

The Messenger

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Improvisation

Rev. Paul Escamilla, Senior Pastor

“It’s a poor cook that can’t improvise.” Never in my life has my mother’s saying been so present in my mind as in this season of disruption and response. Her aphorism applied to all sorts of things through my childhood years—certainly what to fix for dinner when we didn’t have the ingredients we needed for the recipe we had in mind, but also what to do when that happened in the wider sphere of life. My siblings and I were encouraged to discover alternative paths to reaching a goal when the intended path was obstructed. With those wise words, my mother gave us the gift of a lifetime. Improvisation is also a gospel trait—cultivated of necessity in all who would follow the one who improvised his way through ministry, and invites us in endless ways to do the same—laying down this, taking up that.



The word “improvise” comes from a fusion of Latin cognates meaning “not to see ahead.” You can glimpse the word “see” in the end of the word: *vise* (from which, *visual*, *vision*, and *video*). And we know the middle consonant “pro” means ahead, or in front, or before. To *im-pro-vise* means, literally, *not* to see ahead.

How does the community of faith function when we can’t see ahead? More specifically, how do we *improvise* in a time when, due to a pandemic, we cannot be the church in the usual ways?

This is how we have done so: As doors have closed to our conventional place of prayer, we have created an outdoor prayer wall. As our public singing has been silenced, we have pealed the tower bells instead, and sung our songs from home. As our worship gatherings have been on hiatus, online services have sprouted to take their place. Congregational dinners have been suspended, but community meals, served from the parking lot, have fed many a hungry soul. In-person meetings for Sunday school, prayer, choir rehearsal, programming and management have become prohibitive, yet we have found our way to video-conference praying, singing, sharing, and decision-making. Improvisation has become the operative word in this season of disruption; the operative word, and the operative behavior.

What I’ve come to discover is that we are doing in real time what we often speak of conceptually in faith language: living by faith in God’s provision. (Provision, from the Latin *to see ahead*, is the complement of *not* seeing ahead.) “Give us this day our daily bread,” we often pray, our freezers filled with a month’s worth of food. That phrase has taken on a less metaphorical meaning lately. We may not be starving, or worried about our next paycheck, but our hearts are burdened by the keen awareness of many who are; and some of us are taxed in other ways by the stresses and strains, the challenges and emotional freight of this ordeal. To a degree many of us have not known in our lifetimes, the prayer “give us this day our daily bread” has become real.

And so the cooks—that means you, Laurel Heights—are improvising. We are trusting God in new and risk-taking ways to provide our daily sustenance; to strengthen us for an arduous journey whose end point is not yet clear; to open our hearts more broadly than ever to the neighbor next door and the neighbor across the planet; and to gift us with ears to hear the grace notes, eyes to see the human goodness, and hands to offer care and kindness in places formerly beyond our notice.

Thank you, Laurel Heights, for your agility, and for being such grace notes to one another and the community. I am grateful to serve among you just now, and I draw strength and inspiration for my own leadership from your faithfulness. With you I seek to trust more and more that whatever we need in this improvisational season, God will provide.

Grace and peace.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul".

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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. For years, individuals with a true heart for the homeless would bring the Gospel message of hope and salvation in this setting and with a simple camp stove from the back of a van, would prepare and serve a meal, ministering one-on-one to the needs of those attending.

From 1998 – 2004, a small building adjacent to where services had been held became the new meeting place. A building that had been a tavern for decades and stood in the shadow of the old Pearl Brewery now became a lighthouse of hope for all those desiring help. In 2000, Church Under the Bridge formally organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit ministry with a board of directors. When asked to vacate the building by Spring of 2005, hope of keeping the ministry alive waivered, but God had other plans. 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.

The building was finished and the first meal was served in the new “Church Under the Bridge” in November 2011. From the very beginning, Community Bible Church was a strong supporter and donor to this ministry. Now, many churches have partnered with us to sing, preach the Word of God, prepare and serve meals, and donate clothing and hygiene items. CUB holds a worship service, clothes closet, hygiene kits and serves hot meal every Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday evening. For more information, please visit CUB-SA.org

Did you know that LHUMC 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. Over the past 20 years, as the representatives of LHUMC and dedicated organizers, Diane and Julie, assisted by many other LHUMC members, continued providing and serving a meal the first Thursday of the month. The actual preparation and serving moved inside when CUB acquired a building on Chestnut Street. The “first Thursday” mission has now evolved to a partnership with Concordia Lutheran church for either main dish or salad. The complete meal for May 7th will be provided by Concordia Lutheran. However, 200 individually wrapped snacks and desserts are appreciated.

May volunteer opportunities for the Laurel Heights congregation:

Financial contributions through LHUMC and donations of gently used or new men’s, women’s, and children’s clothing, new white socks, backpacks, gloves, personal hygiene kits (men and women), oral hygiene kits and shower kits.

If you’re interested in donating wrapped snacks or desserts, please contact Judy Davis.

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





Feeling the Pulse of Promise

Rev. Jim Carr, Minister of Pastoral Care

This continues a series in which I am sharing Henri Nouwen’s thoughts on “A Spirituality of Waiting” (first printed in Weavings, Volume 2, Number 1, Jan/Feb 1987).



Last week, we heard Nouwen say, “Fearful people have a hard time waiting, because when we are afraid we want to get away from where we are.” But we also heard him say that in scripture we meet people who, because of the nature of their faith, are able to wait, to be attentive, and to live expectantly.

What is the nature of this waiting? “Waiting is waiting with a sense of promise. ‘Zechariah, your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son.’ ‘Mary, Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son’ (Luke 1:13, 31, JB). People who wait have received a promise that allows them to wait. They have received something that is at work in them, like a seed that has started to grow.” This promise that is received is a germinating, growing, unfolding process. It nurtures and feeds the hearts and minds of those who carry it inside.

This kind of waiting is active. It is not a passive, hopeless waiting for fate to happen. Rather, “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.”

I have a sense that this kind of promise is present in the people of Laurel Heights. Even the restrictions we live with due to COVID-19 have not repressed it. Can you feel the pulse of the promise living within and among us? I do, and I think many of you do too. We will live through this time, and in response to the calling of the living Lord, we will minister to each other, and we will serve the world’s needs that are rising around us, and we will embrace needed change in a way we could not have done so quickly only a few short weeks ago. Do you feel the pulse of the Promise?



Eastertide with Laurel Heights

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](#).

Join us in welcoming our guest preacher this Sunday, May 10th,

Rev. Laura Merrill

The service will be posted online at 8:30 a.m.

Laura Merrill is the Assistant to the Bishop of the Río Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church. She has recently placed her letter of affiliation with the Laurel Heights congregation.



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 live. Follow us on Facebook.

[@LaurelHeightsUMC](#)



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/>



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

Budget Receipts:	April	Y-T-D
Contributions Received	\$71,873.34	\$266,050.45
Other Receipts	\$2,876.59	\$32,960.51
Total Budget Receipts:	\$74,749.93	\$299,849.46
Budget Expenses:	\$77,191.32	\$292,849.46
Ahead (Behind):	-\$2,441.39	\$6,161.50
PPP Loan Proceeds	\$27,438.41	\$27,438.41
Trustee Loan		\$75,000.00
Paid 1/1/19		(\$20,000.00)
Balance Due:		\$55,000.00

Birthday Blessings May 1-12

5/2 Audie Scott	5/8 Catherine Geerdes JohnDavid Griffin Riley Lanoux
5/3 Mary Lou Fonseca Jenn Vasquez Diane Halim	5/9 Dixie Shoopman
5/4 Ronnie Watson Shannon McFarland	5/11 Gerald Lee
5/5 Brian Trodden	5/12 Robert Rohlfs Elizabeth Jackson Hannah Hughes
5/7 Alice Gannon	

Wednesday Evening Prayer Service

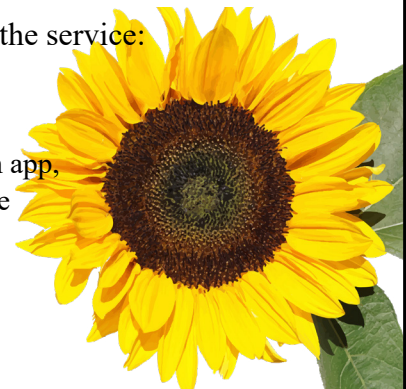
Though scattered, we are gathered in prayer in the name of the one from whose love and belonging nothing can separate us, Jesus Christ our Savior. Today (5/6) from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. we will have a time to gather by Zoom to pray for one another and the world. Rev. Paul Escamilla will guide the meeting.

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



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



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: 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

Experience Your Worshipping Community Online



@Laurel Heights UMC



Contact Us

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Laurel Heights UMC 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@mylhumc.org

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*),
Bryan Geist, Nora Winkler (*Teresa Garces*),
David Bebinger, Marilyn Cook, Beth Rankin (*Ann Wheeler*).

For those who mourn: Henrique Carvalhinhos, passed away March 23.
He was the father-in-law of Fara Ferguson Carvalhinhos
and father of Peter Carvalhinhos;

Leon Flournoy, on the loss of his father, Brent Flournoy.

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.

Content Generator

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