The Messenger

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Grace Notes and Possibilities: Between shells

Rev. Paul L. Escamilla

Lobsters grow, but their shells don't. I'm sure I learned this in 10th grade biology, but I learned it again years later at a marine museum on the Gulf coast where our family was vacationing with the kids. While we were there I received a call from my superintendent notifying me that I would be moving to a new appointment in June. The news came as a complete surprise, as is often the case in itinerant ministry. The next day we visited the museum. As I stood before the glass display case featuring the shell of a lobster, my mind was swirling with thoughts of what moving would mean to me, my family, my church relationships, my routines, etc. I read a plaque explaining that lobsters can only grow by splitting their own shells, crawling out of them, and growing a new one sized to fit their larger exoskeleton. The parallels became immediately obvious: we grow when we move; we grow when we change; we grow when we accept an unsettling event, leaning into it, rising to our full height. And I certainly did grow with that move—as did our family, the church I left, and the church to which I was newly appointed. God was present amidst the disruption of that transition, and a change that was unwelcomed all around ended up bearing gifts all around.

COVID-19 has forced us to move out of our protective shells—pried us loose from our routines, our patterns, our customs, our assumptions; our programs, our practices, our priorities, and certainly our personal preferences. All that is left for us, exposed as we are, is to grow new shells sized to fit a new reality. In the case of our congregation, the specific day-to-day, week-to-week implications of that consequence continue to unfold. Conversations during our Grace Notes and Possibilities process identified some of those implications; among them, the anticipation that worship, small groups, committee meetings, and other church-related gatherings would very likely become, by and large, hybrid in-person/distance events for the foreseeable future.

While enormous in its scope and impact, this shift has a precedent in the biblical story. The Israelites, displaced through exile from the Jerusalem temple, organized synagogues in their communities of displacement, and in radically altered formats continued to practice ritual gatherings; and God was perceived to be present there. Once the temple was accessible again, temple worship resumed . . . *synagogue worship continued*. Displacement followed by a hybrid in-person/distance model of communal gatherings is a story we already know. Perhaps this can be a source of assurance for us as we face an unknown set of challenges in the coming months. God continued to be real for those attending both temple and synagogue; and God will continue to be real for us, together and apart.

To embrace rather than resist necessity can be a means by which necessity becomes opportunity. My hope and prayer for Laurel Heights in the weeks and months ahead—and I ask you to share it with me—is that by the goodness of God change unwelcome all around may end up bearing gifts all around. May it be so.

Grace and peace.

Paul

A LIFE OF SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Rev. Jim Carr, Minister of Pastoral Care

Howard Thurman was born in Daytona, Florida in 1899, and he died on April 11, 1981 in San Francisco, California. Some persons might wonder what he can say to our time, since, after all, new voices are current for our ears. Thurman himself may have a reply to this concern in his attention to the *particular* and the *universal*. "Thurman's social analysis and theology are based on understanding the relationship of the *particular* to the *universal.* Thurman believes that a *particular* contains the *universal*, and the universal is composed of particulars." For example, when he writes about the spiritual songs of black slaves, "their particularity provides a distinctive insight about the power of faith under the most horrendous life-denying conditions....They sing universal truths about the capacity to know God's love despite suffering and death....He discovers within his particular heritage that which is profound and creative testimony to the universal human spirit." (*Essential Writings* 25-26)

Thurman's open, intelligent, inquiring mind and spirit were formed by a grandmother who was a former slave (we will hear more of her), and by some of the best theological and spiritual-formation mentors available. He traveled to India to meet Gandhi, and became open to the essential truth of religious experience in its shaping of personality and the formation of community. His creativity and his relational energy reached out to countless individuals, and shaped religious communities that were vibrant and life giving. His leadership of worship opened hearts, and his presence in classrooms enriched minds. As we shall hear, he influenced the spiritual foundations of the movement to bring freedom and dignity to black people in America. (Read *With Head and Heart*, an autobiography)

"At the time of his death in 1981, Howard Thurman was Dean Emeritus of Marsh Chapel, Boston University, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Howard Thurman Educational Trust in San Francisco. He also served as Dean of Rankin Chapel, Howard University, Washington D.C.; as professor at Howard University School of Religion, and as Director of Religious Life at Morehouse and Spelman Colleges, Atlanta. Founder of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco, the first interracial, interdenominational church in the United States, he was Honorary Canon of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, New York City." (From the cover of *The Centering Moment*)

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
FAREWELL 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.

Sacred space.

Are you missing being in the sanctuary?

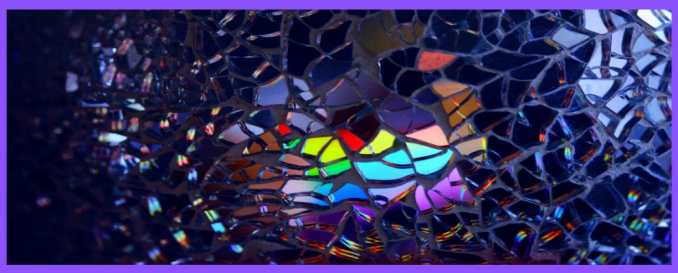
It will be open for a time of quiet prayer and meditation in a come-and-go format Thursday from 5-6PM.

Masks required.
Reserve your spot by calling (210)733-7156.

Community

Are you missing being in fellowship with your community?

We will host an in-person gathering for a time of prayer and sharing Thursday from 11AM-12PM in the church parlor



Masks required.
Reserve your spot by calling (210)733-7156.

Laurel Heights United Methodist Church

Finance Committee Update

Year to Date 2020

Budget Receipts:	August	Y-T-D
Contributions Received	$49,950.34	$488,118.44
Other Receipts	$6,662.81	$62,336.28
Total Budget Receipts:	$56,613.15	$550,454.72
Budget Expenses:	$70,560.23	$575,488.74
Ahead (Behind):	-$13,947.08	-$25,034.02

PPP Loan Proceeds	$0.00	$101,074.93

Trustee Loan -2018		$75,000.00
Paid 1/1/19		($20,000.00)
Balance Due:		$55,000.00

Memorial Gifts

General Memorial Fund

In memory of
Henry Birdwell
given by Paul and Trudy Kinnison

In memory of William Coker
given by Byron King

In memory of
Gloria Sparkman
given by Bert and Janice Clayton

Church Mice Fund

In memory of
Gloria Sparkman
given by Sue Hall

In memory of
Gloria Sparkman
given by Bill and Ellen Myers

Mary Blackford Scholarship Fund

In memory of
Gloria Sparkman
given by Teresa Garces

In memory of
Gloria Sparkman
given by May O'Neal

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 Byrd Bonner and held via Zoom on four subsequent Sunday evenings at 7pm beginning on September 6.

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

Join Zoom Meeting: https://zoom.us/j/97107168193

Meeting ID: 971 0716 8193

One tap mobile
+13462487799,,97107168193# US (Houston)

Dial by your location
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
Meeting ID: 971 0716 8193

Free WiFi in the Woodlawn parking Lot

Have you noticed the signs along the Woodlawn parking lot? The Evangelism committee is publicizing the WiFi hotspot in our parking lot to our wider community.

The WiFi is set up to cover the Woodlawn parking lot and extends all the way from Woodlawn to Mistletoe .

A password, is not required. When connected to your device, it will take you to a page where it prompts you to push a button to connect.
The hours of operation are 6 am to 10 pm.

FREE WiFi

Habitat for Humanity® of San Antonio

Friday, September 18, 2020
12:00 PM to 1:00 PM
Via Zoom

Hab-i-tours are transitioning to an informational virtual tour—join us from the comfort of your home! The Hab-i-tour gives insight into the families, homes, and communities that Habitat is building in the San Antonio area. Led by Habitat staff, Hab-i-tours provide information about hot interested groups and individuals in the community can become a part of Habitat's efforts in building affordable homes in San Antonio, whether through volunteering or monetary donations.

The tour will meet on Zoom for approximately 60 minutes.

Phone 210-223-5203 to register and receive the link for the Zoom tour.

MISSION OF THE MONTH—Habitat for Humanity

We have an opportunity to help Habitat for Humanity build a house on Friday, September 25th. from 7:45am to 3:30 pm. Lunch will be provided. We can have up to 15 volunteers. All skill levels are welcome, transportation will not be provided by the church. If you would like to participate please call or email Jane Manning at 210-859-1639, janem@aptreloctr.com. I will then provide you with all the details. Volunteering together provides a way for us to have fun together while pursuing a common goal, strengthening our community and empowering Habitat homeowners to build a better future for themselves. Please note, Habitat for Humanity leadership team is closely monitoring the Covid – 19 outbreak and the precautions governmental agencies are suggesting limiting the virus' spread. There is a list of precautions that I will be providing to each person who would like to participate.

Call Jane Manning at 210-859-1639 or email: janem@aptreloctr.com.

HELPING HANDS on Mission Service

WHO? You, individuals, small family/friends groups

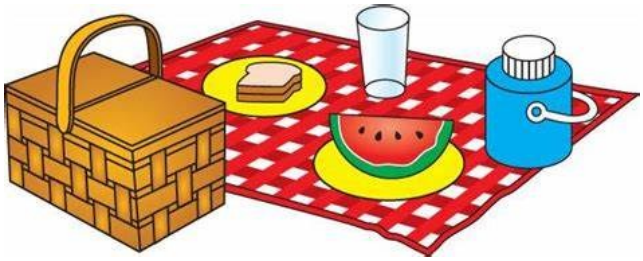
WHAT? Helping Hands work days to verify UMCOR Flood Bucket contents ready for delivery to Hurricane Laura survivors.

WHERE? Bishop Joel and Raquel Martinez Disaster open air warehouse, Kerrville, TX.

WHEN? 9:00 am Monday, September 14 to Saturday, September 19

Contact Judy Davis for additional details and to reserve a date for your mission work.

Judymdavis43@gmail.com 210-392-2282



Thursday, September 24 at 11 am

SUPER ADULT DAY

PICNIC IN THE PARK-ing lot

Bring a sack lunch or reserve one by Susan and park your car in the Woodlawn Parking Lot.

Enjoy some piano renderings by Geoffrey Waite.

We'll provide the dessert and cold water to drink. Munch your lunch in your car or sit outside on chairs provided at each parking place. Late September days are usually pleasant. After lunch we'll enjoy a Sing Song! Be sure and make a reservation to reserve a parking space and a lunch if you want us to provide one. Call 210-872-8031. Choose between Ham & Swiss Cheese or Roast Beef and Cheddar sandwich – served with deviled egg, cherry tomatoes, and package of chips. Cost $5.00.

Wednesday, September 30

9 am – 10 am

Drive Through Flu Shot Clinic

get your Flu Shot

Call and make a reservation 210-872-8031– we will send you the paperwork to fill out in advance – and drive though the porte cochere on the Woodlawn Parking Lot. Walgreens will be there to administer flu shots as they have for the past several years. You won't have to get out of the car. They'll come to you. In this time of Covid 19 it is even more important to get your Flu Shot. Protect yourself and your family and your friends. Shots free for those on Medicare.

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.

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

LAUREL HEIGHTSUMC

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!

September 10—19

9/10
Kay Carter
Miles Kinnison

9/11
Mary Lou Alvarez

9/14
Aubrey Reichman

9/15
Evelyn Williams

9/16
Cheryl Crews

9/17
Barbara Geerdes
Beth Schleif

9/19
Rayda Porter

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Healing: Jeanne Coder, Janie and John Ervin, Concha Garces *(Teresa Garces),* Larry Howard, Gracie Huron, Marvin Huth, Lucien Manchester, Jane Manning, Sandra Ojeda Medina, May O'Neal, Doug Semmes,

Those Who Mourn: Byrd Bonner and family on the loss of his mother, Lou Jane Bonner.

Joy: Birth of Athena Joy, niece of Billie and Tony Arredondo

God's Presence: Students - Elementary, Middle School, High School, College - face to face and remote, 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.

REALM CONNECT
To Belong!

Needing help with our new church database? There are also videos on the church website to assist you.

Please call Elizabeth at 210-733-7156
if you have any questions.

Nominations in Process

The Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development has begun its work in identifying and inviting partners and leaders for various church committees. If you have an interest in serving in some capacity with a board, committee, or work area, see attached for that listing for the current year, and reach out to the chair of the Nominating Committee, our senior pastor, Paul Escamilla, or the vice-chair, our lay leader Katie Myers. You can also contact Elizabeth Jackson, our administrative assistant, to share your interest.

Thank you for all the ways you say yes to following Christ in ministries of serving and leading.

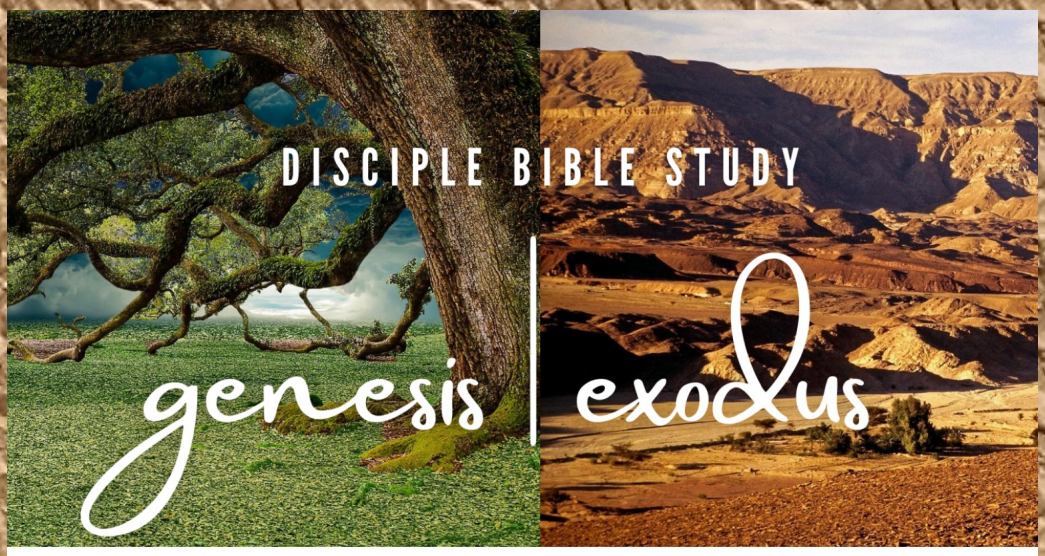
Wednesday Prayer Service

Though scattered, we are gathered in prayer in the name of the One from whose love nothing can separate us.
September 9 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



TUESDAYS
7:00PM-8:30PM

via Zoom
Sept 22 - Dec 15

Leaders: Tanya Campen & Katie Myers

Class Size is Limited.
Registration & Additional Details:
katiewmyers@yahoo.com
(210)587-5498