

The Messenger

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Grief and Gratitude

Katie Myers, Lay Leader

*“This is really hard, but it’s nothing compared to what others are dealing with.”
“I feel bad for feeling grateful for what this time has given me because so many are suffering.”*

Over the past weeks, I’ve heard these sentiments many times. I’ve felt them myself. What about you? We struggle with how to hold both lament and thanksgiving—grief and gratitude.

As someone who struggles with a tendency to dwell on the negative, I can tell you that gratitude is a life-giving discipline. I often simply forget the good things until I practice consciously remembering them, recording them, celebrating them. On the other hand, grief is sacred too. Whether a loss is small or large, it is still a loss. It’s an uncomfortable state to be in—grieving—and we often seek relief from it by trying to minimize our experiences or even by focusing on gratitude as a way of denying our grief.

We struggle with holding both grief **and** gratitude because the world often tells us there is only space for grief **or** gratitude. Yet I think one of the lessons of our life together in Christ in this time—for me, and perhaps also for you—is that grief and gratitude accompany one another. We grieve because of love; we give thanks because of love.

Rejoice with those
who rejoice;
mourn with those
who mourn.

Romans 12:15

Sadness and sorrow and suffering have been around us always, yet this time has invited us to know and see and experience the realities of these things in a visceral way. We are freshly, keenly aware of the aches and wounds of the world. And, as things have been stripped away, we have also found ourselves newly grateful for all that we do have and for what we have rediscovered is truly essential to us.

The habits and rituals learned together in our gathered life teach us how to hold space for both grief and gratitude by offering all things to God. We see this pattern again and again in the Psalms where grief and anguish at the full range of life’s injustices and injuries find expression yet always with a turn to thanksgiving and gratitude for God’s goodness. We practice this habit in our [Wednesday night prayer gathering](#) (via Zoom) where our pattern is always to share our lament and our thanksgiving. This is an act of faith that believes that God can hold both our grief and our gratitude, that God shares in our sorrow and in our joy.

We feel the loss of our gathered Laurel Heights community. We miss each other’s faces, smiles, hugs, conversations, jokes, and just physical presence. We miss our shared life together of meals, songs, service, and worship. We grieve that we cannot come close to one another when people are sick or lonely or hurting. We are heartbroken that we cannot mourn the loss of beloved members of our community together, observing the rituals and customs that have always helped us. There are many more griefs and burdens that we carry in our hearts right now. As you’re reading these words, consider taking just a moment to reflect on and experience those . . .

We have also found treasure and experienced healing and nurturing and even joyous moments together. We have found our way to one another in bonds of community that are harder to shake than perhaps even we knew. We have gathered in one another’s homes through telephone and letter and Zoom and Facebook and have discovered new and deep ways of connecting with each other. We have shared prayers, expressions of love left on doorsteps, food with vulnerable neighbors, and shouts of gladness pealed out by the bells. We have been reassured over and over that in all things God is with us, we are not alone. Just as we carry griefs in our hearts, we also have our joys, the small pleasures, the moments of delight, the richness of provision to draw from. Take another moment to name and delight in these good gifts . . .

This is the pattern of our life together—rejoicing and sorrowing, grieving and giving thanks, trusting that in **all** things we are together and that God is with us in **all** things.



Eastertide with Laurel Heights

Peeling of the Bells

Each Sunday, the bells at Laurel Heights will be pealed at 12 noon and broadcast via Facebook live. Follow us on Facebook.

[@LaurelHeightsUMC](https://www.facebook.com/LaurelHeightsUMC)

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](#).

Wednesday Evening Prayer Service

Though scattered, we are gathered in prayer in the name of the one from whose love and belonging nothing can separate us from Christ our Lord. Tomorrow (5/13) 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. Rev. Paul Escamilla will guide the meeting.

There are three ways to join the service:

Option 1: Click on this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/130214408>

Option 2: Download 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



Organ Offerings at LaurelHeights.org

Click here to listen to the musical offerings of our organist and Director of Music, Geoffrey Waite.

Waiting: Being Fully Present, Right Now

Rev. Jim Carr, Minister of Pastoral Care

I am sharing thoughts on the meaning of waiting, from Henri Nouwen. First published in *Weavings*, Volume 2, Number 1, Jan/Feb 1987.

Last week, we heard Nouwen share that waiting can contain a sense of promise, like a seed that has started to grow. Waiting is active when a promise is unfolding, like a seed beginning its growth. "Active waiting means to be fully present to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening where you are and that you want to be present to it."

Being present in this sense means now. "A waiting person is someone who is present to the moment, who believes that this moment is the moment. A waiting person is a patient person. The word patience means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us."

In this COVID-19 moment, the last thing I want to do is to stay where we are and live it out. Patience? (Trust me, there is something else that is also here that is more like a kind of waiting Nouwen will tell us about later.) Instead of patient, we may feel more like the impatient people for whom the moment is empty, and who want to go elsewhere to find a better thing. But there is a very significant challenge here that takes us below the surface of fluctuating feelings to an inner place where we meet with the divine presence promised in John 14:23. It is the place where we have to listen to the Holy One. Nouwen says, "Patient people dare to stay where they are. Patient living means to live actively in the present and wait there. Waiting then is not passive. It involves nurturing the moment, as a mother nurtures the child that is growing in her."

This may seem unreal and esoteric, but let me assure you, we need to allow Nouwen to be our teacher here. For me, the moments when I wanted to be somewhere else, but I sensed that something was trying to speak to me, and I chose to turn and to be still and listen, have been the moments that revealed things that transformed my life.

Because Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary were present to the moment, listening deeply, they were alert and attentive to the voice of the angel: "Don't be afraid. Something is happening to you. Pay attention."



May 2020 Mission of the Month Church Under the Bridge

Church Under the Bridge began in the Spring of 1997, as the name suggests, under the overpass bridge at US Highway 281 adjacent from the old Pearl Brewery near Broadway. By the Fall of 2005, God had placed a calling in the heart of a benefactor to purchase land and build a new church at no cost to the ministry. CUB holds a worship service, clothes closet, hygiene kits and serves a hot meal every Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday evening.

For more information, please visit CUB-SA.org

Laurel Heights UMC has been in ministry with CUB since December 1998. It all began with pioneers Diane Boehme and Julie Mazel, who provided, prepared, and served homemade soup, salad and dessert on the first Thursday of every month under the bridge. Neither, rain, sleet, snow, heat, or cold interrupted the mission.

To help support CUB this month, consider donating the following items:

- Individually wrapped snacks and desserts
- Gently used or new men's, women's, and children's clothing
 - New white socks
 - Backpacks
 - Gloves
 - Personal and oral hygiene items (men and women)
- Financial contributions can be made through LHUMC (laurelheights.org/donate)

**Donations will be accepted every Friday from 2-3 p.m.
at Church Under the Bridge
724 Chestnut St., San Antonio, TX 78202**

For additional information or questions, contact Judy Davis (210) 392-2282.



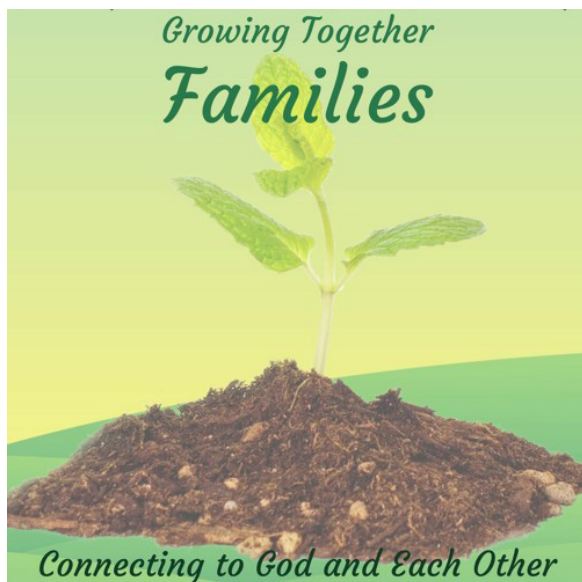
Project Transformation at Laurel Heights will look very different this year.
Laura Healy, Director of Program Ministries

Project Transformation summer camp will happen **online**. Laurel Heights will serve as the contact point for PT families enrolled in the program. We will be **distributing supplies and meals from the SA Food Bank to the families** in a manner that will keep everyone

involved safe and healthy. We will still have many opportunities to volunteer and touch the lives of the children in our care. We will provide **online Reading Buddies** to read one on one with a child. We will also have the opportunity to be **pen pals** with the children in our care! I will have more details in the following weeks.

If you are interested in volunteering, go ahead and get your background check out of the way. Log in to Safe Gatherings <https://safegatherings.com/> to get that process started. Please email me at lhealy@mylhumc.org if you have any questions.

Podcast with Rev. Tanya Campen



Growing Together Families provides resources to help families connect to God and each other regularly in their homes. This podcast invites families into conversation as they consider: How do we connect to God and each other in our daily lives? Conversation provides tips, tools, and resources for doing the important work of faith formation in the home.

[Click here to listen to Episode #4 on Grace](#)

Ad Hoc Reentry Planning Team

As our city and state begin moving into a new phase of response to COVID-19, Laurel Heights has begun the process of planning for our own return to life together as a the gathered body of Christ. The first step of that process is the formation of a working group, called together by Paul Escamilla, our senior pastor, Sue Hall, chair of the administrative council, and Katie Myers, lay leader. The group is currently working to generate recommendations, processes, and frameworks that the church's leadership can use as we move into the coming weeks and months. The members of the working group are: Paul Escamilla, Sue Hall, Steve Haney, Ashley Landers, Katie Myers, Meaghan Rohlfs, and Thomas Sanders. The group will also be working in collaboration with other leaders, staff, and committees as the group's work develops. The current focus areas are: Worship, Staff, Communications, and New Opportunities for Worship and Service.

Birthday Blessings May 12-20

5/12 Robert Rohlfs Elizabeth Jackson Hannah Hughes	5/16 Harrison Hedgepeth 5/17 Kenneth McFarland
5/13 William Shearrer	5/18 Kay Jinks
5/15 Emily Carvalhinhos Rev. Gina Campbell Rebecca Castro Jeanette Morton	5/19 Matthew Scott
	5/20 Jerry Geerdes Irene Vaca

IDENTIFYING RISK FACTORS FOR COVID-19

What does it mean to be at heightened risk for contracting the COVID-19 virus? Follow this link to an article by Laurel Heights member Dr. Steve Haney about assessing our risk and taking precautionary measures to avoid exposure to the novel coronavirus.
<https://www.laurelheights.org/covid-19/>

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

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Healing: Will Beal, William Beuhler, Estelle Hogan, Larry Howard, Liz Hughes, Gracie Huron, Marvin Huth, Jane Manning, Dean Pearson, Doug Semmes, Gena (*Thad Dorsey*), Jeanne Coder (*Clyta Coder*), Meg Mollohan (*Rachel Goeres*), Hanna McCuistion (*Vicki McCuistion*), Artis Owens (*Barbara Miller*), Bryan Geist, Nora Winkler (*Teresa Garces*), David Bebinger, Marilyn Cook, Beth Rankin (*Ann Wheeler*).
For those who mourn: The family of Florence Bilicek.
God's Presence: 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.

Memorial Gifts

General Memorial Fund

In memory of Truman Smith,
given by Kathy Chandler.

In memory of Lydia Powell,
given by Kathy Chandler.

In memory of Diane Boehme,
given by Kathy Chandler.

In memory of Diane Boehme,
given by Clyta Coder.

In memory of Rev. Mal Hierholzer,
given by Elizabeth Hughes.

In memory of Dick Francey,
given by Tom Kurtz.

In memory of Diane Boehme,
given by Tom Kurtz.

In memory of Diane Boehme,
given by Rosemarie Mortola.

In memory of Rev. Mal Hierholzer,
given by Robert & Shelley Stogsdill
& children: Rusty, Opie,
Hillary, & Hallie.

Music Fund

In memory of Diane Boehme,
given by Ann Wheeler.

In memory of Rev. Mal Hierholzer,
given by Ann Wheeler.

Wednesday Night Supper Fund

In memory of Diane Boehme,
given by Bert & Dixie Shoopman.

Pastor's Discretionary

In memory of Lydia Powell,
given by Bill & Ellen Myers.

In memory of Truman Smith,
given by Bill & Ellen Myers.

In memory of Rev. Mal Hierholzer,
given by Bill & Ellen Myers.

Church Under the Bridge (CUB)

In memory of Diane Boehme,
given by Bill & Ellen Myers.

In memory of Diane Boehme,
given by Bert & Janice Clayton.

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With a weekly publication of The
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for print by 5 p.m. each Friday.
Submissions can be sent to
aubrey@mylhumc.org.

What if you are the stones left by God to
help fellow travelers on the path,
*not because you're perfect, but because
you are loved and precious, living
together with each other, together
with God, and because you've learned
something important along the way?*

from the May 10 sermon by Rev. Laura Merrill.
Listen to the full sermon here.

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](#).

Give By Check:

Please mail to LHUMC,
attn: Bookkeeper,
227 W. Woodlawn Ave.,
San Antonio, TX, 78212.

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

-The Finance Committee