

The First United Methodist Church of Lowell Tele-Christian ~ April 2020 Edition

**The mission of the United Methodist Church is to
make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**

Mark's Remarks.....

Oh No! Easter is cancelled this year! Oh well, I guess we'll have to wait until next year...um, hold on a minute!

How can you cancel Easter? You might answer, "Well all it takes is a global pandemic." All a pandemic can do is to keep us from gathering in a common place to worship and celebrate. Is Coronavirus more powerful than Easter? That may seem like a strange question. Let me ask another question.

What is the most powerful force in the universe apart from God? You could answer 'a star going supernova'. You could say 'a black hole' which can consume all around it. You could say 'a quasar' which is a powerful pulse of energy emitted by the accretion disc of a massive black hole. It is capable of destroying anything in its path including whole stars and solar systems. A force more powerful than these exists - which is death. Even the most powerful force in the universe will eventually run down and die. Praise God that there is nothing we can name that is more powerful than Easter.

Easter is so much more than a time to celebrate that Jesus rose from the grave. The power of Good Friday and Easter is God died. By dying for our sins Jesus broke the power of sin over humanity. The slavery to sin was defeated and ended for those who simply believe. God died. How can that happen? God is all powerful, all knowing, omnipotent, eternal. Jesus laid aside this Glory and took the form of a man. He put Himself in the position that He could die because of His great love for us.

Jesus remaining dead is an impossibility. Jesus is God and God can't remain dead. That Easter morning 2,000 years ago, a force more powerful than any was let loose. It was a force so powerful that it overcame death. Death was shattered. That power moves us from being slaves to sin, unable to stop sinning and as a result experiencing death and eternal separation from God; to being made righteous before God and the bonds of death being unable to hold us. We will live forever with our Creator.

How can a simple virus ever hope to overcome the power of Easter? As Christians we are the Easter people. Easter has shaped every aspect of our beliefs, our lives, our hopes. God is alive! Praise God!!! EASTER IS COMING!!!

Pastor Mark

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April Sermon and Scripture Schedule

April 5 ~

Scripture ~ Matthew 21:1-11

Sermon Title ~ *'Hosanna in the Highest'*

April 12 ~

Scripture ~ Matthew 28:1-10

Sermon Title ~ *'Go Quickly and Tell'*

April 19 ~

Scripture ~ John 20:24-29

Sermon Title ~ *'Doubting Thomas'*

April 26 ~

Scripture ~ Luke 24:13-27

Sermon Title ~ *'The Road to Emmaus'*



Staying Connected Through COVID-19

Our church leadership has received many communications from Bishop Trimble and others leaders of the Indiana Conference during the initial weeks of the coronavirus outbreak. The Conference is doing its' best to guide all Indiana Methodist churches through something our state, our country, our world has never experienced before. A common theme in the guidance we are receiving is to

view this time as an opportunity for the Church to be an active light in the darkness, for us to BE the Church. Our building is a church structure but not the Church. WE are the Church and we are called to make Jesus known through our actions, to serve our community well, to stay connected with the people in our mission field.

As we strive to serve & stay connected with our community, our plans include:

Continuing the **Lenten Food Collection**. The demand on the local food pantries may be much greater this spring. We encourage all of you to be extra generous in your food donations (as your budget allows). Items previously collected that may still be donated: applesauce & canned fruit, breakfast bars & cereal, pasta & sauce. Products due the last half of Lent: soup & crackers, canned vegetables, canned meat & peanut butter. Food items may be brought to the church per Pastor Mark's directions in his email sent March 25. We will **end our collection on Friday, April 3**, allow time for germs on the cans, etc. to "die", then wear gloves as we divide, pack, and deliver the items to the four pantries.

Building up our **Good Samaritan Fund** that provides assistance for gasoline, rent, and utility bills for those experiencing financial stress.

Serving our **Household Pantry** families on April 21. If necessary at that time, we will have a drive thru system with the items pre-bagged for pickup.



In one of his communications, Bishop Trimble stated that “social distancing need not result in ‘social isolation’ which means we need to continue to care for one another doing all the good we can”.

Here is how we are caring for and connecting with our church family:

We have asked that everyone reach out to our members, and others, in our local health care facilities with calls, cards and notes. Names and addresses are provided in this issue. While they cannot have visitors, we can help them feel connected to and loved by their church family.

Volunteers are calling our shut-ins to assure them our church is thinking of them, and to find out if they need assistance. Others have volunteered to pick up groceries or medicines if there is a need. Please reach out to connect with any elderly neighbors, friends, or church members with calls and cards to brighten these difficult days. Let them know we will try to help them if they have a need.

Right now we are relying heavily on email communications. Pastor Mark is sending out an email devotion M-Th and Sunday worship is taking place online. We have volunteers who are making calls to our members who do not have email to keep them informed and connected.

Paige Corning is not only providing a children’s sermon for the online worship, but also a Sunday School lesson through a video on the Sonshine Express Face Book page. In this time of change and anxiety, she is a familiar and reassuring face to our children.

Many efforts are being made to keep our church family connected and cared for through this uncertain time. If you are reading this and feel we have not reached out to you, we are sorry! It was not intentional, and please let us know by calling the office. If you want to be more involved with helping us connect with our community and church family during this pandemic experience, please let the office know that also. We will add you to our volunteer list.

In an email to the Indiana Methodist churches, Bishop Trimble closed with these words: “We will get through this and become a stronger witness for Jesus Christ. The God who has brought us this far will not leave us. Stay connected daring to look forward with hope. Be encouraged.”

Bev Kussy
Communications & Congregational Care

Sustaining Our Church Through COVID 19

Our number one priority during this pandemic is keeping our members safe.

But, please keep in mind that all of our bills will continue to come due. (Yes, we have lowered thermostats in an effort to reduce our utility bill while the building is not in full use.) We are maintaining the regular paid hours of our staff, as we do not want to decrease anyone's income during this challenging time. So, even while we cannot meet together it is *critically important* that we receive your tithes and offerings. Listed are some options available:

- You may use the PayPal icon on the bulletin that will be emailed each week.
- You can go to our website www.lowellumc.org and click the 'Donate' box. If you wish, this can be set up as a monthly donation, so you don't even have to think about it.
- If you pay your bills via "Bill Pay" through your bank, you can set up the church as a recipient. This can also be set up as an automatic payment.
- You can mail your offering to the church or bring your gifts to the church and put in mail slot. The mailbox is checked daily.

This can be a very difficult time financially for some of our members and community people. We'd like to remind those who are able to 'give above and beyond their regular giving' to donate to our Good Samaritan Fund. This fund assists those who need help paying for gas, utilities, rent, etc. It's very possible that this fund may be needed and used more than ever.

Finance Committee



Hey...

Are you over 70 ½?

and

Do you have a traditional IRA?

You can do non-taxable distributions from your IRA, save federal and state income taxes and contribute to your church...ALL at the same time!!!

There are specific guidelines to follow, so when you see your tax preparer/accountant this year to file your taxes discuss the items listed below:

What is my RMD (Required Minimum Distribution)?

How can I gift my RMD and/or more to my church?

How does it save federal and state income taxes?

How can I prepare for my 2020 taxes?

You can, also, discuss the procedures to follow with your investment counselor or IRA custodian.



Tempting Services

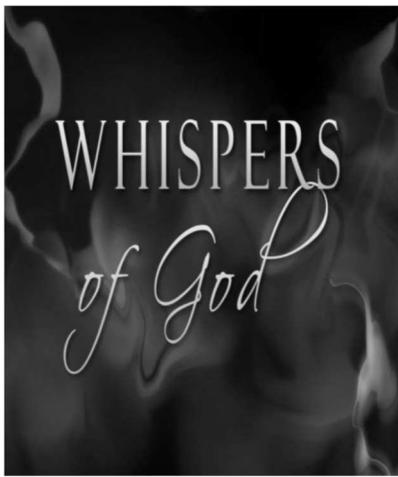
Due to the temporary cancellation of our worship schedule, the Tempting Services Fundraiser is on hold right now. We will offer the sales of our services/talents at a future date. Seventeen people have generously offered wonderful foods, lessons, handmade products, services, and talents. Since this program is being delayed YOU still have an opportunity to participate in offering YOUR talent. Surely we have more than 17 people in our church family who have something to offer?!

Do you think you don't have a talent? Think of it in other terms. How about a 'skill' - something that's easy for you to do (because you have been trained, or have a natural 'knack') but hard for most of us. Someone would likely pay for you to share your skill. How about 'expertise' - a whole lot of experience - in some area? How could you share your experience and knowledge with others? Are you (or your teenager) comfortable with technology? Many would welcome assistance with their smart phone, iPad or other electronics. Someone may need a Power Point presentation made, or documents typed, or a spreadsheet set up. Do you have a hobby you love? You could create something to sell or teach your hobby to others. How about a 'flair' for decorating - it could be decorating room, a dinner table, cookies or a cake! Do you enjoy wrapping gifts? Many people would pay someone to do this task for them at Christmas time! Does your family have some energetic youth? You could offer spring yard cleanup or fall leaf raking as a family.

People in our church LOVE to eat! So, any type of food is a really good offering. You don't have to be an expert baker or chef. A casserole, soup, or dessert that is a family favorite will more than likely be loved by others also. Maybe you are a master on the grill and have a 'specialty' like bar-b-q ribs. Someone might be happy to enjoy those without doing the grilling. Maybe you can visit a shut-in. Are you willing to play in the dirt? You could plant annuals or do other garden work for someone who can't (or doesn't like to) do that task any more. If you don't want to play in the dirt, but have a flair for planning a garden, you can offer that as a service. Do you enjoy spring cleaning? Are you a good window washer? Would you consider being a personal shopper...grocery store, pharmacy, etc.? Do you sew? You could offer to do mending or altering clothing.

We cannot physically be together as a church family right now. But when this time is over, you can be a part of bringing our church family together. Please take this time to think what you can offer for sale. How can you help us support the mission of our church especially during these difficult health and economic times? We all have skills, hobbies, talents, expertise, abilities and God-given gifts we can share. God bless and stay healthy!

Lynn Bochart and Finance Committee



Seek to Hear God's Whispers

Some of us have discussed that we should seek to write "short" articles. There is nothing "short" about taking time to talk about God's influence in our lives. Making changes to our daily lives, our connections and our choices, as we currently are being required to do, challenges our attitudes, our emotions, and God moments. We seek a quick solution but may fall away from our seeking God's whispers.

In John 13:1, there is a comment about Jesus, "...He now showed them the full extent of His love." Christian leaders lead by serving the "team". They are able to put others before themselves; to be the first to volunteer, to see every job as "my job", to accept and embrace a role and not be concerned with personal recognition. They serve by consistently being a model of the values, standards and covenants of their faith.

They serve with confidence; not afraid to hustle, to listen, to be enthusiastic and to encourage. They are confident enough to share leadership and credit; confident enough to develop other strong leaders, to hold onto the values of the "team" and to make difficult decisions, always placing others first. They serve with honor and respect. True leaders honor life, family and peers; respect and accept the judgments of authority and act correctly, even when others don't. They serve with both will and heart. They are passionate about what they do and have the ability to spread that passion to others. Leaders' hearts reflect the true inner person, their character, and they display an enthusiasm that spreads to all they lead. Can we, "Show the full extent of our love?" As the song says, "Where He leads I'll follow." Will we?

There is no doubt; life is normally busy; very, very busy. In many cases, technology has NOT proven to be a labor saver but has increased expectations of more and more from the finite amount of time we have. Sometimes, less is beneficial, necessary, expected.

They talk about meditation in the Old Testament some. They talk about meditation in the New Testament some. They talk about meditation in the present time rarely. Today, we have all kinds of things to do, products of "labor saved". We sing and pray and listen in God's house, together. We worship and fear and love in God's house, together. We think and talk and worry in lots of houses, together. We feel good and bad and so-so in lots of houses, together. I wonder if He wanted to, if He really wanted to, whether He could be heard what with all the singing, praying, talking, feeling good, feeling bad and feeling so-so?

God talks in whispers, in very quiet whispers. To hear a quiet whisper, you must be very, very silent; very, very alone and open. And that is what I believe meditation is. It seems a lost art which would make a significant part of God a lost art. I believe somewhere He whispers, waiting for someone to meditate and hear.

"Be still... and know that I am God."

Be well and blessed folks.

Don Bales, FRIENDS Bible study class facilitator



Permission to Rest

**"This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.'" -
Isaiah 30:15**

Unprecedented times have put us in places of unexpected separation and isolation. Regular schedules and seasons have been disrupted and many are left wondering, "What now?"

An interrupted routine calls for creativity in connection and planning for the future. Yet, have you taken time to recognize this opportunity to slow down and rest? Have you taken time to align your heart to the Spirit of the Lord? At a time that feels like the Lord has pressed pause on the world of work, how are you choosing to respond?

As striving to climb to the top, our instinct pushes us towards performance. How can I maximize my time and productivity? The reality of an empty calendar can feel crippling. If I'm not careful, I begin to fill my schedule with musings to make me feel more accomplished. What if this time is an opportunity to put first things first? We can spend our most quality time with Jesus, sleep to feel rested and spend time with those around us that mean the most.

In Hebrews 3 and 4, the writer talks about "entering into God's rest." The wandering Israelites never entered the rest of God because of their unbelief ([Hebrews 3:19](#)). Under the new covenant, we can enter true rest by trusting Jesus as our Savior.

When we choose to trust Jesus with not just our whole lives, but with each moment and day, we can rest as God himself did. On the seventh day, God didn't need to rest. He wasn't tired! But He chose to rest as a model for His creation. Resting is an act of trust. When we are rested in Christ, we don't have to earn anything by working, but we can work from a place of trust and rest. While physical rest is important, more than anything, you need "heart rest." You need to come into a place that doesn't require striving, emailing, texting or performing. You need to be encouraged and delighted in for who God has made you to be, not just what He has made you to do.

How are you entering into God's rest daily?

How are you honoring God with a Sabbath by resting once every seven days?

What keeps you from being able to rest?

What steps will you take to empty your day to fill it with Jesus (rather than filling it with the work of the world)?

Jesus, thank you for being the fulfillment of our rest. You are set apart as holy and you offer us the peace that surpasses all understanding. Help me to walk in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit when it comes to honoring you with my time, energy and choices.

About the author: Jolee Paden serves on the [FCA DC](#) staff in Washington, DC