

The Messenger

April 21, 2020
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A publication of Laurel Heights United Methodist Church

Ring the bells, Easter people

*Rev. Laura Merrill, Assistant to the Bishop & Director of Clergy Excellence
Rio Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church*



I write with a word of gratitude to your pastor for inviting me to take part in your Holy Week worship. On Easter Sunday, Laurel Heights joined a whole array of congregations in lifting songs of joy and praise to God in new and unfamiliar ways. I was amazed by these tremendous efforts and by the faithfulness of all our songs in the face of such a dark time. I also watched and listened as the church's bells pealed with resurrection joy, marking the hour and the day, from their brilliant tower. Life in the midst of death, indeed.

I remember from my time as a local church pastor what Easter Monday felt like. The biggest push of the year was complete. Crowds had invariably been larger than usual; music, glorious; sanctuary, beautiful. I'd managed my own kids' Easter outfits and baskets and celebrated a nice Sunday meal, and by Monday I reveled in a well-deserved day off.

This year, just like everything else, Easter Monday felt different, too. As I scrolled through Facebook, I read testimonies of pastors who had jumped the big Holy Week hurdle and made it to Monday but found little relief there. For some, it was an opportunity to express the grief they'd been carrying for weeks. The cloud of trouble remained, and getting to spend the day in sweatpants was no big treat.

We meant what we said on Easter Sunday—that the grave is empty, that Christ conquered the worst this world could throw at him. Yet it is an odd Eastertide we are living. We stand in a place that's actually reminiscent of the very first Easter people in the early hours—locked in a room, afraid, wondering how to reconcile all that they had experienced between the cross and the tomb. In that place, the risen Jesus appeared, and he gave his friends what they needed to take the next step in their journey of faithfulness.

We are all doing the best we can right now, and you are doing a very good job of being church. It is my prayer that with each day, you will find Christ coming to you, to speak peace into your home. Whatever your doubts or weariness, I pray you will know that Jesus has breathed the breath of his Spirit into you, and that his living presence will accompany you through every moment to come.

Paul quoted Frederick Buechner in his Sunday sermon. To elaborate on that quote: "The worst isn't the last thing about the world. It's the next to the last thing. The last thing is the best. It's the power from on high that comes down into the world, that wells up from the rock-bottom worst of the world like a hidden spring." As a friend paraphrased Buechner, "If it's not the best thing, it's not the last thing." Take heart, Easter people. Let's keep singing and ringing the bells, claiming the resurrection together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Merrill". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

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Mission of the Month

April 2020: Creation Care

Jason Davis, Missions Committee Co-chair

With everything going on in the world right now, it's no wonder our Mission of the Month for April has slipped through the cracks. With all of the events from Fiesta to concerts and conferences cancelled, it's no surprise that our own Festival of Creation Care slated for this Wednesday on the 50th anniversary of Earth Day has been cancelled as well. Fortunately, we can continue the work of caring for God's creation while practicing social distancing and other safety measures.

One of my favorite anthems in the Chancel choir repertoire is *The Majesty and Glory of Your Name*, which recalls the words from Genesis:

*You have given [us] a crown of glory and honor,
And have made [us] a little lower than the angels.
You have put [us] in charge of all creation:
Beasts of the field, The birds of the air,
The fish of the sea. (1)*

This charge to care for God's creation and all that dwells therein stems from the first book of the Bible and is reflected in our *Book of Discipline*:

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. (2)

During this time of quieter, slower, reflective living, we have the opportunity to make mindful changes in our daily lives that have big impacts over time. Everything from the way we shop and eat to the way we care for our own backyards have implications for the rest of the world. We have gathered resources here and on our Facebook page to help begin the work of stewardship of the environment. There is advice on how to properly mulch your grass, how to begin composting your yard clippings and kitchen scraps and fun activities for kids of all ages. In celebration of 50 years of Earth Day, please peruse these resources and find some small way that you too can make a change and further our United Methodist mission "to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God's creation." (3)

Notes:

1. *The Majesty and Glory of Your Name*, Tom Fetteke
2. & 3. <https://www.umc.org/en/content/social-principles-the-natural-world>

*More Earth Day resources in next week's edition of *The Messenger*.

On the 50th anniversary of Earth Day,
join faith leaders in worship

'Fierce Urgency of Now': A Prophetic Call for Climate Justice



April 22, 12-1 PM ET
Register here



Earth Day 2020 Virtual Worship Service

We are all called to be stewards of God's creation.
With wildfires raging and temperatures rising,
that call has never been more urgent.

Inspired by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous words on the "fierce urgency of now," this worship service observes the 50th anniversary of Earth Day by exploring how we are called to be stewards of creation.

Join us in worship
on April 22 at 12 PM ET
on Zoom!

Speakers:

Christian Brooks, *Presbyterian Church USA,
Office of Public Witness*
Bernadette Demientieff, *Executive Director,
Gwich'in Steering Committee*
Shamiso Winnet Mupara, *Executive Director and Founder,
Environmental Buddies Zimbabwe*





Eastertide at Laurel Heights

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. Tomorrow (Wednesday 4/22) 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.

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.

Eastertide in the Psalms

Take a few minutes each Thursday afternoon to meditate on the lectionary Psalm with Katie Myers, Laurel Heights UMC Lay Leader. You can find the meditation on our Facebook page, Instagram, and website. See page 4 for links to our social media and website.



Peeling of the Bells

Each Sunday through Eastertide (May 24), the bells at Laurel Heights will be pealed at 12 noon and broadcast via Facebook. Follow us on Facebook for more details: www.Facebook.com/LaurelHeightsUMC



Giving to Laurel Heights

Online Gifts:

Please visit our website, www.laurelheights.org/donate

Text to Give:

Please text "LHUMC" to 73256. For illustrated step-by-step online and text giving instructions, click [here](#).

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

General Budget

*In memory of Lydia Powell,
given by Nancy and Richard Dugger.*

*In memory of Marrs Bowman,
given by Nancy and Richard Dugger.*

*In memory of George Falk,
given by Nancy and Richard Dugger.*

*In memory of Charles Leake,
given by Nancy and Richard Dugger.*

General Memorial

*In memory of Truman Smith,
given by Carla and Fred Liebe.*

Music Fund

*In honor of her LHUMC Choir family,
given by Elizabeth Schleif.*

Sanctuary Restoration

*In honor of Ann and Mike McGlone,
given by Melinda and Reid Hartson.*

LHUMC Scholarship Deadline: May 7, 2020

Thanks to the generosity of caring donors, the Laurel Heights UMC Scholarship Committee has scholarship funds available for the 2020-2021 school year.

Scholarship applications are being accepted now through May 7, 2020 from anyone seeking an undergraduate or graduate degree.

Church membership is not required.

Scholarships are *not* auto-renewing; current scholarship recipients must reapply.

Contact Elizabeth Jackson for an application: ejackson@mylhuc.org

Super Adults on the



Susan Holloway, Director of Super Adults

This has been our logo and our method of operation since the beginning of the Super Adult Organization. Well, right now we are not so much “On The GO”, but we are still Super. Super Adults, like everyone else, are isolating, but they are not despairing. They are reaching out to friends, pursuing their hobbies, praying for the world, remembering great times past and looking forward to that day when we will be together again. Henry and I have been spending some time looking through old photo albums (remember those?) and remembering past times and great experiences. Now might be a great time to look into that box of old photos you have (we all have one) and be sure that the people in the pictures are identified. You might even reach out to someone in one of the photos you haven’t heard from in a while. I have been receiving daily videos from a friend in New York City. She details what life is like at the epicenter, but ends each offering with the advice “Keep Dancing.” We may be in isolation, but we are possibly surrounded by reminders of great events and times. Remember the past and look forward to the future when things will be better.

“The one law that does not change is that everything changes, and the hardship I was bearing today was only a breath away from the pleasures I would have tomorrow, and those pleasures would be all the richer because of the memories of this I was enduring.”

-Louis L'Amour

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Healing: Gena (*sister of Thad Dorsey*), William Beuhler, Diane Boehme, Estelle Hogan, Gracie Huron, Jane Manning, Dean Pearson, Kami Powell, Doug Semmes, David Bebinger, Marilyn Cook, Beth Rankin (*Ann Wheeler*).

For those who mourn: Carolyn Hierholzer and family, at the loss of Mal Hierholzer.

God’s Presence: Rudy Sandoval (*Mary Sandoval*), those affected by the COVID-19 virus and their families, as well as for the caregivers and researchers working to treat those affected and combat the spread of the disease; homebound members, the incarcerated, and women and men in our military.

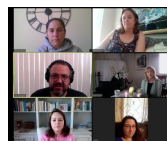
Opening new doors . . .

The Fighting Lions of Zion Sunday school class (pictured below) is one of the many groups at LHUMC that has decided to move their meetings to a virtual platform during this time of social restrictions.

*For where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.”*

Matthew 18:20

With *open doors*, we recognize the importance of gathering together; of having a circle of community with whom to share difficult times. Our goal is to help groups achieve “distanced” gathering in fruitful and encouraging ways. For more information on how to host your group meetings virtually, or on joining an existing meeting, call (210) 733-7156.



Experience your worshiping community online

www.laurelheights.org

@Laurel Heights UMC

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

CONTENT GENERATOR

For the time being, *The Messenger* will be published weekly on Tuesday afternoons. Submission of content for *The Messenger* will be due by 5 p.m. each Friday prior to publication.

Please email submissions to aubrey@mylhumc.org.

