



The Messenger

December 23, 2020
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A weekly publication of Laurel Heights United Methodist Church

*For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;*



*And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6

Merry Christmas from the Staff of Laurel Heights United Methodist Church!

<i>Amy</i>	<i>Anthony</i>	<i>Aubrey</i>
<i>Elizabeth</i>	<i>Geoffrey</i>	<i>Jim</i>
<i>Joe</i>	<i>Laura</i>	<i>Laurie</i>
<i>Paul</i>	<i>Susan</i>	<i>Yvonne</i>



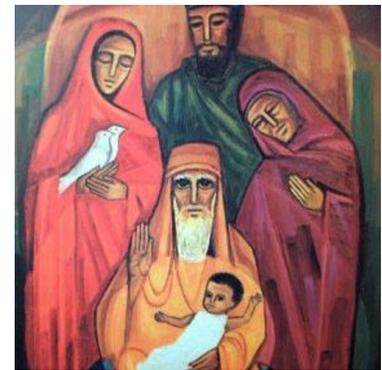
Sunday morning Worship
11 a.m. service of worship will be
on our website and facebook

Watching
for the
Light

Thursday, December 24
Christmas Eve
Christmas Eve by Candlelight
4 p.m. - 7 p.m. (outdoors-come and go format)
Christmas Eve worship online

Come and See What God Has Done

This is the week of Christmas, the birth of baby Jesus. A time of thrilling excitement and celebration as well as stress and exhaustion. This year brings new ways of celebration and gathering, heartbreak or hurt, but maybe the grace of slowing down and complete presence with those who you have near. We are missing some family and friends to our core, but have you found a way to connect that never would have happened without this year, are you creating special and more meaningful memories by seeing and loving those with you now? Don't react, but sit with it.



I don't think anyone would argue that 2020 has been a year of challenges- I mean where do we even begin?! But in those challenges have you let God talk? Have you been able to find those shining moments to get you through? God says he will never give us more than we can handle, and he has been pushing, but have you been able to see the Spirit winking in your direction? Challenges are hard, you can only truly appreciate them in hindsight. The bigger the challenge the more helpless you feel and the more you want to fight your way through it but also the bigger the reward if you take that leap and trust in Him. His plans are bigger. Maybe not what we want, but also maybe they are ... just a much different path than the way we envisioned it. It is hard to keep this faith day in and out but especially at Christmas time every twinkle in each star is that reminder. He is there.

I would love for you to join me this Sunday at 8:30 am over Zoom
for Come and See What God Has Done!

<https://www.laurelheights.org/come-and-see/>

Merry Christmas and warm hugs,
Kiley

or Zoom watch party at www.zoom.us
Zoom Meeting ID: 991 2749 3339
Zoom Password: 588464

Notes from the
Faith Journey



I recently had the pleasure of watching multiple TV and movie versions of the classic story “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” by Dr. Seuss with my four-year-old twin grandsons. One of the many blessings of spending time with young children is the opportunity to see the world through their fresh eyes which can be simultaneously naïve and wise. They were skeptical about how the people of Whoville could be so joyous on Christmas morning despite all of their Christmas decorations, gifts and food having disappeared during the night. Why weren’t they angry or sad?

This was, of course, yet another great opportunity to help educate them about the true meaning of Christmas. But as is so often the case when you work to teach a young person something, you often learn something yourself.

I had been struggling with the thought that for the first time in over 60 years I would not be singing in a Laurel Heights Choir at the Festival of Lessons and Carols. I would not be in our beautiful sanctuary participating in the Christmas Eve Candlelight service. I would not get to enjoy reenacting the story of the Three Kings with a large group of the congregation and visitors at the annual Feast of the Three Kings. All of these uplifting, cherished events and so much more has been stolen from all of us by this horrible pandemic. I have been feeling a little angry and sad about that loss.

But as I spoke to my grandsons it occurred to me that the Whos down in Whoville were right. I have focused too much on these lovely, but ultimately secondary rituals of Christmas. I have no good reason to be angry or sad. Nothing should diminish our JOY that Christ came with his message of Love, Hope and Peace.

In Austin there is a restaurant, the El Arroyo, well known for its sign that often has a funny and/or wise saying on it. A recent one said “In a World full of Grinches be a Cindy Lou Who.” Good advice for all of us this Advent and Christmas season!

Alice Gannon





**"A Christmas Offering
for the friends and family
of Laurel Heights
United Methodist Church"**

Friends, please enjoy this video of Christmas music for organ and brass, recorded in our sanctuary and produced with the help of talented friends and colleagues. It is offered in the hope that, in a time when we are unable to enjoy music together in person and deeply saddened by it, it might brighten and cheer your hearts in the season of gratitude and celebration of the gift of the Christ Child.

From a grateful Director of Music.

The video is now available on our website and at this link:

<https://www.laurelheights.org/ministries/music/>



The Festival of Lessons and Carols
video is on the church website



at <https://www.laurelheights.org/ministries/music/>

Giving to Laurel Heights

Online Gifts: Please visit our website,
<https://www.laurelheights.org/give/>

Text to Give:
Please text "LHUMC" to 73256.

Checks: Please mail to
LHUMC, Attn: Bookkeeper 227 W. Woodlawn, SATX, 78212.

Thank you, Laurel Heights, for your faithfulness in giving.

Memorial Gifts

General Memorial Fund

In memory of
Harold Souder
Given by Teresa Garces

In memory of
Lester Koerlin
Given by Teresa Garces

In memory of
Martha Hamil
Given by Teresa Garces

In memory of
Ellen Gunn
Given by Paul and Trudy Kinnison

Music Program Fund

In memory of
Peter Kline
Given by Jan Garverick

In memory of
Marjorie Parrigan
Given by Sandra Webb

Choir Robe Fund

In memory of
Marjorie Parrigan
Given by Deanna and Mike Trodden

Honorarium Gifts

General Memorial Fund

In honor of
Elizabeth Jackson
Given by Teresa Garces

In honor of
Desi Gloria
Given by Teresa Garces

In honor of
Jesse Fernandez
and maintenance staff
Given by Teresa Garces

Library Fund

In honor of
May O'Neal
Given by Sandra Webb

Year-End Gifts

As you contemplate year-end gifts, please keep your church in mind. We welcome your donations through the church website at [Laurel Heights.org](http://LaurelHeights.org) or by mail. End of Year gifts must be postmarked by December 31st.

If you have any questions please contact Amy Caldwell at acaldwell@mylhumc.org.

Amy Caldwell, Bookkeeper
Laurel Heights UMC
210-733-7156 ext.209

End of Year Giving Tax Tips from the Stewardship Committee

If you are age 70 ½ or older and have an IRA

Individual Retirement Account (IRA) owners who are age 70 ½ or older can directly transfer up to \$100,000 annually from an IRA to a qualified charity, tax-free. This is called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD). Traditional IRA distributions are subject to federal income taxes and can increase your Social Security premiums for Medicare Part B and Part D. By having your IRA administrator transfer the money directly to a charity, you forgo paying taxes on the distribution and reduce your Social Security premiums.

If don't itemize (2020 only)

The CARES Act, passed in March to provide coronavirus relief, allows taxpayers to deduct cash donations to charity of up to \$300 on their 2020 federal tax return, even though they take the standard deduction.

Married-filing-jointly taxpayers do not get a bump to \$600, however. \$300 is the maximum above-the-line deduction per return.

If you want to give big (2020 only)

For those donors who are still able to itemize their deductions, and therefore directly write off gifts to charity, the current deduction cap is 60% of adjusted gross income. The CARES Act lifts this cap to 100% for individuals and joint filers for 2020 federal tax returns. It could theoretically mean zero taxable income if someone gives big.

Please consult a qualified tax advisor about your specific situation.

Wednesday Prayer Service

December 23 from 6:30-7:00 p.m.

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

There are three ways to join the service:

Option 1:

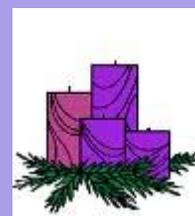
Click on this link: <https://www.zoom.us/j/130214408>

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 time to
to pray for one another
and the world...*



Methodist Children's Home
Offering Hope Since 1890

LHUMC Mission of the Month - December 2020

Every dollar donated will be directed to meet the daily needs of those in our care, such as:

- Essentials for youth residing on our Waco campus and Boys Ranch.
- Supplies and materials for students attending our University of Texas-University Charter School.
- Housing and counseling costs for young adults participating in our Independent Living program.
- Support group and resource costs for grandparents who are primary caretakers for their grandchildren.
- Classes and case management for foster parents and children.
- Family preservation education and services for communities served by our 13 MCH Family Outreach offices across Texas and New Mexico.

Your support makes a difference! The Christ-centered love and care we offer is made possible by your generous gifts. Thank you for helping transform lives and joining our call to this meaningful ministry.



OUR VISION

We empower all we serve to live life to the fullest.

OUR MISSION

We equip children, youth and families to flourish by offering hope through Christ-centered relationships, services and support.

New Year's Day
January 1st, 2021, 11a.m. - 12 Noon

**HAPPY
 NEW
 YEAR**

Drive through the Woodlawn Parking Lot to wave at one another and pick up a bowl of Black-eyed Peas and Cornbread. The peas are traditionally eaten on New Year's Day in the South for Good Luck and Prosperity. There'll also be a Fortune Cookie for you. Write your prayer for 2021 and drop it in the basket.



Super Adults had a successful Christmas Drive-Through last week! Donations were collected for the Food Bank of San Antonio while those in line were treated to holiday music and a visit from Santa.

Merry Christmas!



Happy Birthday!

December 24—December 31

12/24
 Nancy Jones

12/27
 Janie Groves
 Max Healy
 Ashley Soli

12/28
 Jill Caldwell
 Dale Carver
 Liz Hughes

12/29
 Harper Shaw

12/30
 Sam McGlone



JOYS AND CONCERNS

Healing: Adi (*Ashley Landers*), Betty Benson, Whit Birdsong (*Kitty Grantham*), Jeanne Coder, Gena (*Thad Dorsey*), Marvin Gregory (*Carrie Clemens*), Denise and Marvin Howard (*Kitty Grantham*), Annalynn Jackson, Lucien Manchester, May O'Neal, David and Kim Parker (*Ashley Landers*), John Parsons, Margaret Persky, Camille Semmes, Doug Semmes, David Semrad, Bill Shepard (*Janice Clayton*), Letty and Ivan Trevino (*Kitty Grantham*), Bob Walden.

Those who mourn:

The family of Elise Townsend on her death.

God's Presence: for our country, parents, teachers and students both 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.