



Focus Newsletter

“WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I SPOKE LIKE A CHILD, I THOUGHT LIKE A CHILD, I REASONED LIKE A CHILD; WHEN I BECAME AN ADULT, I PUT AN END TO CHILDISH WAYS.”

~I Corinthians 13:11

Year Without Easter

by Rev. Darren Walker

Growing up, Easter was about candy eggs and jelly beans (and avoiding those hard-boiled eggs at all costs!) Then I got older and learned the Jesus story was important. As time went by, I came to realize the sacrifice and love of Christ that has nothing to do with candy, eggs or jelly beans. I mention this because, this year, for the first time in my life, we will not be able to gather as a Church Family for our Sunrise Service or our Easter Celebrations. My first reaction was anger and sadness.

So, I decided to see what my second or third reaction would be. “Easter is still Easter” is what came to mind. Christ died for us and rose from the dead. Maybe we can focus on that more this year without the distractions and activities we normally hold. Maybe, we can focus on our loved ones and spend the time with them or improve our prayer life or Bible Study. Maybe we can each have our own Sunrise Service and remember that people all around the world are doing the same. The church staff is definitely becoming more tech savvy as we work to figure out how to worship and minister on line and through remote contact. The Prayer Team has a Facebook page now. Sunday School Classes are being asked to initiate regular contact with each member. We may end up increasing our outreach in ways we have never thought to do or be forced to implement before. With God’s help, this hurdle could become a series of blessings.

This brings us back to Easter. At a time of darkness and despair, when the first believers thought their world was over, there was Jesus and the World changed. That power and love is still present to help us through our time of darkness and despair. Celebrate Easter this year as big as you can because Jesus is real!

April Calendar of Events

- Sundays in April: Online Sermon on website, YouTube, and Facebook
- Mondays in April: Financial Peace University class online
- Apr 9: Maundy Thursday Online Communion Service
- Apr 10: Good Friday online sermon
- Apr 12: Easter Sunday

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A Song of Hope

by David Pencil, Director of Music Ministry

In a time of fear and confusion, the heart of Easter is a song of hope; hope for the restoration of our lives beyond death, hope for the restoration of the world into the paradise we long for it to be, hope for the restoration of our sinful souls to the perfect holiness of God's presence. We sing the song of hope in our hearts when we trust in the promises of scripture. We are not alone. We are not abandoned. We are loved and treasured. We are called to look beyond the darkness into the light of the promises of God; to trust, to wait, to hold on, to persevere in the face of whatever trial is before us. So sing out church! Sing the song of hope in your hearts, and whether we are near or far from one another we will be united in that great chorus. Stand on the promises of God, for his amazing grace has granted us victory in Jesus.



Memories of Easter

by Carolyn Henry, Congregational Care Coordinator

Easter has always been one of my favorite holidays. Pardon me while I take a trip down memory lane. I loved coloring Easter eggs with my sisters – I can still remember the smell of the dye. I loved eating the eggs too, and the candy – I loved the candy! Even those awful hard-shell candy covered nougat ones. And then there was the Easter egg hunt in my Aunt Mary's big yard. The whole school would hunt eggs there on the Thursday afternoon before Easter. Someone would win the "prize egg" – the large chocolate egg that came in a special box (unfortunately I never did.) Then we were out of school for the next 4 days. And then on Easter Sunday – we would all dress in our new Easter clothes and line up on the pew in our local church. I loved singing "Up from the grave He arose". And I remember thinking "Of course Jesus rose from the grave – after all He was God, and God can do anything".

This year it's most likely that we will be hearing an Easter sermon online, and maybe Dave will sing "Up from the grave He arose" for us. I'll be singing along. Because even though we won't have all the "trappings" of Easter this year, the real joy of Easter is in our hearts. Jesus did conquer death for us, and we can experience the true joy of Easter now and forever more.

Online Giving

by Shannon Stone, Bookkeeper

Would you like to give a gift to St. John's UMC, or maybe arrange for payment of your Sunday School materials? It is easy, free and secure to use our website to donate! Anyone with a credit card, debit card or bank account can give easily. Here's how:

- Go to our website: www.stjohnsumc.cc.
- At the top right of the web page, click on DONATE.
- Scroll to the bottom left of that page and click on MAKE A DONATION.

Once you see the St. John's UMC Donation page, you can complete the form:

- Type in your donation amount. In this field, the default amount is \$0.00, but you can easily erase that amount and type in your own.
- In the FUND field, choose Online Giving.
- Where would you like us to apply your donation? In this field, you can be specific about how and where you want us to apply your donation: General gift, pledge, payment for a church-sponsored trip, payment for a bible study book – whatever you'd like. If you leave this field blank, we will apply your gift to General Giving.
- Donor Information – your first and last name are required. Your email address and home address are optional, but if you would like an email notification of your online donation, please add your email address.
- Choose how you want to give – Credit/Debit Card OR Bank Account.
- For whatever means of giving you choose, please complete the information needed to process your donation: Card information, or bank account information, with billing address.
- There is a box to check at the bottom of the form that helps us cover the cost of online donations. This is optional and can be left blank.
- Finally: Click on the big orange DONATE! Button!

If you have any questions or need assistance with the online donation form, or giving to the Church in general, please contact Shannon Stone at bookkeeper@stjohnsumc.cc.





Easter is Love

by Kathryn Price, Director of Family Ministry

After reading the Easter story to my 8-year-old grandson, I asked him what Easter meant to him. He said it was about being with people you love and who love you to celebrate that Jesus loved us.

I couldn't have said it better. Easter is about love. God's love for all of us, Jesus loving enough to forgive those who had betrayed him and the chance to give our

love to those around us.

While we try to hold on to "traditions" like egg hunts, new clothes or special dinners; we should never lose sight of the real meaning of Easter. We remember and rejoice in the *Greatest Love the World has Ever Known*.

Share today with those you love.

"Easter is about love."

Community

by Andrew Taylor, Director of Youth Ministry

The world is a crazy place right now. Doubt, uncertainty, and fear threaten to take over. It's the perfect time for Easter. Death cannot claim victory over us. Jesus has already won that battle. Even in the darkest of times, we are promised that we will have victory and rebirth.

So what does that look like in our world right now? One way is by finding community in the face of isolation. Thank you to everyone that has reached out to their neighbors in this time of need - you are a light of resurrection in the world. Thank you to everyone that has contacted friends, family, and loved ones to offer presence - you, too, are a light of resurrection in the world.

If you're struggling and need support, please reach out to the church. We have small groups of all sorts that are continuing to meet online. We have people who are willing to run errands and grocery shop for those in need. Please, let us know so that we can have the opportunity to be a light of resurrection to you.



What Easter Means to Me

by JoAnne Gaytan, Nursery Manager & Children's Coordinator

My least favorite topic to write about is “What (insert holiday) Means to Me.” I am a fairly intelligent person, and can write decently about many topics, but putting personal meaning to something and then trying to put that into words seems to be beyond me. But, I am going to try.

Sometimes I think I have trouble because I have a “complicated” upbringing, and most holidays evoke some beautiful, warm memories, while the same holiday can also evoke some ugly, painful memories. Even when I try to focus on why the good memories were meaningful, the other memories like to make sure to push their way in so they are not forgotten. And although I suppose I could write about the good by explaining how they were special because of the people I was with and the time spent with them, the same is true for the bad memories – based on the people I was with and the time spent with them. Sort of a paradox. (This is where it hits me that I at least had a topic to focus on – possibly a little nudge by God, there.)

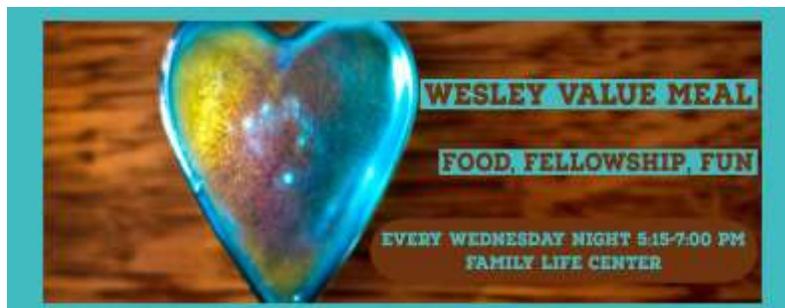
That thought made me remember that Easter is

also a paradox, or actually consists of several paradoxes. It is a holiday that we celebrate with great joy and wonder that Jesus was raised from the dead and even now He lives and walks with us and wants to have a relationship with us. However, for any of that to matter, Jesus had to die. But he didn't just die, He was humiliated, debased, beaten, abused, betrayed, and mocked. And all that was *before* He was crucified. The paradox isn't just that He died and God resurrected Him. That is part of it, but the biggest part is the amount of shame and torture He endured and taking on the punishment of OUR sins so that we can now rejoice and have peace in the knowledge of God's gift of grace. The biggest miracle is the resurrection. The biggest paradox is all that suffering was ours to take, but He took it for us, and we now can live with the joy of His grace and the anticipation of heaven.

I guess God wanted you guys to know what Easter means to me, after all.

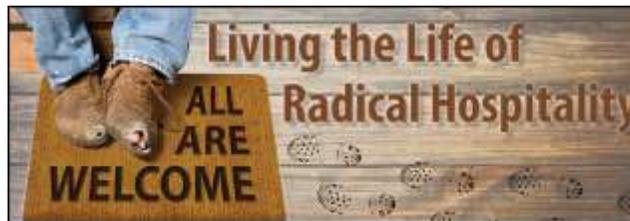
WEDNESDAY NIGHT MEAL AND ACTIVITIES FOR APRIL

All Wednesday activities are on hold until the week of Monday, May 11, 2020 due to Williamson County restrictions. Please keep watching the website, your e-mails, and the Facebook page for more information as we move through this time together.



FEBRUARY 2020 FINANCIALS

2020 Income \$111,885
2020 Expense \$92,444
Net **+\$19,441**



HEBREWS CAFÉ

Where Y our Cup Runneth Over

Hebrews Café will be closed until May 11, 2020

United Methodist Women News

by Shirley Channell, co-President



St. John's United Methodist Women

Due to the ban on gatherings of more than 10, we will not be meeting in April. We will tentatively plan to meet in May.

United Methodist Men News

by Dean May, President UMM



St. John's UMM - General Meeting

Due to the ban on gatherings of more than 10, we will not be meeting in April. We will tentatively plan to meet on Tuesday, May 12, 2020.

Praise His Name

by Michelle Cousineau, Communications Coordinator/Executive Secretary

I grew up French Roman Catholic. You would think that they would have leaned heavily on the Lent portion of this season and the awesome power of God to raise His Son from the dead. But my family always celebrated Easter without the preparation of Lent and always with candy, Easter egg hunts, family and food. We didn't talk about the ugliness that Jesus went through in order to be raised from the dead, so Easter was just another holiday where the kids got stuff, mostly candy.

I have only recently (in the last few years) really started with Lent and I have to tell you, it has completely changed what Easter means to me. To walk with Jesus in that final week, to know you are about to be betrayed by someone you thought was a friend, to know that you were going to be humiliated and persecuted and nailed to a cross to pay for OUR sins, and to go through with it because you loved us that much. Then, it happens - Jesus rises from the dead. He defeats death in glorious fashion. Psalm 150 captures Easter to me. It is singing God's praises loudly and to the whole world.

Easter is no longer just about the candy in our home (although trust me, there is still candy), now we sing with joy to the Lord and we praise His name from the rooftops if need be. Easter shows God's love for His children and I am so blessed to be a part of that family, aren't you?

¹ Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!
² Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
³ Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
⁵ Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
⁶ Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD!
~Psalm 150 (NRSV)



ST. JOHN'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

St. John's has been a part of the Georgetown Community for over 140 years.

We started as a group of Swedish immigrants who joined together in their homes to study, worship and pray and built our first church building in 1882. At that time, we were known as the Swedish Methodist Episcopal Brushy Church (Svenska Metodistkyrkan at Brushy).

The original church stood at the intersection of Westinghouse Road and FM 1460. Our church cemetery is still at this location.

In 1906 we moved to town, to our present home at 311 E. University Avenue, and in 1938 we changed our name to St. John's Methodist Church.

In 1968, when the Methodist Church joined with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, St. John's became St. John's United Methodist Church.

Come join us and share in our rich history and heritage of celebrating God's love.

St. John's United Methodist Church
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If you have a prayer or blessing you would like to share, please e-mail prayerteam@stjohnsumc.cc.

A NOTE FROM THE PRAYER TEAM

by *Martha Arizpe, Prayer Team Chairperson*

It has come to my attention recently that there are many political ads on TV. Many of them are by a spokesperson for the candidate, and at the end, there is a note or verbal comment from the actual candidate that they approved the message. The same thing occurs when the actual candidate is the one making the ad. In other words, he actually says that he approves of what he just said. It seems to me that if the candidate is the one speaking, then the public is to believe that the opinions he espouses are really his true opinions. Seems redundant for him to have to reconfirm that point. Then I had a "light bulb above the head moment" - wouldn't it be helpful if we really did have to authenticate our statements after we made them? If we really had to say: "Yes, indeed, that is exactly what I believe, exactly what I meant to say, and exactly the tone I meant to say it in." Would having to take immediate responsibility for what just came out of your mouth make you more careful about what you said? Does not seem to really work for politicians, but the theory seems sound. At the very least, maybe it will add a bit of caution to our daily conversation. We could probably all benefit from that.

Blessings,
Martha Arizpe

MONTHLY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

The monthly worship schedule is on hold until we come together for worship again in May. Know that we miss seeing you every day and pray that you are all staying safe and healthy. If you need anything, please do not hesitate to contact the church office at 512-863-5886. You can also e-mail any of us on the staff and we will be happy to help you.

Grace & Peace,

St. John's Staff



**You are loved
and missed**