



# The Messenger

December 6, 2023  
Volume 55, Issue 46

*A weekly publication of Laurel Heights United Methodist Church*

Laurel Heights United Methodist Church



NOW BOOKING LIMITED

## *A Festival of Seven Lessons & Carols*

*Prelude Begins | 6:30 p.m.*

*December 10, 2023 | 7:00 p.m.*

*Reception to follow at the end of Lessons & Carols.*

## *In God's Steps: A Miraculous Journey*

by Byrd Bonner

I was thirty years old, a new father and homeowner. I had started to find myself in leadership around the then San Antonio District and Southwest Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. I found a spiritual home in ecumenical networks and learning of global movements seeking the unity of the Body of Christ. John 17:20-21 seemed to be a mantra for my own theology. I learned the language of ecumenism, which is a whole vocabulary unto itself! I had never considered myself a racist.

I was thirty-four years old and found myself elected to serve as the only white lay man on the global General Commission on Christian Unity & Interreligious Concerns. The fact that I can say that name quickly and type it quickly without error says it all in some ways. I started to be challenged to build interfaith relationships. First with Jewish friends at Temple Beth El and elsewhere, then Muslim friends in other states. I was getting ahead of my faith. I sought help and learned much from the then United Methodist Women and other groups about a Christian's challenge to value other understandings of creation and relationships with God. I began to know and learn from a new mentor, Bishop William Boyd Grove then serving the Albany New York area. A white man of great accomplishment



and distinction, Bishop Grove had the respect of all other bishops, others Christians and persons of all living faith communities. I had never considered myself a racist.

I was forty-one years old and was named to serve as a member and then as treasurer of the Pan-Methodist Commission. It is the global intersection of the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal and United Methodist Churches—denominations divided by, in some cases torn apart by, one thing: race. Again I found myself across tables from Bishop Grove. I began to realize that we were often

the only white faces in these meetings of 30-40 bishops, clergy and laypersons. As I observed his wisdom and heart, I began to understand the challenge that a white person and especially a white man must take on to wrestle with and conquer his privilege and power. You see, without uttering a word or making a move, white persons operate in a sphere of privilege that must be acknowledged and considered. I shed tears in realizing that unity of those four denominations did not mean structural merger, that the value is in learning the struggles of one another largely benefitting the white majority and marginalizing Black members outside and inside the United Methodist Church. I very much wanted merger. Bishop Grove helped me to realize that merger was a human construct rather than a divine one. He helped me to understand the freedom of acknowledging privilege and wrestling with what it means to be a *recovering racist*. The moment I understood that is one of the more freeing moments of my adult life.

*In God's Steps, cont. on pg. 3*

*In God's Steps cont.*

I realized that fact many years ago now and it has led me to and through repentance, reconciliation, and even trust among persons of other races and ethnicities as I never understood or expected. God can do great things with us once we find ourselves open to being used. Come with us on this miraculous journey. My hope is that this insight gives you an idea of why the study *In God's Steps* is so important to me. I share these steps in my life above to attempt a transparency that is painful and freeing. I challenge you to think of your own journey and see what you recall and what may be left undone.

Registration is open for In God's Steps: Walking Together Toward Racial Justice. The opening dinner is January 7<sup>th</sup>. Small group book studies will follow. There will be a closing dinner on February 25<sup>th</sup>. Follow the QR code to register online or look for paper registration forms at the church.



# Super Adult News

Dec. 11 @ 10am - Book Talk

"Christmas Bells" by Jennifer Chiaverini

Dec. 14 Super Adult Christmas

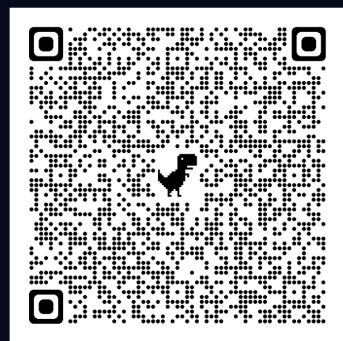
10:30am - Bingo 11:00am - Lunch

\$8.00 per person

# SHARE YOUR ANGEL WING PHOTOS #lhumcadvent2023



## JOIN US ON CHRISTMAS EVE



Join us Dec. 24 for Christmas Eve  
at Laurel Heights UMC

11am - Intergenerational  
7pm & 11pm - Nativity Retelling  
in Scripture & Song

All services will include communion and candlelight





# REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

1 Peanut Butter	2 Rice	3 Dried Beans	4 Mac & Cheese	5 Canned Chili
6 Canned Tuna/ Chicken	7 Breakfast Cereal	8 Canned Fruit	9 Crackers	10 Oatmeal
11 Pasta	12 Pasta Sauce	13 Stuffing Mix	14 Instant Potatoes	15 Soup
16 Apple Sauce Cups	17 Canned Pinto Beans	18 Crackers	19 Canned Tomatoes	20 Cookies
21 Canned Green Beans	22 Canned Carrots/ Corn	25 Please bring your completed box to the church on or before December 24.		
23 Cranberry Sauce	24 Canned Sweet Potatoes	Our boxes will be going to the San Antonio Food Bank.		



Laurel Heights UMC  
227 W. Woodlawn Ave. San Antonio, TX 78212



hello  
DECEMBER

2023



S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13

- Advent Dinner 5:30pm
- 9 Letters to Santa 10am *Santa will be here!*
- 21 Movie night Polar Express 5pm
- 24 Christmas Eve Services  
11am 7pm 11pm *No Bible Class on Christmas Eve*
- 10 Epiphany Dinner 5:30pm



# Advent

Join us for  
Midweek Advent Dinner &  
Worship, Wednesdays  
in December at  
5:30 p.m. in  
Fellowship Hall.



*Merry Christmas*

**The Polar Express**

**ROUND TRIP**

**LAUREL HEIGHTS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
OPEN HEARTS. OPEN MINDS. OPEN DOORS.  
227 W Woodlawn Ave.  
San Antonio, TX 78212

No 01/0001

Thursday  
12 - 21 - 23  
5 PM

FREE  
Hot Coco  
Popcorn



# Sunday Worship Services



December 10, 2023  
9:00 a.m. Worship Service  
Advent 3  
Sermon: Rev. Lisa Straus  
Liturgist & Song Leader:  
Tom & Jeanette Morton  
Scripture - Matthew 1:18-25

**Fellowship Gathering**

Sunday, December 10  
9:30am to 10:00am  
Fellowship Hall.  
Thank you Pathfinder & Fighting Lion  
classes for providing snacks and re-  
freshments to our church family.

**Sunday School**  
10:00 a.m. to 10:45 am.

**Worship / 11am / Sanctuary**  
The 11 am service is live-streamed at:  
[www.laurelheights.org/online-worship/](http://www.laurelheights.org/online-worship/)  
and on our Facebook page  
[www.facebook.com/LaurelHeightsUMC](http://www.facebook.com/LaurelHeightsUMC)



December 10, 2023  
11:00 a.m. Worship Service  
Advent 3  
Sermon: Rev. Lisa Straus  
Liturgist: Thomas Sanders  
Scripture -Matthew 1:18-25

## Church Calendar

### Friday, December 8

9:00 a.m. Exercise Class - *Room 312*

### Saturday, December 9

9:00 a.m. Volunteer Opportunity @ C.A.M

10:00 a.m. Letters to Santa - Fellowship Hall

12:00 p.m. Youth Lunch Movie & Gift Exchange

### Sunday, December 10

9:00 a.m. Worship - *Sanctuary*

9:30 a.m. Fellowship Time - *Fellowship Hall*

10:00 a.m. Sunday School

11:00 a.m. Worship Service - *Sanctuary*

1:00 p.m. Lively Spirits - *Parlor*

5:00 p.m. Advent Study—*Zoom Only*

7:00 p.m. Lessons & Carols - *Sanctuary*

### Monday, December 11

9:00 a.m. Exercise Class - *Room 312*

5:30 p.m. Board of Trustees Meeting - *Parlor*

### Tuesday, December 12

9:30 a.m. Staff Meeting

5:30 p.m. Finance Committee Meeting - *Parlor*

### Wednesday, December 13

9:00 a.m. Exercise Class - *Room 312*

5:30 p.m. Midweek Advent Dinner & Worship

7:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal - *Choir Rm/ Sanctuary*

### Thursday, December 14

9:00 a.m. Church Mice

6:00 p.m. Tai Chi Class - *Room 312*

### Friday, December 15

9:00 a.m. Exercise Class - *Room 312*

### Sunday, December 17

9:00 a.m. Worship - *Sanctuary*

9:30 a.m. Fellowship Time - *Fellowship Hall*

10:00 a.m. Sunday School

11:00 a.m. Worship Service - *Sanctuary*

5:00 p.m. Advent Study by Zoom

## Letters to Santa



Join us at Laurel Heights to write  
Letters to Santa on Saturday  
December 9 at 10am.



 **LAUREL HEIGHTS**  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
OPEN HEARTS. OPEN MINDS. OPEN DOORS.  
227 W. Woodlawn Ave.  
San Antonio, TX 78212



United  
Women  
in Faith

Dear UWF sisters, because of schedule conflicts, we are unable to hold the Dec. UWF meeting at the regularly scheduled time. Please put Tuesday, Dec. 12, at 1:30 p.m. on your calendar and plan to attend a Holiday Concert. For additional information, please contact Janice Clayton.



# Prayer Requests

## JOYS AND CONCERNS

### *Healing:*

Lucien Manchester  
Sonny Landers  
Richard Parrigan  
Natasha Garza  
Barbara Miller  
Kaylyn LeFevre  
Donna Semmes  
Gracie Huron  
Diane Halim  
Elizabeth Jackson  
Juan Arturo Gonzalez

### *God's Presence:*

For those affected by the COVID-19 virus and homebound members;  
the incarcerated; and women and men in our military.



**Lord, in your mercy,  
hear our PRAYER**

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

## Happy Birthday

12/8

Stephen Hall  
Holly Hoting  
Ann McAdams  
Ann Elise Salazar

12/9

John Largen  
Jocelyn Reed

12/10

Byrd Bonner  
Steve Haney  
Wynne Jones  
Jerome Malek  
Diana Phillips  
David Shelden

12/12

Jed Dorsey  
Donald Redmond

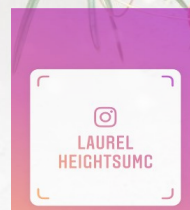
*Are we missing  
your name  
on the birthday list?*

*Please notify the  
church office  
at 210-733-7156  
so we can update our  
records.*

*We don't want to  
miss anyone!*



## Follow Us On Social Media



<https://www.facebook.com/LaurelHeightsUMC>

**Sanctuary Offering**

**Online Giving**  
Please visit our website:  
<http://www.laurelheights.org/give/>

**MANY WAYS TO GIVE AT LAUREL HEIGHTS UMC**

**Text to give:**  
"LHUMC" 73256

**Or use our QR code**

<http://www.laurelheights.org/give/>

## Church Office Hours

9:00am to 4:30pm  
Monday through Friday

Contact Us  
210-733-7156

## Laurel Heights Staff

Rev. Lisa Straus, Senior Pastor

Rev. Laura Healy, Associate Pastor

Laura Marty, Music Director

Dr. Melanie Randall, Organist

Angie Taylor, Dir. of Young Family Ministries

Heather Weidenbach, Administrative Manager

Debbie Cormier, Administrative Assistant (PT)

Susan Holloway, Super Adults Director

Yvonne Garcia, Wesley Nurse - 210.733.7156

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