This Lent and Easter:
To Every Heart, Love Will Come!

Rev. Doug Robinson-Johnson

In his song “Anthem,” Leonard Cohen offers:

Every heart, every heart
To love will come
But like a refugee
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

The remainder of March we continue reflections on the Way of Love leading turn-by-turn into a labyrinth, deeper and deeper into the mind of Christ and the heart of God’s love. We have reflected on the important practices of repentance and of learning. In remaining Sundays we will explore Praying (3/7), Worshiping (3/14), Blessing (3/21), and boldly Going (3/28). Each of these spiritual practices reveals some of the meaning behind Cohen’s observation that cracks allow the light to enter. The shell of this fragile egg of existence has cracked this year, but something else can now emerge because of those cracks. Each practice of Lent allows more light, more Love to get into these places of fear, pain, and anxiety. Remember that free copies of our Lenten Devotional book Living the Way of Love by Mary Bea Sullivan, are available on our two campuses in Little Lending Libraries just outside!

Easter Sunday of Resurrection, April 4th, is the dawning of new Life! The light gets in! Every heart, every heart, to love will come! Plan now to join us each day in Holy Week to best appreciate the sunrise on Sunday!

Find more about Holy Week on page 4 and 5!
Coffee with Pastor Doug
Begins Saturday, March 13 at 9:30 am
nationalchurch.org/live

Interested in getting better connected at National UMC? Join Pastor Doug and other members of the church staff every other Saturday at 9:30 am. Beginning on March 13, come to Coffee with Pastor Doug (Zoom information below) where you can learn more about National UMC and find the best ways to connect with others in faith! For more information, contact Helen Simon, Director of Development, at hsimon@nationalchurch.org.

Join Zoom Meeting
By computer:
https://zoom.us/j/98866204549

By phone:
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
Meeting ID: 988 6620 4549

For Everyone Born:
A Hymn Sing of Female Hymn Writers
Sunday, March 14 at 1:30 pm EST
nationalchurch.org/live

Join our Director of Music, Worship, and Arts, Dr. Melissa Chavez for our monthly hymn sing on the second Sunday at 1:30 pm. Our popular program of 45 minute hymn sings takes place virtually over Zoom, and in March will feature some of the great women hymn writers in honor of women’s history month. You won’t want to miss it!

By phone:
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
Meeting ID: 988 6620 4549
Save the Date:
Third Annual “Night Under the Stars” Talent Show

Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 15th for our third annual “Night Under the Stars” talent show at 7pm. Interested in sharing a talent? Find out more here: https://forms.gle/3KT76ASzF7cDDwFM6
**Palm Sunday: March 28th**  
*Service available at 7:00 am,  
Godspell Junior at 3:00 pm*

This Sunday, we'll dive into the joys of hosannas and the sorrows of Christ's passion. In the afternoon, at 3pm, the youth and children present Godspell Jr, Stephen Schwartz's classic musical reworked for young actors, telling the story of Jesus and his friends through parables and song, laughter and tears.

**Holy Week Monday**  
*Devotion available at 7:00 am*

Lenten devotional offered by Doug Robinson-Johnson and music from our virtual choir and soloists. From Doug: *Jesus upsets the marketplace of the Temple insisting a house of prayer has become a den of thieves. Many believe his subsequent arrest a few days later is a direct result of this disruption. Tempting as accommodating, gracious, polite tolerance can seem for people of faith, the gospels clearly invite disruption in the face of oppression. Would you have been there, with the resistance? Would you have resisted the marketplace, or the witness of an activist?*

**Holy Week Tuesday**  
*Devotion available at 7:00 am*

Lenten devotional offered by Maynard Moore and music from our virtual choir and soloists reveal God’s presence with us in times of lament. From Maynard: *The scriptural reference will be Lamentations, dating from about 580 bce following the destruction of Jerusalem by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. The context for my message will likely focus on the Black experience in America, including some laments coming out of slavery, but also a word of hope. The point I will make is that lament is a proper theological response. In the current context, recognizing the pain and anger felt by many people of color, and challenging the white majority to repent of our complicity in maintaining the status quo.*

**Holy Week Wednesday**  
*Live on Zoom at 6:00pm  
nationalchurch.org/NatAtWesley*

All are welcome to experience creative, connective worship as we center ourselves on the sacred mysteries of Holy Week at National@Wesley Wednesday Night Live, with leadership from Ali DeLeo, James Mayo, Wesley campus liturgists, and the Wesley Gospel Choir.

continued on the next page
Maundy Thursday
Service live streams at 4:30 pm, available on demand after 5:30pm

Thursday, we read of Jesus’ last supper with his friends. We remember how he promised to be present in our meals together, to be revealed as we break bread. We see how the love at the center of the universe is about kneeling to serve each other. **Communion elements are offered outside of our Metropolitan Memorial and Wesley sanctuaries at 6pm.**

Good Friday
*Spiritual Practices with Ali DeLeo at 12:30pm on Facebook,
Good Friday Service with the Dubois Seven Last Words at 7pm.*

Ali DeLeo leads us deeper into the waters of faith at 12:30 pm on Facebook through spiritual practice. Our Good Friday service at 7pm features the Dubois The Seven Last Words of Christ, featuring our own Bruce Caviness on the organ, soloists, virtual choir and instrumentalists. In this musical offering, we are reminded how real death is, and that even in the midst of deep agony, God’s nature is to forgive.

Easter Vigil: A Service of Biblical Storytelling
*Streaming at 7:00 pm*

Saturday night, we gather virtually for one of the church’s most ancient rituals. Through biblical storytelling, we are reminded again of all the times that God has acted in our world to bring life, and wholeness, and resurrection. At the conclusion of the service we proclaim Easter—the ultimate triumph of life over death, goodness over evil, love over hate.

Sunday: Easter Sunrise Service
*April 4th, 7:00 am*

On this joyful day, our alleluias rise with brass, handbells, organ, and virtual choirs as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Download this and other Zoom Backgrounds at nationalchurch.org/ZoomBackgrounds
Prepare Ye! National United Methodist Church is proud to present the Tony-nominated musical GODSPELL.

In this timeless tale of building a community, friendship, loyalty, and love, a small group of disciples helps Jesus tell a variety of parables through song, dance, and a heaping dose of humor. Boasting a score with chart-topping songs by Stephen Schwartz (Wicked), including Billboard chart's pop single hit, “Day by Day,” GODSPELL is a sensation that continues to touch audiences! GODSPELL Jr, a reworking of the original musical for young actors, features our talented youth and children.

Dubois Seven Last Words

On Good Friday, our virtual choir and instrumentalists are pleased to join Bruce Caviness, organist, for The Seven Last Words of Christ. This cantata, a tour de force for organ, was written by Théodore Dubois (1837-1924) in 1867 for St. Clotilde in Paris, where he was the maître de chapelle. The work is in eight movements and was an instant success after its premiere, becoming the most frequently performed French Romantic oratorio through the beginning of the twentieth century. Dubois’ setting of the seven last words of Christ leads us into the compelling drama of the Passion story, and ends with a stunning hymn that reminds us of the coming resurrection.

Send us your “Alleluias” for Easter!

Be a part of our Easter day celebration by recording yourself saying “Christ is risen! Alleluia!”. Videos are welcome from locations indoors or outdoors, with family, with fur babies, or as a solo mission. Submissions are due on Monday, March 22nd. https://www.dropbox.com/request/VAwbs14f5Ds7jlojVgrB
Food for Thought: Lent Edition

Words of Life: Jesus and the Promise of the Ten Commandments Today

Join us Thursday evenings, 7-8 pm on Zoom for a Lenten Bible study.

In this book and video study, United Methodist pastor Adam Hamilton considers the commandments in their historical context, looking at the meaning of each commandment in Hebrew, unpacking how Jesus reinterpreted them, and showing how every thou-shalt-not was intended to point to a life-giving "thou shalt." He also explores how the latest research in science and psychology illuminates these commandments, rightly understood, as a way of ordering one’s life beautifully in the present day. In a culture marked by workaholism, materialism, and social media-driven envy, God has given us a time-tested path that leads to gratitude, confidence, and peace.

In each session, we will watch brief videos from Pastor Hamilton, followed by discussion of one or two of the commandments per week. Participants may wish to read the accompanying book, Words of Life - Jesus and the Promise of the Ten Commandments Today, but you will also be able to participate fully in the discussion simply by watching the videos with the group and reading the Bible passages.

March 11: "You shall not murder" and "You shall not commit adultery"
March 18: "You shall not steal" and "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"
March 25: "You shall not covet...anything that belongs to your neighbor."

For more information, contact Rev. Janet Craswell at jcraswell@nationalchurch.org

Help Support Policies to End Homelessness:
Join the Friendship Place Advocacy Network by Ann Michel

Advocating on behalf of public programs, policies, and funding to end homelessness is an important way we can support efforts to combat homelessness across our city. Our ministry partner Friendship Place has created a simple and direct way for us to help through the new Friendship Place Advocacy Network, or "FAN." Those joining this network will be notified by Friendship Place’s Advocacy Organizer, Lynn Amano, when we can help by contacting our elected officials.

All you need to do to enroll is complete a simple, online sign-up form at: nationalchurch.org/FANForm

For more information, contact Ann Michel amichel@wesleyseminary.edu

Join the discussion at 7 PM Thursdays on Zoom
https://zoom.us/j/97005757736?pwd=eTRDL2dqa2N0dURHYTAvcnmxZczR3dz09
Meeting ID: 970 0575 7736 Passcode: justice
On March 1, the COVID Task Force met to hear recommendations from a Task Force subcommittee that includes scientists Richard Kenney, Alexandra McPherron, and Julie Niemczura, as well as Lay Leader Rita Guenther and Senior Pastor Doug Robinson-Johnson. Following the subcommittee’s recommendations, the Task Force affirmed that Easter on April 4th will be held online, and that the next decision point will be May 2nd.

The subcommittee will continue to meet monthly, with Alexandra McPherron supplying all the groups with decision-making responsibility under the COVID policy with biweekly metrics. Currently we are in stage 2B, which allows for some small groups to request permission to meet outdoors. A full copy of the COVID policy, along with up-to-date regional COVID data, is available on our website at nationalchurch.org/covid.

How Can I Request Consideration of Sub-Tier Two Activities for My NUMC Group?: Sequential Steps:

1. **Written Request to Pillar Staff**: When a NUMC group wishes to request consideration of an activity to be held while NUMC is in the Tier Two operating phase, a designated person from that group should send one or more Pillar Staff Leads a brief outline of the proposed activity, the purpose of the activity (e.g., Essential Ministries of Mercy and Justice), whether the event will be held indoors or outdoors, the estimated number of attendees, and share how the group proposes to ensure adherence to the health and safety protocols of the Policy, and to fulfill the requirements for contact tracing and waivers.

2. **Meeting of Pillar Staff (1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month)**: The Pillar Staff will meet and consider any request made and determine if it will be allowed under one of the sub-tiers. For each request, the Director of Operations will record the decision made by Pillar Staff.

3. **Communicating the Decision**: Pillar Staff will share the requests considered with the Task Force and with the Board of Trustees to allow for coordination of space, tenant activities, and any other issues that may arise.

4. **Coordination of Logistics and Communications**: Once final approval is granted for an activity, the activity’s leaders should:
   a. Reserve the desired space through the online reservation system
   b. Coordinate any facilities needs with the Director of Operations (as per standard procedures)
   c. Coordinate the procedures for adherence to the health and safety protocols of this Policy, and for fulfilling the requirements for contact tracing and waivers with the Director of Development
   d. Coordinate any media and/or communications needs with the Director of Communications

5. **Reporting to Church Council**: The Senior Pastor will report all approved requests to the Church Council monthly.

If questions remain, please don’t hesitate to contact Senior Pastor, Rev. Doug Robinson-Johnson (doug@nationalchurch.org) or Task Force Leader, Rita Guenther.

The Pillar Staff are: Pastor Doug Robinson-Johnson (Senior Pastor), Rev. Janet Craswell (Learning Pillar), Rev. Ali DeLeo (Caring Pillar), Lucinda Kent (Serving Pillar and Director of Operations), Helen Simon (Sharing Pillar and Director of Development), and Melissa Chavez (Praising Pillar and Director of Music, Worship, and Arts).
“I am with and will watch over you wherever you go.” -Genesis 28:15

The Hebrew people left Egypt and journeyed toward the Promised Land, pitching a holy tent as they traveled, remembering God’s covenant to accompany them “wherever.” We have pitched holy tents in a multitude of places over the past year, and over the next two months we plan to continue this pattern of worshipping and learning primarily online. We encourage all NUMC participants to receive any of the available vaccines and to assist others in doing so. And we encourage participants to continue working with the COVID-19 policy and its custodians in order to remain on track toward responsible reopening of facilities.

We are sometimes asked why we have all of these COVID-19 procedures and don’t just trust individuals and groups to make good choices. Hold in-person worship up to the maximum allowed by DC rules and let people decide what they want to do. Leave it to church or community groups to decide whether it is best to meet in a church building or not. Do we really have to be so paternalistic about this, especially now that vaccines are more available? It’s true, we take good care of one another in this church. Anyone who has suffered a loss or illness can testify that wisdom and mercy abound here! The major concern has not been each individual’s diligence in properly wearing masks, social distancing, and being honest about each one’s symptoms or possible exposure risks. The primary concern has been around preserving safe spaces for others such as groups we have prioritized (like schools) or staff (like our Campus Kitchen chef or our musicians) who need to work in secure spaces.

We are moving through what we hope are the last stages of our journey toward our promised land—the green “low risk” category of our COVID-19 plan where our new normal will allow us to be close to one another again at the table, at the chancel rail, serving our community. We do not think we will have to wait until November when scientists predict we might reach something like herd immunity in order to come together in more familiar ways as soon as the summer. Imagine a confirmation service near the end of May where families each approach an outdoor altar under a holy tent, one family at a time, to receive a blessing, cheered on by sixty people standing and sitting nearby and hundreds more watching and praying from their own holy tabernacle! It may remind you of the time when Pastor Ali DeLeo was ordained outside last year! Wasn’t that a blessing!

There’s no way or reason to rush through this final stage of the desert on our way to the Promised Land. God is with us wherever we go!

Rev. Doug Robinson-Johnson, Senior Pastor

Grief, as we know, is a non-linear and multi-faceted path. As a church, we are committed to balancing the essential importance of celebrating a loved one’s life with the known scientific information as outlined in the COVID-19 policy. That being said, God has given us an abundant share of creativity in ways we can offer grief-care. Currently, these include the following: 1) services at the graveside/interment in our columbarium in accordance within specified limits; 2) virtual funeral/memorial services, which can include both family involvement and communal offerings like the NUMC virtual choir; and 3) Zoom prayer & remembrances services on special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, etc.

We also welcome exploring other opportunities and ideas with you, as we desire to commemorate beloved family, friends, and members in ways that honor and celebrate their lives. And as always, we are here to walk with you through the myriad of losses we are all experiencing during this pandemic time, and please reach out to us as you need.

Rev. Ali DeLeo, Pastor of Congregational Care
“Rhythmic Expressions”:
Watercolors by Susan O’Neill

by Marilu Wood, Arts Council

You may not believe that spring is really coming, given the pictures of snow and ice in Texas. However, it is a fact of nature that there will soon be crocus buds pushing their way through whatever is on our ground come March 21 when the Arts Council presents the artist of our spring show, Susan O’Neill.

Susan’s diverse experiences have expanded her artistic style and provided extensive opportunities to exhibit her work nationally and internationally. She has received “Best in Show” awards and honors in watercolor, oil painting, and drawing. Currently, she is on the faculty of The Art League and the University of Maryland.

Susan creates pieces inspired by the play of light and rhythm within a landscape, object, or within the human figure. Working from life, she carefully observes her subject, exploring the harmony between the elements of the scene. This harmony creates the illusion of movement, depth, and design of the composition. Susan allows for spontaneity in her process and embraces the unexpected delights occurring between the interplay of watercolor and the surface of the paper. Ultimately, through the appropriate use of paint quality and placement, she strives to convey the passion and excitement experienced in the timelessness of nature’s rhythms and magnificence.

“One of the elements of watercolor that I highly value is the white of the paper and how the shapes formed by the interplay of color and light become a positive force, implying the multiplicity of the composition,” says O’Neill, explaining her work. “The white of the paper reinforces the inherent rhythms and atmosphere of the scene. It gives breath and life to the artwork.”

The Arts Council Presents the
Borisevich Duo, featuring pianist
Margarita Loukachkina and violinist
Nikita Borisevich

April 11th, 2021 at 3:00 pm
nationalchurch.org/art

“Nikita and Margarita gave a magical and diverse performance with extraordinarily nuanced artistry, virtuoso fireworks and ensemble collaboration.”

- William Riddle, Artistic and Executive Director of Venetian Arts Society, FL

The Borisevich Duo, featuring pianist Margarita Loukachkina and violinist Nikita Borisevich, is an internationally acclaimed violin and piano duet, frequently performing across the United States and Europe. Mr. Borisevich and Ms. Loukachkina are winners of numerous international music competitions and have collectively performed on world renowned stages such as The Kennedy Center (Washington, DC), Grand Hall of Moscow Conservatory (Moscow, Russia), Shriver Hall (Baltimore, Maryland) and Manuel de Falla Auditorium (Granada, Spain), among others.

In 2020, the Borisevich Duo was named a winner of the Beverly Hills National Auditions and will perform a series of concerts in Southern California in the 2021 concert season. Also this season the duo will be releasing their debut CD, which will feature a piece by award-winning American composer, Zach Gulaboff-Davis, which the duo premiered last season among other works. Join us for this online concert experience.
From the Broader Church: General Conference

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, originally scheduled for 2020 and postponed due to COVID, is now scheduled to be held Aug. 29 through Sept. 6, 2022, in Minneapolis, MN.

In response to the further postponement of the 2020 General Conference, the Council of Bishops is calling a Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church to be convened online on May 8, 2021.

The purpose of the 2021 Special Session of the General Conference will be limited to gaining a quorum in order to suspend the rules for the sole purpose of allowing the use of paper ballots to act upon 12 pieces of legislation that would enable the church to effectively continue its work until the postponed 2020 General Conference is held in 2022. While other potential amendments were considered, it was agreed that these 12 pieces of legislation would enable the church to continue its administrative functions appropriately. These 12 pieces of legislation can be found at:

https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/files/websites/www/pdfs/12+legislations+to+be+decided+by+the+2021+special+session+of+general+conference.pdf

Sundays at National UMC

All Day: Online Worship
Visit nationalchurch.org/live for an online worship service combining the styles of our worshiping campuses.

8 am and 8 pm: Prayer Call
Begin and end the day with a short time of devotion and prayer. Callers are encouraged to share their own prayer concerns in a trusting, prayerful space.
These calls are offered every day of the week!
(551) 258-5131    |    Toll free: (844) 857-5555
For callers outside the US: use access code 3529140

10:00 am: In the Biblical Sense
This adult Sunday School class explores how the Bible relates to our everyday lives.
Available on Zoom; Meeting ID: 957 6923 5121. Passcode: bible Mobile passcode: 598320

10:00 am: Children’s Sunday School
All children up to age 12 are invited to a time on Zoom that supplements the recorded Godly Play videos on our website with interactive activities. Visit nationalchurch.org/children to learn more.

11:00 am: Middle School Sunday School
Leaders Jason Grim and Frances Bourne lead 6th-8th graders in weekly lessons and discussions. For more information, visit nationalchurch.org/youth

12:30 pm: Virtual Coffee Hour
Here’s your chance to see our community face to face - albeit virtually. Connect with friends old and new, with opportunities for both large and small group conversations. Join at nationalchurch.org/live
You can also call in at (301) 715-8592; use Meeting ID: 988 6620 4549

3:30 pm: Science, Religion, and Society
Dr. Maynard Moore leads discussions with weekly guests and experts connecting both science and religion to society at large.
Available on Zoom; Meeting ID: 923 0079 1268. Passcode: science Mobile passcode: 971080

5:00 pm: Facebook Rebroadcast
Join in online worship in community as we share the week’s service on our Facebook page. This is one of the easiest ways to invite someone new to church! Available at facebook.com/nationalmethodistchurch
Contribute to the Messenger

The Messenger is a monthly publication of National United Methodist Church. If you have a ministry event coming up, a recent church event you want to celebrate, or a story of how God is at work in this community, we want to hear from you! We know that right now many future events are a bit uncertain; if you have any questions about submitting to the Messenger, please email Christopher Simon, Director of Communications, at communications@nationalchurch.org

The April Messenger comes out:
March 26, 2021

Please submit articles, pictures, stories, and announcements by:
March 19, 2021

Please email submissions to communications@nationalchurch.org