

Lithopolis United Methodist Church

Inviting people to be in relationship with Jesus and each other so that lives and communities are changed



Images from some of our Micro Worship gatherings that meet outdoors at local parks on Sundays.

It's Time to Check In

By Charles Martindell

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end" (Lamentations 3:22)

How are things going for you? That might be a very important question for us at this point in 2020! Over the past few months, I've been in prayerful contact with many from the church who are doing what we are all doing: *relying on God to be steadfast during uncertain times.* Some of the ones I've heard from have been directly impacted by COVID-19. Others have been struggling with how to support family members who have come down with the virus. All of us are feeling the emotions and frustrations of how life has changed in so many ways that no one would have chosen.

What you'll find inside:

- Financial Update
- Returning to Indoor Worship
- Children's Ministry
- Youth Ministry
- Small Groups
- Bell Tower Restoration



I've also heard about some renewed or new learnings and experiences that, while not sought, have still blessed the lives of many of us. Times with family in new ways. Less of the over-scheduling that is often a stressful burden. And in powerful ways, the experience of God's nearness and the gift of God's Holy Spirit to comfort and uphold and strengthen faith. We may be living through a global pandemic, but we are not, have never been, and will never be, alone. God's promised presence with us in it all can be that which makes all the difference.

In this edition of our newsletter, we're including photos and snapshots that lift up some of the thankfulness we feel as a church family because even during several months without worship in our Sanctuary, Lithopolis UMC has never closed.

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Ministry with families of all ages has continued and so has the outreach of the church to our community. A wonderful group of youth has completed their Confirmation group experience and plans are coming together to celebrate their faith journeys including decisions of faith, church membership, and celebration of baptism. Add to this all the families of our extended region who are being fed by the Blessing Box ministry. See what I mean? God continues to work in us as our mission is being fulfilled.



Bell Tower at LUMC.

For me, as I come closer to taking the step of retiring at the end of the year, clearly this is a year I will never forget, and could never have imagined. I’ve so enjoyed our outdoor services which have gathered about 80 people each week for worship and may have involved twice that many who have attended at least some of those services over the summer months. So, we will also be sharing our plans and approach for a return to worship in our Sanctuary. Meanwhile, we are taking on the challenge of renovation of the historic Bell Tower at the church. These are all some of the things included in this newsletter edition and these are among the many reasons I am convinced of the vitality of our church family and the faithfulness of our God.

Returning to Worship IN THE CHURCH

At present, Worship in the Sanctuary is happening each week at 9 a.m. through our Traditional Service and 10:30 a.m. through our Contemporary Service. Thank you to everyone who is working so hard to make this happen! As we describe what we’re doing and what to expect, we also want to remind everyone to please make the choice about attending worship that makes sense for you, and is safe for you. Our plans include a forever continuation of Online worship opportunities for anyone who is not able to be present in the Sanctuary. We also plan to continue sending a Letter each week to those who do not use the Internet or email. We’ve been mailing these communications since last Spring and include a summary of each week’s sermon along with the printed prayer email. This is one of the ways the church has continued to keep connected to each other.

For those who choose to worship in the Sanctuary, pre-registration is asked either online through the “Sign-Up Genius” page, or by phoning the church office and leaving a voicemail with your name and which service you plan to attend (614-837-2230). We are using our pre-registrations to manage the limited size of these gatherings as well as to assist the Health Department with any need for contact tracing were there to be a positive virus test for any of our worshipers.



Worshipping during our Contemporary Service.

Sanctuary Worship

What to expect at a worship service in the Sanctuary includes the following:

- Entry is only by way of the main glass doors.
- Masks and social distancing are required at all times.
- Complimentary temperature checks happen as people enter the building.
- There are many opportunities for using hand sanitizer.
- If restrooms are needed, only one family at a time will enter the narrow hallway leading to the restrooms.
- Only *quiet* singing or humming (or clapping, etc.) during the music.
- Speakers or song leaders will be behind plexiglass barriers for safety.
- Upon arrival, we're having people move directly into the Sanctuary rather than visiting in the Entry area (no coffee service at this time).
- No Nursery care or Rock City programming but families are welcome to keep their children with them in the Sanctuary and also to make use of children's Activity Bags.
- Offerings can still be received either online, mailed to the church, or we have an Offering basket for people to use as they depart following the service.
- Departure happens from the front side door of the Sanctuary rather than returning through the entry area.



Our goal is to provide a safe place to share in a service of worship that both glorifies God and also is nurturing to our Spirits. We are able to visit with those seated in the various areas of the sanctuary and also outside the church at the conclusion of the service. Does this sound like something that is right for you and your family at this time? Everyone is encouraged to continue the practice of worshiping our Lord either in person or through private moments and also through our online opportunities.

Bell Tower Restoration

There's a little "good news" and "bad news" which is bringing an additional challenge for us to meet. Serious deterioration of the Bell Tower located in part of the historic Lithopolis UMC building has led to a restoration project with a cost approaching \$140,000. That's the "bad news". The "good news" is that as we begin to work at meeting this challenge, approximately \$90,000 (just over 2/3) of the needed amount is already available thanks to the generosity of those who have continued to support the church through special gifts for Building related needs.



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“Bell Tower” continued from Page 3.

Now it’s up to us to do our best to raise the additional \$50,000 to complete necessary repairs and maintenance which will restore the Bell Tower and avoid additional expenses and damage moving forward. As the Leadership Board and the Facilities Team prayed and considered the best steps forward in facing this challenge, one of the insights shared had an ironic feel. At the moment, a global pandemic is keeping many of us away from the church building. And yet, for our community and everyone who sees the Lithopolis UMC Bell Tower as they drive through town on a regular basis, 2020 may well be a year when a powerful word of witness is being spoken just through the continued physical presence of our well-maintained church building. Not everyone who is reading this Newsletter is in a position at this time for it to be possible to make a special gift above our regular giving to God through the church in support of meeting this challenge. And that’s okay. For those who can do so, mark your special gift “Bell Tower Restoration” or choose that tab from the drop-down menu on the Online Giving through the church’s website. Gifts can also be given at worship on Sundays or mailed to the church. Thank you to everyone for generosity by way of our prayers and our gifts!



First day of our Bell Tower restoration project.



Trunk or Treat – October 29th

Mark the date for our Drive-Thru Trunk or Treat which will be on October 29th from 6-7:30pm. Volunteers will pass out candy as families drive-thru the parking lot this year. You can participate by donating candy or volunteering the day of the event. Donations can be dropped off in the entryway at church. [CLICK HERE](#) to volunteer!

We can’t wait to see you there! Our Drive-Thru Trunk or Treat will happen rain or shine!



Life Groups and Study Groups

One of the strengths of the church, is our ministry of Small Groups. Many dedicated and gifted small group leaders make this ministry possible. But how to gather at the church with so many limitations? Recently, with the coordination of Steve Stanford who is our Connections and Groups Coordinator, various Life Groups and Study groups have begun



making arrangements for how they can gather while practicing Safe Distance procedures. This has been a challenge with new (larger) church spaces being needed. For instance, more than one group will be holding their studies or life group meetings in the Narthex (entry area) of the church. Due to these challenges, the church is temporarily less available to groups from the community and that limitation is regretful but necessary at this time. Thank you to our small group members and leaders for their flexibility. Just a reminder that masks are required in the church building at all times. If you'd like more information about being part of a small group, or starting a new Life Group or Study group, please contact Steve Stanford ([CLICK HERE](#)) or one of the pastors.

Youth Update

As so much of our church life has changed this year, our youth group has remained a place for teens to connect with God, see their friends, and give their quarantined parents a few hours of quiet! We spent the summer meeting outside to allow for distancing more naturally. During this time, we studied the storyline of the Old Testament, exploring it as a unified story which points to the coming of Jesus. We're excited to be meeting inside for our new longer gatherings with masks now that school has started, and we're doing our best to enforce the same safety standards that they're used to.

While this isn't a total return to normal, it's looking like it will allow us to do some exciting things this fall, including a new series on the Book of James (starting September 20) and pumpkin picking and carving (October 11). Additionally, we will be (finally) confirming our 2020 confirmation students on Sunday October 4, so come on out to the 10:30 service that day to show them your support!



Our amazing youth group!

Youth Dates to Remember:

- **September 20** – Kick-off to new series (MS Youth Wednesdays from 6:30-8:30pm; HS Youth Sundays from 6:30-8:00pm)
- **October 4** – Confirmation Sunday at the 10:30 Contemporary service
- **October 11** – Pumpkin picking/carving

Children's Ministry Update

Our Children's Ministry has continued to find creative ways to stay connected over these past few months. They gather each Sunday for our family Micro Worship gathering for a Bible lesson and activity. We were also able to kick-off the school year with a Back to School Blessing AND a VBS Pool Party! We had a drive-thru and walk-thru experience for families at the beginning of the school year to pray over them. For our VBS, families gathered that evening for swimming as well as crafts, games, snacks, and a Bible story. It was so much fun! Our Growing Together group will start up again this month for families with children ages birth to 5th grade. This year, we'll be rotating to area parks – what fun! We sure hope you can join us.



Enjoying activities at our Micro Worship gatherings (above). Family activities and prayer time at our Back to School Blessing (left). Games and crafts at our VBS Pool Party (below).



You're invited...



Growing Together

As families.
In Christ.
With each other.

For families
with children
birth-
5th Grade

Wednesdays @ 6:30pm

September 9th—Chestnut Ridge Metro Park at Play Area
 September 16th— Walnut Woods Metro Park at Play Area
 September 23rd— Slate Run Metro Park at Buzzard's Roost Play Area
 September 30th— Three Creeks Metro Park at Play Area
 October 7th— Slate Run Metro Park at Shady Grove Play Area

**Masks are required for the beginning devotional time,
but are optional during free park play time**



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FINANCE FOCUS

Financial data thru August 31, 2020

Fund Balances

General	\$44,584
Building	\$89,061
Planned Replacement	\$92,708
Endowment	\$ 42,310
Other Designated Funds	\$ 25,518

General Fund Activity

Contributions to the General Fund pay for general operating expenses of the church including music expense, payroll expense, office supply expense, parsonage maintenance and utilities, church maintenance and utilities, and apportionments.

General Fund	Aug-20	YTD 2020
Contributions	39,477	296,341
Expenses	32,928	312,629
Difference	6,549	(16,288)

- YTD 2020 General Fund contributions have decreased 17.1% compared to 2019.

Building Fund Activity

Building Fund Income for August 2020 = \$2,081

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV



Bell Tower

\$140,000

Our goal

94,773 as of Sept. 7

\$90,000

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone for such a good start toward our goal! For those who can help, mark your special gift "Bell Tower Restoration". At LUMC, giving happens in person on Sundays, or through the mail (PO Box 42, 80 North Market St., Lithopolis, OH, 43136), or also online at <https://www.lithopolisumc.org/give-now>.