



BLUFF PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Easter at Bluff Park UMC

Easter may look a little different this year. Of course, we will be observing the state and local guidance on the gatherings of people each and every day. However, it is looking like we may not be able to hold an Easter celebration in our Sanctuary and Chapel this year.

This has forced me to consider what Easter is really about. Is Easter about the choir singing Handel's Messiah? Is Easter about packed sanctuaries and white lilies? All of those things are wonderful and they add to the celebration, but they are not the main thing. We gather at Easter to

marvel at the great news that Christ, who was born for us at Christmas, has now risen from the dead. Death has been defeated and life everlasting is offered to us all! Even though it may be a much smaller celebration in our homes, I believe that God is more interested in changed hearts than packed sanctuaries.

So, we are not ready to cancel our plans for Easter just yet. But be prepared for us to offer a Livestream of our worship services at 10:30 am on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Inside this newsletter, you will find information on how to connect with our Livestream online. We will also be sending out more information about our offerings on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The best way to stay in the loop is to subscribe to our weekly e-mail newsletter.

Remember, God is more interested in changed hearts! May you marvel at the miracle of Easter as you cherish that Jesus is Risen indeed!

The Same Mission But In A Very Different Season

Church has felt very different for the past few weeks. We were forced to move quickly into digital means of communication and worship. Thankfully, we had already offered a worship Livestream for both of our services for many months.

The work of ministry and mission at Bluff Park United Methodist Church continues. It is the same mission but in a very different season. Your giving is needed now more than ever. By financially supporting Bluff Park United Methodist Church you are witnessing to your faith that God is at work even in difficult times. Your generosity funds our church's mission even as we have cut back on non-essential expenses and invest more heavily in staying connected to our church family and in serving the needs of our community.

Remember, God calls us to be generous with what we have. Maybe what you have now is a little different from what you had several weeks ago. But what you have can still be used to make a difference!

You can give by: 1) mailing in a check, 2) setting up a recurring gift with your bank, 3) using an online application such as Realm or EasyTithe, or 4) calling the church to set up a time for us to meet you at the front door of our office area!

Seek God, Lose Yourself, Find Life

www.BluffParkUMC.org

Sunday Morning

WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 10:30 am

Watch on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/bluffparkumc

Watch on our website:
bluffparkumc.org/livestream

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Our faith, our lives, and our ministries take on a new life when the stories are shared with others. Help us tell God's story of love as it unfolds in our church and community. Send news, photos, videos, and stories to newsletter@bpumc.org

Message from the Pastor

When the people of God were scattered from Palestine around the Mediterranean and the Middle East, it was called "diaspora." It was the unfortunate state of God's people who were supposed to be gathered together as one people in the land of God's promise. The scattering had at least one negative and at least one positive outcome. The negative outcome was that the faith of the scattered



people became more difficult to hold as it was. They were strangers in a strange land and felt the pressure to assimilate. The positive outcome was that their unique faith was able to witness to new peoples.

In a way, we have experienced two weeks of diaspora. And as I write this at the end of March, it is possible that even on Easter Sunday we will be sheltering in our homes as we proclaim that Christ, our Lord, is risen! This is a very unusual moment for such a church-culture like we have in the south. Eventually, we will gather again. But the negative outcome may be lurking around the corner. We will likely be tempted to stay at home more frequently now that we have experienced online worship. We may even be tempted to care for ourselves rather than to get out of our comfort zones and serve others in the name of Christ.

But we shall overcome those temptations. We shall because God will not let us! And we shall because we are the kind of church that believes in gathering together. The positive of this temporary diaspora is that we are really discovering just how much we need one another and what gathering together truly does for our souls. Another positive of this temporary diaspora is that we are beginning to see the real meaning of the church. The church is more than just a gathering of good Christian friends. We gather so that we can be formed. And we gather so that we can be sent by God to witness and to serve. I know many people have experienced new ways of serving their neighbor and witnessing their faith in this strange time. It just goes to show what God can do in every situation we face. All things are possible with the God who called the people of Bluff Park United Methodist Church together as one body. Thanks be to God!

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Mike".

Help During the Coronavirus... Church Members Step Up to Help!

From the outside it may appear that the life of the church has come to a standstill, but nothing could be further from the truth. A tremendous amount of mission and ministry continues to happen through the work of our staff and volunteers.

Our food ministry has become more vital than ever as the most vulnerable members of our community struggle to keep food on the table. With Birmingham issuing a shelter-in-place order, our Food Pantry team made some rapid shifts in their plans. Many of the clients of our Pantry live in Birmingham, so we are partnering with Urban Ministries to bring the food closer to the people.

Pantry volunteers are also delivering groceries to seniors living at the AHEPA 3 and AHEPA Penelope apartments. Additional food deliveries are being made to individuals in need. If you know of someone who needs groceries or paper goods, please contact the church at 822-0910.

The Under the Bridge team continues to feed the homeless during this crisis. They are working with the Mayor's Office of Citizens Assistance to provide meals for about 50 people on Tuesdays while adapting to protect the health of the volunteers and those they serve.

Food ministry is a huge concern, but so is care and contact. Sunday school class leaders are checking in on their members. Our ministers and volunteers are making calls to older members of our congregation to let them know we care about them and ask if they need any assistance during the pandemic. The Open Door Café volunteers are doing the same for their members.

Finally, church staff and volunteers have been sitting down in front of cameras and reading stories to our children to brighten their day and keep them connected.

There is a lot of mission and ministry happening here at Bluff Park!



Food pantry volunteers, (l to r) Bob and Patsy Cummings, John and Sylvia Sumners and Sandra Wingate put on masks and gloves before delivering groceries to AHEPA 3 housing.



BPUMC volunteers, Amy Montz (l) and Julie Adams prepare to distribute food supplies (Weekend Backpacks) to students at Green Valley Elementary School.

BPUMC's Easter Love Offering

During the season of Lent, we ask for a special Easter Love Offering to support several of the mission agencies that we work with throughout the year. Each of these ministries provides vital services to the communities they serve. Your generosity through the Easter Love Offering enables each of them to continue to serve those in need. This year's Easter's Love Offering will help fund the following:

- BPUMC's Chile Mission Team
- Fountain of Love - Fairhaven
- Rise Against Hunger
- United Community Center (Riley Center)
- Urban Ministry

The Easter Love Offering is sponsored by the BPUMC United Appeal Fund.



Volunteers Needed for BPUMC's Card Ministry

Can you help send special occasion cards such as get well, birthday, thinking of you and holiday cards to our members who can't make it to church due to age or illness? If so, please contact Sula Hicks at 205-982-1958 or sulahicks@bellsouth.net.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

We in the Children's Ministry at Bluff Park United Methodist Church hope and pray that everyone is staying safe during this unprecedented time. Based on the recommendations of church, local, state, and national officials, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the community wide Easter Egg Hunt that was scheduled for Saturday, April 4th. In addition, we have canceled children's programming on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights until the children return to school.

However, even though we are unable to meet in person, we are doing everything in our power to provide ways for families to stay connected and continue being the church during this time. Along those lines, we are providing a BPUMC Story Time each day, where a staff member or teenager reads stories to the children of our church and community. Further, we are creating Children's Church videos each week for the children to use on Sunday mornings (or anytime throughout the week), as well as providing a family devotional each Tuesday that we hope families will work through together. Lastly, both the Student Ministry and Children's Ministry are jointly offering a weekly family activity/challenge (with prizes!) that families can work on together. You can find all of these things on our BPUMC Kids! Facebook Page.

If there is anything that you and your family need during this time, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at sdavidson@bpumc.org. My hope and my prayer is that this pandemic will be over sooner rather than later, and that we may all grow closer to both God and our families during this time.



STUDENT MINISTRY

STUDENT MINISTRY UPDATE

Hey guys! So things are constantly changing it seems, but we are continuing to put out material for our Student Ministry! Make sure you are following us on Facebook at Bluff Park Student Ministry and on Instagram @bpumc_students. We are putting out devotionals, competitions, and even live worship events through our social media pages. So make sure you like and follow both of those pages to keep up with all the things that we are creating for you during this time!



NEW WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Music Monday
Together Tuesday
Worship Wednesday
This or That Thursday
Flashback Friday

ADULT MINISTRY EVENT CANCELLATIONS DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS

1. BPUMC's Food Pantry held on the first Wednesday of each month will be cancelled for April and May, but will resume on June 3rd, if the Coronavirus situation is improved.
2. The Open Door Café that is held on Thursday mornings is closed until further notice.
3. The Trip to Belle Chevre Creamery scheduled for March 18th has been postponed and will be re-scheduled when the Coronavirus situation is improved.
4. The Trip to Jim Scott's Gardens scheduled for April 13th has been cancelled and will be rescheduled for a later date if they have space available.
5. A Walk in the Park at Aldridge Gardens lead by Bill Pearson and scheduled for April 18th is being cancelled and will be rescheduled for a later date, if possible.

How To Worship Online

Over the past few weeks the pastors at Bluff Park UMC have put in a lot of work creating a Livestream Worship Service each Sunday morning. As the quarantine guidelines have evolved, we continue to adapt our approach so you can stay connected to your church family.

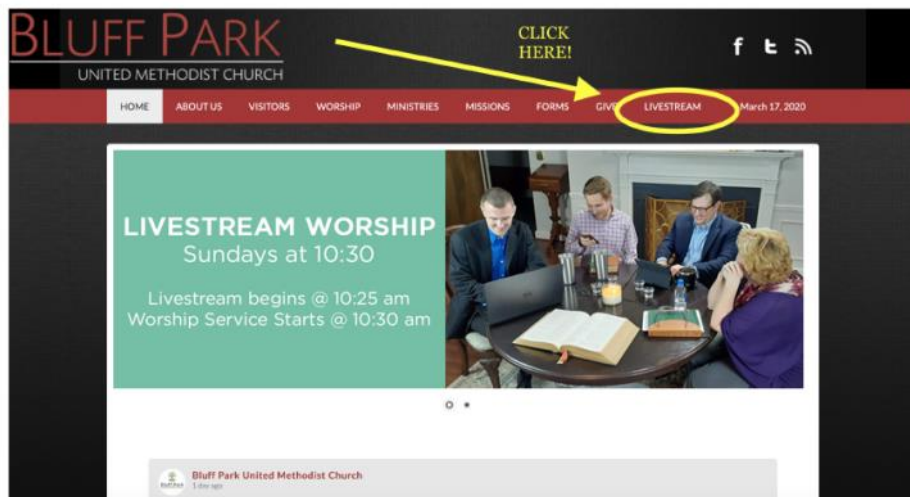
On Sunday mornings the weekly Livestream can be found on our Facebook Pages. If you aren't a Facebook user, there is also a dedicated page on our website where you can tune in live each week. The link to the livestream page is on the upper right of the website homepage and will take you to the Livestream page.

If you are not able to tune in to the live broadcast, the full service recording is available immediately after the service on the Livestream page and on Facebook.

No matter what happens in the coming weeks, you can stay connected and worship with your church family here at Bluff Park.

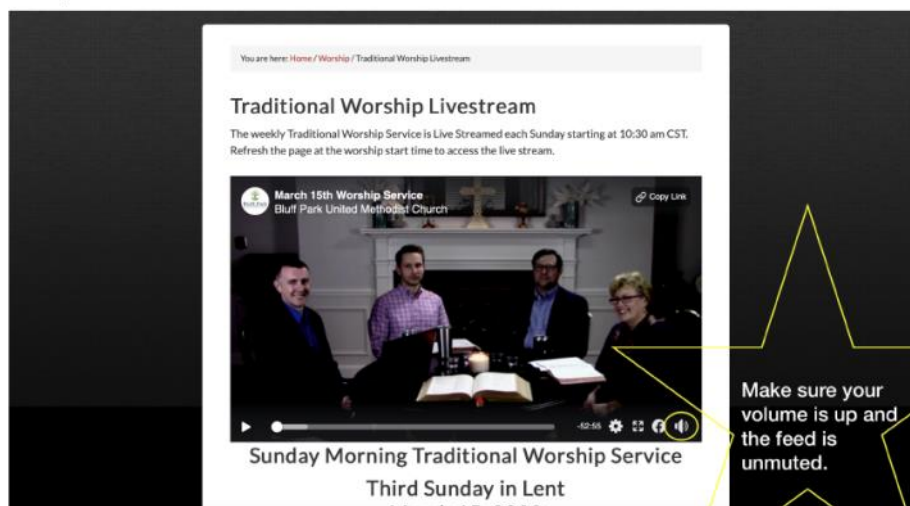
Step 1: Visit www.bluffparkumc.org

Step 2: Click "Livestream" in the top ribbon



Step 3: Click Play in the media player on the Livestream page

**Be sure and make sure the volume is on on the player and your computer or device.*





Realm is an online ministry tool designed for real-time connection. It helps members of our church family connect with each other and with our staff. Realm allows you to manage your personal information and who is allowed to see it, control your giving, and keep in touch with the ministry groups that matter to you.

Realm is not like a social network that's open to everyone. It's only made up of the people in your church. Realm gives you control over what information you share and who can see it.

You can access Realm on the web or through a free app on your phone.

If you have not setup your Realm account yet, contact Jason McCrory in the church office and request an invitation to join.

Let's get connected. ✨

Member Updates

NEW MEMBERS

- John and Judy Mitchell - 3/1/2020

CONGRATULATIONS...

Congratulations to Laura and Dan Cater on the birth of a son, Cohen James on February 25th.

SYMPATHY OF THE CONGREGATION...

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to the family of Ardelle Acton who passed away on February 6th. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family in their time of loss.

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to the family of Bob Sturdivant who passed away on Sunday, March 1st. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family in their time of loss.

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to Harry Hill on the passing of his wife Peggy on March 2nd. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family in their time of loss.

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to Debi Whitcomb on the passing of her husband John on March 8th. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family in their time of loss.

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to the family of Jean Valentine who passed away on March 10th. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family in their time of loss.

LIFETRACK

April 1

Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41
Psalm 129

April 2

Philippians 1:1-11 | Psalm 132

April 3

Philippians 1:21-30 | Psalm 95

April 4

Lamentations 3:55-66 | Psalm 144

April 5

Matthew 21:1-11 | Psalm 24

April 6

John 12:1-11 | Psalm 51

April 7

John 12:20-36 | Psalm 12

April 8

John 13:21-32 | Psalm 74

April 9

John 13:1-17, 31b-35 | Psalm 143

April 10

John 19:16b-30 | Psalm 22

April 11

John 19:31-42 | Psalm 88

April 12

John 20:1-18 | Psalm 148

April 13

Colossians 3:5-11 | Psalm 98

April 14

Colossians 3:12-17 | Psalm 111

April 15

Joshua 3 | Psalm 115

April 16

Colossians 4:2-5 | Psalm 146

April 17

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 | Psalm 136

April 18

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Psalm 104

April 19

John 20:19-31 | Psalm 147

April 20

1 Peter 1:3-9 | Psalm 2

April 21

Jonah 1 | Psalm 10

April 22

Jonah 2 | Psalm 13

April 23

Matthew 12:38-42 | Psalm 18:1-20

April 24

1 Peter 8b-16 | Psalm 16

April 25

Luke 14:12-14 | Psalm 145

April 26

Luke 24:13-35 | Psalm 150

April 27

Genesis 18:1-14 | Psalm 9

April 28

Proverbs 8:32-9:6 | Psalm 28

April 29

John 21:1-14 | Psalm 38

April 30

1 Peter 2:9-12 | Psalm 37:1-18

Dear friends,

I am inspired by how North Alabama United Methodists are responding to the coronavirus pandemic. Churches of all sizes are finding innovative ways to be Christ's hands and feet in their communities.

Examples include:

- Online worship services offered by many of our congregations, with more being added every day. A few churches are hosting drive-in worship, using low-cost FM transmitters to allow participants to worship in their cars;
- One church continues to cook Celebrate Recovery meals, using a drive-through system for safe social distancing and distribution of the meals. In the drive-through, leaders offer support, prayer and counseling for participants' hurts, habits and hang-ups;
- Facebook Live Lunchtime Gatherings proposed each day with devotions, conversation and games;
- Phone calls, emails, notes and texts made to persons who are at risk of feeling isolated;
- Curbside pick-up and front porch delivery of fresh-cooked meals. One church calls this the "Feast of Sharing" ministry;
- Live bedtime stories read by children's ministry leaders for children watching online;
- Youth groups check in virtually and teachers offer online tutoring;
- Small churches open their front doors with sanitizer handy for those who want to pray individually observing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations;
- Volunteers connecting with community groups to provide services to homeless and under-resourced persons;

Thank you for continuing to be the church in the face of this pandemic. Even though the Cabinet and I are requesting the continued suspension of all in-person worship services and gatherings until local public health officials and the CDC change their restrictions, we North Alabama United Methodists are actively providing important ministry and services in the lives of our congregants and community.

Many of you have already begun discerning creative alternative ways to celebrate Holy Week and Easter. A summary of such ideas will be circulated by District Superintendents to clergy next week as well as a reflection paper on the theology and how-tos of serving Holy Communion during this time.

The Conference Leadership Team and I are carefully monitoring the coronavirus pandemic and will be in touch with you on a regular basis as the situation evolves. In the meantime, I am so proud of the extraordinary witnesses you are for Christ.

As always it is a privilege to serve as your bishop.

Blessings,
Debra Wallace-Padgett
Resident Bishop
North Alabama Conference

NOTE:

We are currently living with a great deal of uncertainty about when we will be able to resume some of our normal gatherings. The calendar will continue to be revised throughout the month as the Corona Virus pandemic continues to play out in our community. Continue to watch our Facebook page, website, and Realm messages for updates.



MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

In Memory of...

GENERAL OPERATING FUND

Peggy Hill, by Terri Channell

John Whitcomb, by Anne Hartline

FOOD PANTRY

Jay Burns, by John and Sylvia Sumners

Don Delashaw, by David and Jeannie Jenkins

CHRISTIN CROCKETT SCHOLARSHIP

Peggy Hill, by Jean Brown, Bob and Pan Cahoon, Bonnie Campbell, Bob and Patsy Cummings, Donita Crockett, Jeff and Sue Hazlewood, Angela Hobson Hertenstein, Ann Hill, Harry Hill, Jeff and Lucy Hill, Lee Hill, Tommy and Peggy Dee Hill, Kassoug & Company, National Christian Foundation, Bill and Paulette Pearson, James and Sara Perry, Stone, Avant and Daniels, P.C., Jan Voorhees

PASTOR'S DISCRETIONARY

Peggy Hill, by Catherine and Alan Hallmark

Bob Sturdivant, by J.B. and Frankie Thrasher

PERMANENT ENDOWMENT

John Whitcomb, by Jean Brown, Elizabeth Davis, Ann Gilliland and Gary Yates, Rick and Tina Hardy, Ann Huddleston, Joe and Carol Pitard, Mike Welborn, Pat and Carol Westbrook

MUSIC MINISTRY

Dan Hughes, by Frank and Madge Gregg, Jim and Gloria Woods

John Whitcomb, by Terry and Ann Bice, Russ and Kay Bridges, Bob and Patsy Cummings, Art and Debbie DeWeese, Julia Dunne, Jan Harris, Janet Haynes, Andy and Ann Holder, Jim and Sally Holland, John and Sue Irwin, Robert and Betty Janney, James and Ella Kellum, AV and Mary Marlow, Martha McCary, Richard and Linda Mixon, Stokely and Sandra Morgan, Bill and Paulette Pearson, James and Sara Perry, Dee and Suzanne Scivley, John and Sylvia Sumners, Ken and Martha Wade, Robert and Janice Wilhite

Note: Some Memorials and Honorariums are not listed by the request of the donors.

X



Bluff Park

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

— Rooted in Faith, Growing in Grace —

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LIVESTREAM WORSHIP

Sundays at 10:30

Livestream begins @ 10:25 am
Worship Service Starts @ 10:30 am

