night is deepening as we continue to offer nourishment—both literal and spiritual—to the hungry and vulnerable. As we develop new ways to be the church in this time of physical distancing, we are all invited to develop fresh expressions of church that are not bound by the methods and ministries and places that have characterized our lives before this disruption. Who might we reach that we would never have reached before? What might grow in this disrupted soil of our life together?

Our call to worship through the season of Lent includes an intriguing phrase: "This is the journey along which the Spirit is surely moving." At one level, we imagine the Spirit traveling alongside us through the Lenten wilderness. At another, the phrase suggests the movement of the Spirit within our heart and within our faith community, cultivating change, spiritual depth, even transformation—bearing fruit beyond what we could imagine.

I am grateful for the resilient, innovative, and loving spirit of our congregation and staff, who have brought all their gifts and graces to this moment. It has been one of the great blessings of this season to see our Laurel Heights family members both doing what they do best and also discovering new ways that their talents can bless us all. While we journey through this season of disruption, the Spirit is surely moving to bring renewal and rebirth, both within us and among us. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Laurel Heights United Methodist Church Finance Committee Update Y-T-D 2020

Budget Receipts:	March	Y-T-D
Contributions Received	\$64,936.54	\$195,577.11
Other Receipts	\$13,592.66	\$28,683.92
Total Budget Receipts:	\$78,529.20	\$224,261.03
Budget Expenses:		
Apportionments	\$5,461.83	\$16,405.49
Christian Education	\$86.83	\$702.79
Evangelism	\$0.00	\$25.00
Library/Media Center	\$0.00	\$0.00
Missions & Outreach	\$600.00	\$1,631.32
Music	\$0.00	(\$725.16)
Neighborhood Ministry	-\$568.00	\$1,432.95
Worship	-\$91.51	\$119.44
Youth Ministry	\$0.00	\$0.00
Administration	\$3,202.19	\$8,953.29
Operations	\$27,227.80	\$51,952.04
Personnel	\$43,325.53	\$135,160.98
Total Budget Expenses:	\$79,244.67	\$215,658.14
Ahead (Behind):	-\$715.47	\$8,602.89
Trustee Loan		\$75,000.00
Paid 1/1/19		(\$20,000.00)
Balance Due:		\$55,000.00

Staying Healthy



Our Wesley Nurse, Yvonne Garcia, will be taking appointments by phone only.

Please email YGarcia@mhm.org or call (210) 595-9729 to set up an appointment.

If you've been missing the Moving On exercise class, tune in Monday through Friday at 11:00 a.m. to the Sit and Be Fit exercise program on KLRN San Antonio.

Contact KLRN for on-air program information (210) 270-9000



For more information on fall prevention, download this PowerPoint prepared by Aixa L. Alvarez, MD Medical Director, Metropolitan Methodist Hospital. <https://www.laurelheights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Fall-Prevention.pptx>

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Healing: William Beuhler, Diane Boehme, Dean Pearson, Doug Semmes, Mal Hierholzer, Estelle Hogan, Gracie Huron, David Bebinger, Marilyn Cook, Beth Rankin (*Ann Wheeler*), Armando Diaz (*Sandra Ojeda Medina*), Dianna Buxkemper, Shirley Melennyzer (*Teresa Garces*), Darlene Shirey (*Wendell Davis*), Elden Stalnaker (*Roxane Darnell*).

For Those Who Mourn: Rachel Goeres and family, at the loss of Lydia Powell. Karen Hogan and Lucian Smith, at the loss of Truman Smith.

God's Presence: Those affected by the COVID-19 virus and their families, as well as for the caregivers and research scientists working to treat those affected and combat the spread of the disease; homebound members, the incarcerated, and women and men in our military.

You can submit a prayer of gratitude or concern by emailing prayers@mylhumc.org, through [Facebook Messenger](#), or calling the church office (210) 733-7156.

Wednesday Evening Prayer Service

While we are physically distant from each other, our Laurel Heights community is discovering ways to be spiritually and relationally present to one another. One important way that we are staying connected in Christ is by continuing to share in the work of prayer. Today (Wednesday 4/1) from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. we will have a time to gather by Zoom to pray for one another and the world. Paul Escamilla will guide our gathering.

There are three ways to join the prayer meeting:

Option 1: Click on this link: <https://zoom.us/j/130214408>

Option 2: If you use the Zoom app, click Join Meeting and enter the Meeting ID: 130 214 408

Option 3: Call (346)248-7799, and when prompted enter the Meeting ID: 130 214 408

Though scattered, we are gathered in prayer in the name of the one from whose love and belonging nothing can separate us, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Grace and peace.

Birthday Blessings April

4/1 Juan Arredondo Natalie Pearson	4/21 Esther Chalk Shelby Oleson
4/7 Chance Kinnison	4/22 Joshua Mercado
4/12 Raymond Boazeman	4/23 Luke Campen
4/16 Elizabeth Bailey Michael Largent	4/24 Deborah Spading Grace Greathouse
4/17 Randy Pollock	4/25 Sam Guven
4/18 Wyatt Clemens Chris Welch	4/27 Kathleen Gekiere
4/20 Jane Manning Lindsay Welch	4/28 Norma Balderas
	4/29 Laurie Morton



Memorial Gifts

General Memorial

*In memory of Ann Schulze,
from Pam Miller.*

Mission of the Month - April 2020

Creation Care

How much do you know about our Earth—its species, its resources and its threats?

Visit www.earthday.org/earth-day-quizzes to test your knowledge and learn more about how we can collectively care for creation.

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday

April 5
8:30 a.m.
Palm Sunday Worship
Posted to
laurelheights.org
and Facebook

Maundy Thursday

April 8
6:30 p.m. Foot Washing
7:00 p.m. Maundy
Thursday Service
Posted to
laurelheights.org
and Facebook

Good Friday

April 10
7:00 p.m.
Good Friday Service of
Music and Meditations
Posted to
laurelheights.org
and Facebook

Easter Sunday

April 12
8:30 a.m.
Easter Sunday Worship
Posted to
laurelheights.org
and Facebook
12:00 p.m. Peeling of
the Easter Bells



Although the church building will be closed until further notice, office staff will be available to answer phone calls and emails. Please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us during this time.



**What staff meeting looks like for us now!
We are all now masters of Zoom video-conference calling.**

**We miss you all and are working hard to keep us
connected as the hands and feet of Christ.
May God bless and keep you all.**

CONTACT US
Main 210.733.7156
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Clergy

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Rev. Tanya Campen, Deacon in Residence
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It is our custom at Laurel Heights to wave palm branches as we sing "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" on Palm Sunday. While we cannot be together to do that this year, we invite you to participate in this time honored custom from right where you are!

Imagine what you might wave if Jesus were passing by your house today. Discover something from your house or yard and take a photo of you or your family waving it.

Send your photos (landscape orientation, please) to katiemyers@yahoo.com. We will include as many as we can in a montage of photos to accompany our first hymn during worship on Sunday.

We will need your photos by 5 p.m. today, April 1.



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