



The Octagon

Severna Park United Methodist Church News

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The Stars, The Ground, and You

The year “The Lion King” first hit the big screen, my family was obsessed. We went 4 times to see it in theaters, and I soon owned the picture book and cassette tape to relive the magic on many a long car ride. This formative time engrained certain lines of the movie in me, so much so that I cannot hear certain phrases without thinking of it. In

particular, it’s easy for my mind to remember the majestic voice of James Earl Jones as Mufasa, as he encourages his son: *“Look at the stars. The great kings of the past look down on us from those stars. So whenever you feel alone, just remember that those kings will always be there to guide you. And so will I.”* (continued on page 4)



Worship this Lent

Lent is a season that invites us to return to God, to strip down our lives, to get earthy and elemental in our faith. Join us in worship as we explore our guiding scriptures through the arts, study, song, preaching, and sacraments. All worship services listed here will be virtual.

Ash Wed: Feb 17, 7:30pm

Dirt: Grounded - Matt 6:1-6, 16-21

Lent 1: February 21, 10am - Desert:

Grounded in Scripture - Matt 4:1-11

Lent 2: February 28, 10am

Wind: Grounded in Spirit - John 3:1-17

Lent 3: March 7, 10am - Water: Grounded

in Acceptance - John 4:5-42

Lent 4: March 14, 10am

Light: Grounded in Faith John 9:1-41

Lent 5: March 21, 10am

Tears: Grounded in Grief - John 11:1-45

Palm Sunday: March 28, 10am - Donkey:

Grounded in Humility - Matt 21:1-11

Maundy Thursday: April 1, 7:30pm

*Bread & Cup: Grounded in Memory
Luke 22:14-27*

Good Friday: April 2, 7:30pm

In the Ground - John 18:1-19:42

Easter Sunday Worship

Easter Sunday: April 4 - *Life: Ungrounded*
Matt 28:1-10 & John 20:1-18

6:30am Sunrise Service - Rev. Carissa

9am Family Service - Rev. Carissa

10am Festival Service - Rev. Ron

For up-to-date information on how to participate in online worship, visit severnaparkumc.org/lent

Ash Wednesday Worship

On February 17, the season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. This is the day where we mark our mortality by taking ashes and dust, drawing a cross on our foreheads, and remembering that “from dust we have come and to dust we shall return.” This year, we are broadening this metaphor by using dirt (included in your Lent kit and available in your own backyard). You are invited to **use the everyday dirt and soil** God made to mark yourself with the sign of the cross, remembering that through the cross, God takes ordinary things of earth and makes them sacred. We’ve also enclosed **purple paper hearts** in each Lent kit. These hearts are made out of seed paper, designed to grow wildflowers when the paper is planted. During the Ash Wednesday worship service, you’ll be invited to write on these hearts as a sign of confession – and then to bury them in the ground to wait and see how God might yet bring new life.

For kids with early bedtimes, we invite you to be part of this special day during a 30-minute interactive Zoom session on Ash Wednesday at 6:30pm (registration required). Learn more and sign up online. severnaparkumc.org/familylent



Lent Workshops & Studies

Grounded in Art: Creative Workshop Series

When life becomes overwhelming or difficult, sometimes the only way to process everything is through art. Whether it's listening to music, writing in a journal, or painting a picture, there's something about the creative process that engages our bodies and spirits in a different way - a way that inherently connects us to God.

This Lent, you're invited to attend 1 or all of the workshops in our "Grounded in Art" workshop series. Each workshop will be held on **Mondays at 7:30pm**, and will help us connect more deeply with the themes of the Lenten season. Our very own Rev. Ron and Chris Dillard will be sharing their gifts of photography and song, and April Doss will be leading us through an interactive workshop on creative writing.

We are especially thrilled to welcome guest artist, Rev. Martina Efodzi, who will lead a 2-part painting workshop entitled "This is My Story, This is My Song!" based on Matthew 4:1-11. If you would like to pick up a supply kit for Rev. Efodzi's painting workshops, make sure to check "Yes!" on the sign up form.

Photography & Song: February 22 & March 1 - Rev. Ron Foster & Chris Dillard

Painting & Story: March 8 & 15 - Rev. Martina Efodzi

Creative Writing: March 22 - April Doss

All workshops are open to all people - registration is not required, nor is artistic expertise! If you'd like to get personal email updates about these workshops (or if you'd like to receive a supply kit), make sure you sign up today!

Walking with God in the Wilderness

Rev. Lee will be teaching a class on **Wednesdays at 7:30pm** using the book *Walking in the Wilderness: Seeking God During Lent*, written by a UMC deacon Beth Richardson. The book includes daily scriptures with theologian readings and reflection, as well as a word for the day.

Themes include being present, lament, lectio divina, trust, compassion, and hospitality, among others. Sign up online.

severnaparkumc.org/lent

Lent for Families

Lent Resources

Visit the *Lent for Families page* on our website for a ton of resources, plus any links to sign up for online events.

In order to comply with copyright restrictions, you'll need the password to access the resources. Password: Lent severnaparkumc.org/familylent

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday interactive family worship service will take place at **6:30pm** on Zoom on **February 17**. Registration is required.

The Stars, The Ground, and You

(continued from page 1)

This moment in “The Lion King” is a touchpoint throughout the movie, as a young lion seeks something to ground him when everything around him is changing. And, in fact, it’s also a touchpoint in scripture. The book of Job tells us that after the faithful man of God has lost everything, and his friends have been the opposite of helpful, he cries out to God: “Where are you? What is happening? Why?”

And how does God ground him? By pointing at the stars: “*Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation...while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?*” (Job 38:4-7) In the midst of the biggest losses and the most heartbreaking grief, it’s the majesty of God’s creation that grounds Job in the truth that God is the one who creates, redeems, and sustains all things.

What grounds you? In my day-to-day life, it’s the simplest things that bring me back to myself: brewing a cup of tea. Breathing deeply in a silent room. Looking right into a friend’s eyes over a good meal. Sometimes it’s the stillness of a crackling fire, and other times I need the physicality of something like shoveling snow or a brisk walk. But always, in those grounding moments, there is something earthy: water, air, breath, fire, wind. These grounding moments bring me back to who I am, and the God who made me that way.

This Lent we are returning to God and stripping down to the earthy roots of our faith in our worship series, **Grounded: An Unlikely Path to New Life**. We’ll root

ourselves deeply in God’s love by finding ourselves in the dirt, desert, wind, water, light, and tears of the most beautiful stories told by the gospel writers. Between Sunday worship services, we hope you’ll take advantage of the enclosed weekly **Wilderness Devotional Book**, daily **Rooted Reflection** videos from the pastoral/staff team, **Grounded in Art** creative workshops, and **Walking with God in the Wilderness** studies.

So often, we imagine God to be seated up in heaven, far away from us, in the direction of our church steeple. But this Lent, you are invited to see God walking alongside you, feet flat on the same ground you tread. Jesus came to earth to show us love incarnate, love divine. May we root ourselves deeply in that love, and find ourselves in God once more.

-Rev. Carissa

Nursery School Registration

SPUMC Nursery School Online registration for the 2021-2022 school year is open! Our play-based program promotes personal, physical, cognitive, and social development through literature, math, science, social studies, art, music, and faith. Students must be fully immunized, completely potty trained, and must have turned three or four by September 1, 2021.

Email with questions? office@spumcns.org
Or register online.

severnaparkumc.org/nursery-school



Vaccine Tips from the Regathering Task Force

Your Regathering Task Force is excited that COVID-19 vaccine distribution has begun in our area! We celebrate this progress, and encourage everyone to continue wearing masks, washing hands, and staying socially distanced, even as more people are vaccinated. If you are looking for more information about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, we recommend these key resources:

State of Maryland:

<https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/vaccine>

Anne Arundel County:

<https://aahealth.org/covidvaccines>

Sign up for Health Alert emails here:

<https://aahealth.org/health-alert>

Text **Join COVID** to **30890** to receive up-to-date text alerts from Anne Arundel County

If you do not have access to the internet and would like help getting vaccine information, please contact the Anne Arundel Department of Aging at (410) 222-3663.

Thank you for doing your part to keep our community safe!



Ebony Bishops Preach

The Ebony Bishops Preaching Series began at Asbury UMC in Washington, D.C. with Bishop LaTrelle Easterling preaching the inaugural sermon on January 17. The congregation, one of the oldest African-American churches in the denomination, has an historic pulpit where preachers have given voice to justice and freedom since 1836. Future worship services will be live-streamed at asburyumcdc.org. Participating United Methodist bishops will include:

February 21: Bishop Woodie W. White, a retired Bishop and civil rights leader in the UMC

March 21: Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Western Pennsylvania Conference

April 18: Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, South Carolina Conference

May 16: Bishop Tracy S. Malone, East Ohio Conference

June 20: Bishop Julius C. Trimble, Indiana Conference

July 18: Bishop Sharma D. Lewis, Virginia Conference

Thank You, Leaders!

Our church is blessed to have many gifted people in leadership roles. We give thanks for Christine Chandler, Todd Popham, Craig Linehan, and Kris Zyla for all the time they gave serving as committee chairs in our church over the last several years. This year, we celebrate the following people committing to serve on Church Council. Those members with an asterisk (*) are beginning their leadership role this year. Please send them a note of thanks, for how they are guiding our church.



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Cross-Racial Dialog Supper Clubs

For those looking to have rich and deep facilitated conversations with people within and beyond their circles through virtual suppers, the BWC invites you to join “Mapping a Path to Racial Justice: A Journey to Beloved Community” on the fourth Thursdays of the month from 6-8 p.m. One of the most significant ways to celebrate who we are and where we come from is often found through conversations that happen as we break bread together with those like and unlike us. The sessions will be Feb. 25, March 25, April 22, May 27, and June 24. Sign up online.

severnaparkumc.org/bwc-racial-justice

You can learn more about the history of the people’s supper organization, whom we’ve partnered with to provide this transformative and relatable experience.

thepeoplessupper.org

MLK Day Lasagna Outreach

On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, SPUMC partnered with Reach Out & Serve to make, buy and deliver pans of lasagna to our Angel Tree families in Annapolis. The parking lot was a flurry of activity as people dropped off their lasagnas before they were all taken down to Annapolis by Heather Kraus, Joy Stow and Sharon, Hartley & Peter Acosta for distribution. Thanks to everyone who participated in this scrumptious outreach!





Faith & Race Group

In keeping with our theme for this season (Grounded: An Unlikely Path to Growth), our book for Lent will be the NY Times Bestseller *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. This beautifully written book explores our connection to creation and one another through the dual lenses of botany and Native American spirituality. The good news is that you have almost two months to read -- we'll meet for discussion on **Tuesday, March 23 at 7:30pm**. Feel free to come no matter how much of the book you get through. At our meeting on **February 23 at 7:30pm**, we'll spend the evening getting more familiar with some of the resources on racial justice that are available through the Baltimore-Washington Conference -- no prep is necessary. Contact Rev. Ron for more info. ron@severnaparkumc.org



Sacred Worth Group

For the months of February and March, the Sacred Worth Group, which meets on the third Tuesday of each month, will be reading and discussing excerpts from *UnClobber* and *A Wider Table* to explore ways of reading scripture and thinking theologically that support LGBTQI+ inclusion in the Body of Christ. The group is open to all LGBTQI+ persons, family members, friends, allies and people curious to learn more about becoming a more welcoming and inclusive church. Join us on **February 16** and/or **March 16 at 7:30pm** to be part of these conversations. Contact Rev. Ron for more info. ron@severnaparkumc.org





40 Days of Giving

Our Front Porch is a warm and welcoming space where we can serve our community during the Lenten season. After getting extensive use during Advent as a place for our Angel Tree and our SPAN grocery collection, we are putting it back in use for similar hands-on community support during Lent! Beginning **February 17** through Palm Sunday on March 28, the following giving opportunities will be available on our Front Porch:

- 1. SPAN – 40 Days of Giving!** Please grab a SPAN grocery bag from the Front Porch and fill it with food, toiletries, or paper goods. Please return it to the Front Porch or drop it off at SPAN (400 Benfield Road). Let's help those who are struggling to have enough food and basic necessities.
- 2. Reach Out and Serve, LLC** will be facilitating the collection of Masks and Hand Sanitizer plus \$20 gift cards to Giant for low income families; masks and hand Sanitizer can be dropped off in the designated plastic bin on the porch.
- 3. Arundel House of Hope** – We will collect \$10 gift cards to McDonald's & Burger King for our Winter Relief community.
- 4. Clothing Ministry** – Please donate

Walmart gift cards (any amount) which will be used to shop for Arundel House of Hope clients who are homeless or are in transition to housing.

- 5. Heaven's Kitchen** – Please donate \$20 gift cards to Giant for our Heaven's Kitchen clients

For all gift card donations, there will be plastic bins with labeled envelopes on the porch for each ministry participating. Please pick up an envelope, place gift cards inside, and drop off in the secure lock box found on the right side of the porch.

Thank you for your continued generosity in serving those in need of help in our own community!



Easter Flowers

We are excited to resume our annual tradition of inviting YOU to order Easter flowers to grace our sanctuary and altar on Easter Sunday. Flowers may be dedicated to a loved one, and you can pick them up from the front porch after the Festival Service (11:30am on April 4). Flowers are \$15 per plant, and must be ordered by **March 3**. To order flowers, go to severnaparkumc.org/flowers. Email Martha for info. mhollidge@verizon.net

Thank You from Heaven's Kitchen

Just like the rest of the church family trying to figure out our new pandemic normals, Heaven's Kitchen went through a couple of changes as well. Starting in March 2020 we started serving bag lunches outside along with our toiletries distribution. Then we discovered we could partner with Community during their food distribution in conjunction with Maryland Food Bank. Their lunch coordinator was hospitalized so we filled that need along with much need toiletries. We were serving about 90 folks per month. Then in November we were able to use the kitchen at Community to serve hot meals which we did again in December. Our Christmas Heaven's Kitchen was special. For the first time since February we had clothing tables, kids Christmas gifts, many desserts thanks to UMYF, along with our toiletries and McDonalds cards for everyone! It was a beautiful winter day filled with fellowship.

Most of all on behalf of Heaven's Kitchen thanks to the church family and volunteers for the donations of food, snacks, drinks, desserts, and clothing, that allowed us to continue this ministry. Each year we are overwhelmed with the generosity expressed through the Angel Tree. Thanks for sharing your love with Heaven's Kitchen!

-Chip Linehan



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 Update

The Regathering Task Force is focused on bringing our congregation together again, safely. At our January 28 meeting, we affirmed our current RED status, keeping all ministries virtual, even as the preschool operates within safe guidelines for daycare/education facilities. We are encouraged now that some of us have begun to receive the vaccine against COVID-19! Please know that we are as eager to worship in person

as you are, and as soon as it is safe, we will resume in-person worship. In the meantime, let's do everything we can to minimize the impact of COVID by continuing to wear our masks, keep socially distant, and wash our hands. If you have any questions, feedback, or input for the Task Force, please reach out to chair, Gaines Johnston. gainesjohnston@gmail.com

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