



The Octagon

Severna Park United Methodist Church News

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Thank God It's 2021 (and Thank God for 2020, too!)

When we chose our worship theme to begin the new year with, there were many things on our minds. **Thank God It's 2021** or **TGI 2021** clearly seemed to acknowledge the collective angst, emotional stress and physical fatigue brought on by the events of 2020. We were all more than

ready to say good-bye to a year too full of fear, sadness, cancellations, disruptions, loss, grief, and massive rearrangements of work/home/school/ church schedules. Good riddance 2020, **Thank God It's 2021!**

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Advent Highlights





Thank God It's 2021

(continued from page 1)

And with the vaccine rollout starting to gain momentum, even though we are still in many ways in the worst grip of this virus yet, there is legitimate hope for some return to a sense of normalcy (whatever that will look like in all areas of our lives) that is visibly and realistically on the horizon. With the flip of a calendar page from December 2020 to January 2021 we could all breathe a collective sigh of relief that there was indeed light at the end of this very dark tunnel and a new day is coming. And quite fittingly for six weeks in worship, TGI2021 is allowing us to explore how God has always been in the business of making things new through new dreams, new identities, new callings and more.

But before we move on too quickly, it is important to celebrate the resilience, the unexpected gifts, the strength of our church community and the deep faith in God and one another that allowed us to not only survive 2020, but actually to thrive. At the beginning of this pandemic back in March, there was no way to predict how long this would last or what the impact would be on our congregation. Literally overnight, we had to learn how to become a virtual church. We had to reinvent the way we worshiped together, learned together, shared faith together and reached out in mission to the world. Through it all God has been abundantly faithful – and so have you.

Your support allowed us to continue to nurture the spiritual lives of our children through virtual Sunday School lessons, a

reimagined Vacation Bible School and a memorable outdoor Christmas Pageant. Your giving made it possible for us to stay connected with our youth and to offer an array of groups, classes and Bible studies for adults via Zoom. It allowed us to continue to care for our building, to move forward with our database conversion and to find creative ways to stay connected with one another through letters, notes, phone calls, emails and home-delivered Advent bags. Your support let us expand our social media presence, produce tons of videos and communicate regularly through our website, ENews and Octagon.

Because of you, we were able to provide for weekly worship services that were meaningful, creative and full of all kinds of great music. We've had the opportunity to tap the talents of incredible musicians – members and friends of our church and gifted guest musicians – all while building a tech team that has worked so hard and learned so much to make our worship experiences inspiring and excellent.

And most importantly, your faithful stewardship made it possible to pass on blessing to others. We were able to send out monthly teams to serve at Heaven's Kitchen, host our 3rd annual Rise Against Hunger event where we packed 20,000 meals, maintain our support for and ongoing relationships with SPAN, Arundel House of Hope, the Jane Hartranft School in Sierra Leone, Feed My Sheep in Haiti, and Wycliffe Bible Missionaries Heather & Bruce Beall. During Advent we fulfilled the needs of hundreds of tags on our Angel Tree and reached out in very personal ways through the Intentional Acts of Kindness project.

In a year where we did not know how things would play out financially, you were faithful in your giving month after month and your generosity was overwhelming in the last quarter of the year. I am thrilled and humbled to report that **your giving totaled \$1,367,000** (so far – checks are still trickling in via the mail) and allowed us not only to meet but to **exceed our expenses** in a very unpredictable and challenging year **by over \$60,000**. And for that we say **Thank God for all of you in 2020** even as we lean into the new year and say **TGI2021!**

– Rev. Ron & the Entire SPUMC Staff



Congratulations Graduates

Harrison Colborne: Associates Degree in General Studies, AACC

Paul Ford: BS in Music Education, Towson University

Bella Hahn: Associates Degree in Psychology, AACC

Matt Loock: BA in Secondary Education (History), Towson University

UMYF

UMYF continues to meet almost every week, by Zoom, 6pm Sunday nights. Evenings include a game or two, discussion, video clips, announcements.

Go to severnaparkumc.org/events. Click on Sunday, then on UMYF. You will see a link that gets you right in!

Once the weather warms up, MYF will resume parking lot gatherings; watch for announcements.

Confirmation

The outstanding class of 2020 graciously yielded their time to the pastors so we could figure out ministry in the midst of pandemic. THEREFORE, the Confirmation Class of 2020 will resume their classes where they left off, in mid-March, and hope for confirmation in May.

At this time, there is no plan for a new class this semester. Eligible youth in grades 7 and 8 this year will be contacted and included next time. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Appalachia Service Project

As of now, we do not know what summer programming will look like. We have a tentative date and will soon be having sign-ups just in case, but no money will be collected until we know something for sure. We are in constant communication with the main ASP office and will keep you updated.

Christmas Eve Highlights





Children's Ministry



Join the Children's Ministry on Zoom for a fun event, a **Snow Day at Home** on **January 20 at 6pm**. Be sure to sign up online so you can get the Zoom link.

spumc.breezechms.com/form/snowday

If you have any questions you can email Erica. ebenjamin@severnaparkumc.org



Ash Wednesday Family Service

We'd love to have you participate in a family-oriented worship service on Zoom on Ash Wednesday, February 17 at 6:30pm. Registration Link:

spumc.breezechms.com/form/ashwednesday



Mom's Connect

1st & 3rd Thursdays @ 8:30pm

You may or may not realize it, but you talk to yourself all the time. And what you say to yourself matters a great deal. This winter during Moms Connect, you'll discover strength and freedom for each day as you create new habits of self talk based on biblical truth. In this study, we'll look at common self talk phrases and their impact. We will meet January 7 & 21, February 4 & 18, March 4 & 18 at 8:30 on Zoom. Visit our Events page for details. severnaparkumc.org/events

Easter Bunnies Needed

We are going to be delivering **Lent Kits** (with crafts for kids, devotionals for adults, Holy Week worship supplies and more) to hundreds of homes throughout our area the week of February 7. If you would like to be part of the team to help **pack or deliver kits**, we would really appreciate it. We plan to pack kits in the afternoon on February 7, gathering safely with a very limited number of "pods" in the Fellowship Hall. Contact Beth in the Church Office if you're willing to pitch in with this project. Thanks. bfrank@severnaparkumc.org

Stories of Light and Love

During the season of Epiphany when we celebrate the light of Christ going out to the world, we have posted some heartwarming stories of light and love on our website.

Our 4th Annual Intentional Acts of Kindness Advent project took place throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons as members and friends of our church received \$100 bills and used their hearts and imaginations to turn them into blessings for others in our community and world. In many cases, they matched or added to the \$100 and enlisted the cooperation of others to join them so the \$12,000 that we gave out probably multiplied to \$20,000 or more.

Participants reached out to single moms, waiters, suicide prevention groups, friends with cancer, families in grief, a cleaning woman who had stolen from them and so many more people and places that needed a spark of hope. Many thanks to our three Angel Donors that made this project possible and to everyone who participated. If you haven't shared your story yet, contact Rev. Ron and we will continue adding to this post as new stories come in.

severnaparkumc.org/choosekind

Sacred Worth

The **Sacred Worth** group will resume meeting on the third Tuesday of the month, January 19 at 7pm on Zoom. Contact Rev. Ron for details.
rfoster@severnaparkumc.org

Join the Conversation

The **Faith & Race Group** is reading Jon Meacham's new book, *His Truth Is Marching On*, about the remarkable life of the recently deceased John Lewis, famous for getting in and encouraging "good trouble." Rev. Ron will be leading the group discussion on Tuesday, January 26 at 7:30pm and anyone is welcome to join us. All our groups will be meeting via Zoom and you can find the links on our Events page. severnaparkumc.org/events

Study Classes

Rev. Byron Teaches Romans

Rev. Byron is teaching a 5-week study on Paul's letter to the Romans which is one of the most important books in the New Testament. It is the Apostle Paul's most "systematic" theology as he reflects on the new covenant relationship made possible by Jesus. Mondays, 7:30pm, January 11 through February 8. It's not too late to join in! Contact Rev. Byron for info.
bbrought@severnaparkumc.org

The Wesley Challenge

Rev. Carissa is leading a 4-week study in January of The Wesley Challenge by Chris Folmsbee. We'll work through 21 key questions about our faith that engage with our physical, spiritual, and emotional lives, and our relationship with God and with others. We will meet for four Tuesdays at 8pm, starting January 12; Zoom meeting information available on the Events webpage. It's not too late to join in! Order your book online and email Rev. Carissa if you're interested.
csurber@severnaparkumc.org

REGATHERING AT SPUMC

RED	WORSHIP ONLINE	ALL GROUPS ONLINE; STAFF WORK FROM HOME
ORANGE	WORSHIP ONLINE AND OUTDOORS	ALL GROUPS ONLINE OR OUTDOORS
YELLOW	WORSHIP ONLINE AND OUTDOORS (INDOORS IF RAIN)	MOST GROUPS ONLINE OR OUTDOORS; LIMITED INDOOR MEETINGS
GREEN	WORSHIP ONLINE AND INDOORS	GROUPS ONLINE, OUTDOORS, AND INDOORS; STAFF WORK ON SITE
BLUE	WORSHIP ONLINE AND INDOORS	NO RESTRICTIONS

MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING WILL BE REQUIRED AT ALL LEVELS

Regathering Task Force Update

We understand the pandemic has been an incredible challenge to the congregation, as well as our staff. Since May, the Regathering Task Force has been focused on developing safety protocols and creating a guide for moving forward. Our protocol for in-person worship is based on CDC guidelines for masks and social distancing, and outlines how we need to protect each other in order to ensure that we all know what is expected.

The Task Force developed guidelines based on local pandemic conditions (in all stages, safety protocols apply including masks and social distancing), illustrated in the chart above. SPUMC is currently in the Red Stage due to rising case numbers in Anne Arundel County. Stages are reviewed regularly by the Task Force as we monitor changes in local conditions. We appreciate your patience and further updates will be published through our regular communication outlets. Please contact new Task Force chair Gaines Johnston with questions.

gainesjohnston@gmail.com

Christmas Pageant Thanks

Thanks to Brian Hissong for producing the pageant video, and to the children & families who created such a memorable Christmas Pageant for us this year: Ella Ingel, Ethan Brunk, Kennedy Beam, Katie Richardson, Nora Shephard, Johanna Perry, Ali Carlin, Anna Pilholski, Trevor Calish, Maddie Bogle, Ben Carlin, Hannah Beam, Aubrey Ingel, Sawyer Perry, Emily Pilholski, Elliana Brunk, Eliot Shephard, Grace Pepper, Maggie Pepper, Evelyn Pepper, Henry Pepper, Elijah Brunk, and Joseph Richardson.



SPUMC
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We must learn to
live **together** as
brothers or perish
together as fools.

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