



The Messenger

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Grace Notes and Possibilities: Hope

*Rachel Goeres,
Chair, Grace Notes and Possibilities Work Team*



Our senior pastor Paul called me last month and told me about a new church project. He imagined conversations among Laurel Heights members about how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted us, what unexpected good had come, and what hopes we had for our future church. Paul asked me to read the concept paper he had drafted and consider being the project lead for this idea he and the church leadership team were calling “Grace Notes and Possibilities.” I read the paper and I told him “yes.”

I also told Paul that if he had called two weeks earlier I would have told him “no.” I wasn’t ready. I did not have the energy. Grief takes a lot out of you. My wife, Lydia Powell, had died four months earlier. Some days I could do several tasks while other days I gave myself bonus points for brushing my teeth twice. The ebb and flow. Coping with grief. Adjusting to a new identity: Widow.

I love doing project management. Lists and spreadsheets and timelines - oh my! We assembled a dynamic team (Tanya Campen, Sue Hall, Stephen Haney, Jane Manning, Katie Myers, Paul Escamilla and our fabulous Zoom facilitator Rev. Wyndee Holbrook) and went to work.

We invited you to participate in a number of ways: Zoom sessions, a 7-question survey, Instagram and Facebook prompts, and videos. We want to know how you are doing during this abnormal time as well as your hopes and imaginings for the future of our church. What will our new normal look like?

In the process of doing this work, I realized that my own list of “yeses” in this “no” season was getting longer and longer.

- My son Ryan and I meet up at church each Sunday. We tie a ribbon to the prayer wall. Listen to the bells. Share moments of silence followed by deep conversation.
- I joined a Sunday School class. On Zoom!
- Relationships with my church family are deepening.
- The love and support of family, friends, and my church family help me in my grief to know that I am not alone.
- God is with me.
- Ideas for changes for our church are being imagined which will open our doors even wider.
- We are closer, even in our separateness.

What could not be imagined a year ago has been lived. I have survived. We have survived. I have hope - and hope does not disappoint (*Romans 5:1-5*). Thank you, Laurel Heights, for being the church for me through this time, and inviting me, patiently, to find my way again into life together with you, my church family. I am grateful beyond words for the grace note that is you.

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. Romans 5:1-5

BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

Rev. Jim Carr, Minister of Pastoral Care

Jesus asks his disciples this question: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter responds, "You are the Messiah." And then Jesus says that the Son of Man will undergo great suffering, be rejected, be killed, and after three days rise again. Peter rebukes Jesus for saying this, to which Jesus responds, "You are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

When I say that I am looking for Jesus, I am walking in Peter's shoes. So often when I turn to Jesus, it is the Jesus I want and need in a specific moment, on my terms. But W. H. Vanstone, in *The Stature of Waiting*, gives me hope. He says, "The Creator Himself has given to the world not only power of being but power of meaning, not only existence but meaningful existence. So [a person], in perceiving meaning in the world, perceives what is really there. He sees--no doubt in a distorted or limited way--what God sees: at least he sees the dimension--the dimension of meaning--which God sees."

What Vanstone says is of basic importance in being able to see Jesus. Jesus comes to me and stands before me in the human lives I meet, and in the events in which I live. I want to be open and willing to know persons and events for who and what they are, in their own terms; not as I want or need to see them. I want to be able to see the dimension of meaning which God sees. Can I do this? Only with God's help, and with a leap of faith, and with a heavy dose of humility.

I believe Albert Schweitzer shares such a moment of awareness with us in "Results" at the end of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. He says that he and his colleagues, in their search for a historical Jesus, "...have robbed our own thoughts of their vigour in order to project them back into history and make them speak to us out of the past," that is, when we look into the past to see Jesus and we are wanting to see particular things, what we see is what we placed there, not the real Jesus. But, he says, "that does not mean that Christianity has lost its historical foundation," because there is "...the real immovable historical foundation which is independent of any historical confirmation or justification." And then he makes this statement (my italics): "*Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from Him and flows through our time also. This fact can neither be shaken nor confirmed by any historical discovery. It is the solid foundation of Christianity.*"



BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS

AUGUST 20– 27

8/20
Steve Hines

8/21
Willa Mayer Oakes

8/23
Bill Celaya
Amber Lowery

8/24
Mason Clemens

8/27
Betty Beck



JOYS AND CONCERNS

Healing: Clyta Coder and her daughters, Jeanne and Ruth, Crawford family, Vicki Ferguson, Concha Garces (*Teresa Garces*), Gina, and Mark, (*Sue Hall's nephew and his wife*), Glynn (*nephew of Jill Caldwell*), Diane Halim, Larry Howard, Mary Howard, Gracie Huron, Marvin Huth, Annalynn Jackson, Lucian Manchester, Jane Manning, Shelley McMullen, Sandra Ojeda Medina, May O'Neal, Paul (*friend of Frank Healy*) Louise Rawlings, Debbie Regaldo and children, Javian and Malorie, Ella Sanders, Sarah, Matt and Annie, Doug Semmes, Stephanie (*niece of Dale Dorsey*), Geoffrey Waite, Pat Whitehurst, Nora Winkler

Joys: Ariana Emilia, daughter of Anthony and Sylvia Castillo
Hazel Grace, granddaughter of Nancy and Steve Haney
Margaret Janice Bonner Collins, granddaughter of Byrd and Patsy Bonner

Those Who Mourn: William Hurt on the loss of his brother, James Hurt
Family of Gloria Sparkman, who passed away
Family of Gloria Pittman on her passing (Liz Escamilla)
Deb Spading on the loss of her father, Charles Dunford

God's Presence: Families, teachers, Sunday School teachers, Weekday School teachers, school custodians and administrators as they return to school, 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.

Laurel Heights says “Goodbye “and “Hello”

FAREWELL PLANNED FOR LOUISE DUDLEY



After 23 years as the Laurel Heights UMC bookkeeper Louise Dudley will retire at the beginning of September. We will celebrate her tenure and express our deep appreciation with a love offering and other gifts. If you wish to participate in that offering, direct your

gift online or by check with “Louise Dudley love offering” in the memo line. In the worship service on September 13, we will present Louise with a special gift.

NEW LHUMC BOOKKEEPER BEGINS HER WORK

This past week Amy Caldwell was offered the position of bookkeeper by the SPRC. She has begun training for her new role with our bookkeeper of 23 years, Louise Dudley. Louise will vacate her position within the month. Amy, who has been a math teacher and worked in finance, is a member of Gruene UMC in New Braunfels. Her planned schedule, following a training period with Louise, is to be in the office once a week and work remotely the remainder of the week. Welcome, Amy!



Drive-Through Super Adults! Thursday, August 27 from 9:00 - 11:30 AM



We are inviting everyone to drive through the Woodlawn Parking Lot and wave to Henry and Susan Holloway and the pastor, Paul Escamilla.

You may drop off grocery items which will be donated to Christ Episcopal for their Sidewalk Saturday event that distributes food for families in need.

Needed items: canned corn, green beans, soup, peanut butter and dry cereal. You can also make a monetary donation for purchase of items.

We will put books from the Super Adults library out on carts and you can get out of your car—one at a time—and find a book you would like to check out.

Wear your mask! Wave at your friends!
And collect a special gift.

Drive down Mistletoe and turn into the church parking lot.
Drive through to the Woodlawn Parking Lot.

Super Adults Book Discussion

Via Zoom

Monday, August 31

at 10 am

“A Bell for Adano”

by John Hersey

Call the church office to have the Zoom link emailed to you or call Susan Holloway for more details.



Grace Notes and Possibilities

Online Survey

We want to hear your voice, your ideas, your reflections.

The congregation-wide survey is available on the website

<https://www.laurelheights.org/grace-notes-possibilities/>

through this Friday, August 22nd.

Please take a few minutes to offer your thoughts there or call 210-733-7156 for more assistance.

Visit our facebook page or Instagram platform to share a picture, poem, or prayer.

Thank you for sharing in this month of reflection and discernment!

As we listen to God and each other we invite you to share your photos, artwork, reflections to the daily prompts on Facebook or Instagram. Each day we will post a question with the theme and focus.

Don't want to post- not a problem! These prompts can also be used for your daily reflection and prayer practices too.

Our hope is that these prompts will guide us as we identify the gifts we have experienced during this difficult season (grace notes) and the possibilities for us and our church as we move forward together.



PICTURE

grace notes

possibilities

8.10 HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE GOD TODAY?

8.17 WHAT IS ENCOURAGING OR HOPEFUL ABOUT THIS TIME?

8.11 WHAT COLOR(S) DESCRIBE HOW YOU EXPERIENCE GOD TODAY?

8.18 WHAT COLORS EXPRESS YOUR FEELING OF HOPE?

8.12 WHAT IS YOUR HEART CELEBRATING TODAY?

8.19 WHAT IS YOUR HEART CELEBRATING TODAY?

8.13 WHAT JOYS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED DURING THIS TIME?

8.20 WHAT POSSIBILITIES DO YOU SEE COMING OUT OF THIS TIME?

8.14 WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU TODAY?

8.21 WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU TODAY?

8.15 AS YOU PICTURE GRACE- WHAT ARE YOUR PRAYERS?

8.22 AS YOU PICTURE POSSIBILITIES- WHAT ARE YOUR PRAYERS?

8.16 WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED AS YOU PICTURE GRACE?

8.23 WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED AS YOU PICTURE POSSIBILITIES?

Rev. Kendall Waller, our Río Texas Conference treasurer, shares some inspirational words about the church's generosity through this challenging season.



Read his message here.

<https://riotexas.org/news/2020/8/13/39mp5fgeu7l0x8b2x2s806e301e9hb>

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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.

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.

CONTENT GENERATOR

The Messenger is 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 ejackson@mylhumc.org



Laurel Heights Online

Sunday Worship Live-stream @ 8:30 a.m.

Following the live-stream, the service will be reviewed, repaired, and replaced to ensure a satisfactory viewing experience. The repaired service will be available for sharing and viewing on Vimeo, Facebook, and our website.

Sunday School

Children's Sunday school will continue to be posted to

Vimeo, Facebook, and our website Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m.

Adult Sunday school classes meet by Zoom. Call (210) 974-1834 to find out more!

Wednesday Prayer Service

Though scattered, we are gathered in prayer in the name of the One from whose love nothing can separate us.

Today (8/19) from 6:30-7:00 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 service:

Option 1:

Click on this link: <https://www.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

A Study on Race and the Church

'We Are the Church Together: Racial Justice in the Church' will examine the stages and ways that the Methodist Movement has been faced with issues of race— sometimes impressively and sometimes not. We will navigate together schisms in the Church over race and examine ways that racism has caused stress in the Body of Christ and created opportunities for proclaiming justice. We will look at tears in the fabric of our denomination and annual conference. We will look into the mirror at our own congregation and finally into our own hearts. Don't come expecting a 'feel good' experience but come expecting to be changed!

This study will be led by our own Byrd Bonner and held via Zoom on 4 subsequent Sunday evenings at 7pm beginning on August 30th.

For more information, please contact Laura Healy @ lhealy@mylhumc.org



Realm Connect is Here!

The staff at Laurel Heights has implemented a new administrative software called Realm Connect to help run the daily operations of our church. Now, it's time to share it with you. Realm Connect allows church members to view church news & upcoming events, share contact information with other members, and manage their giving. Realm Connect will be accessible on any PC, tablet, or smartphone.

Realm Connect will replace the paper church directory that's been distributed in the past. However, paper copies of the church directory will still be available for members who request one.

Did you receive an email from Laurel Heights asking for your approval to share your contact information with others?

If not, please call Elizabeth at 210-733-7156.