The Cornerstone

Rolling Hills United Methodist Church
26438 Crenshaw Blvd.
Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274
310-377-6771

December 2020

Advent Stroll Invites Preparation for Christmas

On **Saturday, December 5**, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., RHUMC will be prepared to welcome members and friends for an experience of the gifts of Advent. A one-way walking path will begin at the lower parking lot, circle the patio, offer a visit to the sanctuary, and conclude with the opportunity to tie prayer ribbons on the fence around Imagination Island.

Along the way, those who make the journey will be able to collect a children's Christmas craft project to complete at home, donate gifts to children affiliated with Toberman Neighborhood Center (via the effort known as Trek to the Tree), admire the chancel Christmas tree and take a family photo, donate poinsettias in honor or memory of a loved one, reflect on the journey to Bethlehem, and collect your communion supplies for Sunday worship.

The one-way path will help participants to keep safely distanced and will allow for shortcuts for those who wish to skip the visit to the sanctuary or confine their interaction to simply picking up communion and/or craft supplies. Reservations for communion supplies can be made by responding to the email that will go out early in the week of November 30. Information about Trek to the Tree and poinsettia donations are elsewhere in this newsletter. We look forward to the encouragement of being within sight and sound of one another as we enter the sacred season of preparing to welcome Jesus once more into our lives and into the world. And thank you for wearing a mask!

There wasn't a pandemic that year, but the census had brought enough disruption on its own. In the 1st century, everyday ordinary life in Judea was subject to all kinds of disruptions. From drought and famine to political upheaval, religious division to social strife, people in that part of the world faced many of the same threats that we experience today.

The *Pax Romana*, the so called era of peace in the Roman Empire, began during the reign of the Emperor Augustus. But it was anything but peaceful. There were no wars between them and other empires, as had characterized the previous couple of centuries. But there was plenty of violence involved in suppressing the many ethnic and religious minorities under Roman rule. It may have been peaceful back at headquarters, but in lots of communities it was still a time of fear.

That was the world into which the Word of God came to dwell. Out there among the flocks grazing in the hill country, it may have seemed like a silent night. But daily life wasn't easy for most – and certainly not for a young couple expecting the birth of their first child. On the road. Not by choice, but necessity. Nowhere to stay. The whole world turned upside-down. We understand. Our exact circumstances may be different, but we share the same deep yearning.

This year we need to hear that story more than ever. We want to hear again that God will reach out to the human family with grace and compassion. We need to be reminded that "by the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace" (Luke 1:78-79).

And we shall hear it! Though we will not be gathering in the sanctuary for some time yet, we are doing all that we can to bring the sights and sounds of Christmas to our whole church family. Our Children's and Youth Ministries team have been working on our Children's Christmas Eve service, with as many of the usual players present as possible. We will still have angels and shepherds and sheep and donkeys, wise men and women, and of course a baby in a manger, surrounded by loving parents. It is being recorded and prepared even now, and will be available to all on Christmas Eve.

We are doing the same for the usual evening celebration. Music from both 3rd service (our traditional 8 p.m. service) and members of our choir and friends (who lead us at 11 p.m.) will be part of the service. We haven't quite figured out how to do a candle procession while singing "Silent Night," but we haven't given up, either.

Yes, the world may seem upside down these days. The dark comes early at this time of the year and the nights are longest. But this is when the story comes to life: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5).
Merry Christmas to all!

Jonathan

April Herron

Dear Friends,

Perhaps we think we are familiar with Christmas. We know the story. We have lit the candles, helped with the decorations, repeated the carols, baked the favorite cookies, and prepared the traditional food time and time again. Year after year, we have found joy and peace in the worship services and habits of generosity that the season inspires.

This year, however, Christmas is not going to be just like all the other years. And so, we have an opportunity to learn something new about the season, perhaps by hearing beloved scripture passages with new ears. In this regard, I have found reason to appreciate the scholarship of Amy-Jill Levine, Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School and College of Arts and Sciences.

Professor Levine, in her book *Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent,* makes the case that every detail of the gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus is weighted with significance. For example, even the names of the characters help to convey the meaning of the unfolding events. In their Hebrew forms, Zechariah means, "God remembers" Elizabeth means, "God keeps promises." John (Jochanan) means, "God is gracious." Mary, a derivation of Miriam, brings to mind the quick-thinking and courageous sister of Moses, who protected him when he was a baby and proclaimed God's power as he led the people into freedom.

These four people were living in tense times of political conflict and periodic upheaval. In that context, they were called upon to prepare the way for Jesus; to usher him into the world. This brought them into truly uncharted territory. They may well have been as disoriented and disturbed then as we are now. Listen how, in unexpected and uncomfortable circumstances, their names tell them, and tell us, everything we need to know: God remembers us and sees our suffering; God is faithful and fulfills God's promise to be with us; God is gracious and merciful; God has given us the same spirit as our brave and trail-blazing ancestors.

Mary might have wished for easier conditions for the birth of the baby she carried, but she agreed to do her part, and trusted God to see her through. May God grant us deepened faith as we find new ways to honor Christ's birth into a world that is not yet matching up to our highest aspirations. May we learn to receive the gift of peace.

April

Help us Decorate the Sanctuary with Poinsettias for Christmas!

Whether our worship is in person or virtual, we will be decorating the church with poinsettias. You are invited to purchase one or more poinsettia plants to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. The plants can be dedicated a few different ways.

☐ To the Glory of God

☐ In Honor of: _____

_____

_____

☐ In Memory of: _____

_____

_____

Given by: _____

Number of plants:_____ Amount paid: _____

Cash: _____ Check number: _____

Please make checks payable to RHUMC for $15 per plant, or 2 for $25. Please mail or bring this form to the church office. The last day to order plants is December 6th.

Thank you!

Tis the Season….For Trek to the Tree

The RHUMC Missions Committee is thrilled to announce that Trek to the Tree will be taking place in 2020, albeit virtually. This is your opportunity to buy a gift for a child aged 1-12 or a $25 Target gift card for youth aged 13 or older who are served by Toberman Neighborhood Center. Since RHUMC is not yet meeting in person, we are not taking sign-ups this year. Instead, you have several ways to participate.

Have your heart set on buying a toy? That would be great. Here are your options:

· Order directly from Toberman's Amazon Wish list accessible at Trek to the Tree or find the link on our website. Toys will be delivered directly to Toberman.

· Buy a toy and either drop it at RHUMC or have it sent directly to Toberman at 131 N Grand Ave, San Pedro, CA 90731. You can drop toys at RHUMC during the week when the office is open or on Saturday, December 5 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. during communion pick-up. Please DO NOT wrap the toys.

Want a simpler way to give? Cash is a great gift as it allows us to buy gift cards, which are highly valued in today's difficult economic climate. In the last several years RHUMC has given around 150 gift cards. We hope to double that this year and give 300 $25 cards! No need to buy the cards yourself as our Noucha Jasanis is on tap to take care of that for you. It's easy to help: write a check payable to RHUMC, put Trek to the Tree in the memo line and either mail the check to RHUMC or drop it off during communion pick up on December 5. You can also donate online at rhumc.org. Please be sure to include Trek to the Tree in the designated giving line.

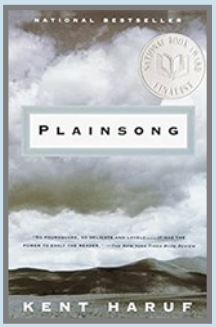
Whichever way you choose to participate, please note that we need all toys and monetary donations at Toberman or RHUMC no later than Saturday, December 12. Thanks, as always, for your generosity. And thank you to Noucha Jasanis for her 18th year of coordinating Trek to the Tree!!

The Family Christmas Photo - An RHUMC Tradition!

Through the Sundays of Advent and across the array of services on Christmas Eve, families, couples, and individuals within our church are fond of capturing a moment in front of one of our beautiful trees. This year, our observance of the season will be different than usual, but we still want everyone to have an opportunity for a photo in front of the Christmas tree. The Worship Committee has decorated the sanctuary Christmas tree and you are welcome to make arrangements to visit the sanctuary during business hours (Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) to create your own photo shoot.

The steps are: call or email the church office (310 377 6771 or churchoffice@rhumc.org) and schedule your time slot; put on the outfits and gather the camera and the designated photographer; smile and say, “Merry Christmas!” Or, to keep it really simple, come to the Advent Stroll!

Year End Book Discussion



Just a reminder if you plan to participate in the book discussion on **Monday, December 7**, at 7:00 p.m., please be sure to email April at April@rhumc.org so she can provide you with the Zoom link. We'll enjoy a conversation about *Plainsong* by Kent Haruf..

Salvation Army Bell-Ringing Season by Roxanne Morse

'Tis the Season…

Nothing is quite the same this year, and the Bell-Ringing Season for our RHUMC volunteers is no exception! The Salvation Army will have workers outdoors this season and we still have our evening spot at Vons in Redondo Beach Mondays through Saturdays. The Army is so appreciative of RHUMC's volunteers, but understands if anyone is not comfortable this season, due to Covid.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact me at 310-543-2281 or email roxannemor@gmail.com. We have been ringing since 2013 and have raised over $10,000 for the work of the Army in Redondo Beach. I know there are some RHUMC members who support the Army separately and I would encourage you to give directly to them: Salvation Army, 125 Beryl Street, Redondo Beach CA 90277.

We thank RHUMC for support in this ministry and as the Salvation Army states at Christmas: Need Knows No Season…

Thank you Doug Kemps for the beautiful Thanksgiving display on the chancel and to Doug Kemps, Suellen Fung, Brendon Fung, Susan Markee and Scott Takahashi for decorating the tree in the sanctuary! Your efforts are very much appreciated!

Altar Flowers

The new flower chart for 2021 has arrived! Sign up early to ensure you get your favorite date to honor, celebrate, or remember that someone special! You can do so by calling or emailing the church office (310-377-6771 or churchoffice@rhumc.org) or signing up the next time you're in the church entry way – perhaps during the Advent Stroll? Flower arrangements cost $45. Please make checks payable to RHUMC with a notation on the memo line of altar flowers.

Advent Gathering for College Students

Tuesday Nights @ 7:00pm
Dec. 1, Dec. 8, Dec. 15, & Dec. 22

You are invited to gather via Zoom for fellowship, faith exploration and opportunities for community service!

Email Kristin@rhumc.org for more information
Follow @rhumcyag on instagram for young adult events

Staff Announcement

Megan Pelc, Director of our Kid Zone and Mid Zone programs, recently moved to the United Kingdom to be married. Gabby Palacios, a long-time member of our Preschool staff, was hired to succeed her. Gabby began her journey with us through Kid Zone many years ago and has been a trusted and valuable member of the Preschool staff, most recently as Assistant Director. She was especially helpful in our transition to and from temporary classrooms during the construction of our new facilities. She brings with her much experience, as well as energy and passion for serving families with children. We are delighted to welcome her into this new role.

Hello!

My name is Gabby Palacios and I am looking forward to begin my journey as the director of Kid Zone. I am excited for the fun we will have and the memories we will create. My background is in early childhood education through UCLA. I have been working at RHUMPS for 17 years teaching, and most recently as Assistant director to Myra in the Preschool. I am blessed with an amazing husband and three beautiful children.

I love spending time with family, cooking and making lemonade out of lemons. I enjoy working with the children and learning from them. It really does take a village to raise a family and I am grateful to be a part of the village here at RHUMC.

Youth Ministries

Ignite: Outdoor Movie Night Dec. 2 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Bring your own chair, blanket and dress warm for an outdoor socially distanced holiday movie night. Due to COVID no food will be served, and masks must be worn throughout the event.

Ignite: Poinsettias and Carols Dec. 9 @ 5:00-7:00 p.m.
Due to COVID19 we are organizing this event differently this year. Youth will stay in their family units to make the deliveries, so parents are needed to drive and all siblings are welcome to help! If you chose to extend your "bubble" to drive with other youth families, that is up to each family's discretion. Please RSVP ahead of time for Kristin to coordinate your supplies!

Ignite: Christmas Party Dec. 16 @ 6:30-7:30 p.m.

This is the last Ignite of the season. Wear your favorite ugly Christmas sweater and enjoy holiday treats and games over Zoom! All youth are invited to attend. Supplies for the games will be available for pick up on Monday, Dec. 14, 11:00-6:00 p.m., or can be delivered if requested. Please RSVP to Kristin@rhumc.org by Dec. 12.

Service Opportunity: Spread Holiday Cheer

Set up for "Santa's Breakfast" at Toberman Neighborhood Center
Sunday, Dec. 13 time TBA
Youth will help with Toberman's annual Christmas event. We will meet at Toberman and help them sort the gift donations so families can "shop" during the event later that week. Youth must sign up for this event by contacting Kristin@rhumc.org.

Youth Sunday School is offered Sundays at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Contact the Director of Youth Ministries, Kristin Reksc, with any questions:
Kristin@rhumc.org
To receive text message reminders for youth events please text the keyword "RHUMCyouth" to 33222.

The children and the preschool are preparing for Christmas and rehearsals will begin for our traditional songs and celebrations of the season. We recorded our Thanksgiving offerings and songs for YouTube (parent access only) and will follow in offering videos to the parents for Christmas towards the end of December for all parents to enjoy and share with their loved ones in the safety of their own home.

Children's Ministry

Does your family have Christmas traditions you honor each year? Advent calendars, dances, special meals, caroling, making reindeer food and many more? You may not even know how they started, but these traditions may now be a part of how your family celebrates each year.

The Children's Ministries would love for you to share a few sentences about one or more of your holiday traditions. No matter how big or small the tradition, these are cherished memories that last forever.

Please send along a family photo that we may post with your traditions. They will be put into a slideshow and put on the church web page for our church families to see in the month of December. Sharing these different traditions can inspire others, both in your family and afar.

Please send your traditions and photo to: debra@rhumc.org by December 11th. Please note that by sending your photo you are allowing RHUMC to use your photo publicly on our webpage.

The RHUMC Children's Ministry is conducting online Sunday School for children in the congregation. Parents of TK-2nd graders receive an email each Sunday with a Bible lesson, activity sheets and video links. For more information please email Debra DeLuca at debra@rhumc.org.

Parents of 3rd-5th graders receive an email each Sunday with a Bible lesson, activity sheets and video links. For more information please email Ms. Stevie at steviesterling@gmail.com.

Our Youth Ministry conducts live stream Sunday School lessons for youth (6th-12th grades) via Google Meetups. Weekly lesson plans are emailed. For more information please contact Kristin Reksc at Kristin@rhumc.org.

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Change Service Requested

SAVE OUR PLANET!

Have your Cornerstone sent via email; it's easy, just call the church office at 310-377-6771. You can also view the Cornerstone on the church website at www.rhumc.org

Senior Pastor	Jonathan Chute	Associate Pastor	April Herron
Senior Pastor Emeritus	Martha Rowlett	Music Director	Chuck Dickerson
Preschool Director	Myra Ghabrial	Organist/Pianist	Althea Waites
Parish Nurse	Annette Matsuda	3rd Service Music	Paula Kuno
Children's Ministry Dir.	Debra DeLuca	Exec. Asst. to Pastor	Roksolana Vecerek
Youth Ministry Director	Kristin Reksc	Church Office Admin.	Peggy Roulette
Kid Zone Director	Gabby Palacios	Custodian	Miguel Portillo
Treasurer	John Fitzgerald		
Church Business Mgr.	Nicole Lowery Zakman		

Church Office Phone	310-377-6771	Resident Bishop	Grant J. Hagiya
Fax Line	310-544-4123	District Superintendent	Mark Nakagawa
Web Site	www.rhumc.org		

SUNDAY WORSHIP HOURS
8:30 & 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
CHURCH OFFICE HOURS
Monday – Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Next Cornerstone deadline is December 23
www.rhumc.org