

INSIDE:

- + **News to Know**
- + **Christ's Resurrection**
- + **Coping with COVID-19**



A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
April 2020



News to Know

Lenten Soup Supper Canceled

St. Joseph Catholic Church has announced that the Lenten soup supper originally scheduled for Friday, March 27, at the former Kennedy School cafeteria, has been canceled. More information is available at (785) 625-7356.

Hays Christian Church Cancels Activities

Hays Christian Church is moving their Sunday worship service online and cancelling all other activities for the foreseeable future.

An online service will be offered at 10:45 a.m. on Sundays, said Pastor Kevin Daniels in an email. More information about the online service is available at Facebook.com/hayschristian or hayschristianchurch.org. The service is being done via Zoom so the congregation can see and interact with one another.

Trinity Lutheran Suspends Services

Services at Trinity Lutheran Church, 2703 Fort St., have been suspended until Tuesday, March 31. The church council issued the following statement in an email to members: "This does not mean that the practice of being the church does not continue. Pastor (Brenda Rodger) will continue serving our community with prayers and consultation. Please feel free to contact her at the church office," (785) 625-2044.

More information is available on the church's website at trinityhays.org and Facebook.com/tlchays.

Celebration Moves Its Services to Facebook

Celebration Community Church, 5790 230th Ave., in an email to members has announced, "We will not be meeting for services, events, or Bible studies, but will have services on Facebook Live each weekend. They will also be posted to our C3 Hays App each week as well." The church's Facebook link is Facebook.com/c3hays.

Pastor Brant Rice said, "We will have music, a relevant message, and even a time to take Communion at home as you watch the service each weekend. We ask that you interact on Facebook Live by commenting who you are and who is watching with you.

"We also encourage you to get the word out to as many people as possible who may enjoy our services from their homes. A great way to do this is to share the service when you're watching it."

North Oak Suspends 'Gatherings' Through March 31st

The elders of North Oak Community Church, 3000 Oak St., have suspended all ministries and gatherings through the end of March. An email sent to members said, "That decision will be re-evaluated at the next Elders Meeting on March 31."

Services can be accessed on the church website, <http://www.northoak.net>, any time after 8:30 a.m. each Sunday. Click on the Facebook Page button or YouTube button on the home page.

Prayer requests may be emailed to noccprays@gmail.com. Office hours through the end of March are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Messiah Lutheran Cancels Lent, Sunday Services

Messiah Lutheran Church, 2000 Main, has canceled Sunday worship services and Lenten and midweek programs through Wednesday, April 1. At that time the church's board of directors will reassess the situation, said Ben Venteicher, director of Christian Education.



ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to one@ourecma.com.

The ECMA ONE Advisory Board will choose appropriate and timely submissions for publication. The columns in ONE represent the views of the author.

Volume 14, Issue 1 • ourecma.com • Copyright 2020 individual authors and ECMA

Advisory Board

Pastor Dave Buller
dbuller@northoak.net

Linn Ann Huntington
lhunting@fhsu.edu

Editor

Pastor Kevin Daniels
kevin@hayschristianchurch.org

United Methodist in Hays Offers Facebook, Radio Options

Hays First United Methodist Church, 305 W. Seventh, has canceled its 8:30 a.m. Sunday worship service for the immediate future. The 10:45 a.m. service is moving to Facebook Live. Pastor Mike Rose gave these instructions to members in the church's March newsletter:

"If you haven't logged onto the Facebook Live worship, you can do so by either going to the Hays 1st UMC web site, <https://haysfumc.com>, and clicking on the Facebook Live Worship tab, or for those who have a Facebook account, after logging in, type in Hays First United Methodist Church in the search bar at the top of the page. The worship service will appear on your computer or phone at 10:45 a.m. on Sunday."

Another option, he said, is listening to the service on KAYS Radio, 1400 AM or 94.3 FM.

Rose said the only Sunday School classes that will continue to be offered are The Walk classes that he teaches at 9:35 a.m. Sundays and 6:15 p.m. Wednesdays.

They, too, will be offered via computer or smart phone. "If you are a member of one of the classes, you will be sent a Zoom Meeting link via email. At your class time, click on the link and it will take you to the meeting. You will be able to see me and your classmates and will be able to both talk and listen during the interactive class," Rose said.

"Today we have a plague that faces us called the coronavirus," he added, "and like the early church, we are called to stay safe, to worship the Triune God, and to be in fellowship together. And like the early church, we must meet in a different way for worship, but worship God is what we will do! And we will stay safe while we do so."

Presbyterian worship experiences go online

First Presbyterian Church, 2900 Hall St., will have its "worship experiences" available via Facebook at Hays First Presbyterian Church Group. There will be no in-person worship for the immediate future, Becky Rogowski, Generations In Faith Together coordinator, said in an email.

CrossPoint to Offer Services Online at Multiple Times

CrossPoint Church, 1300 Harvest Road, is moving its weekend services to online delivery through Tuesday, March 31, Pastor Micah Sanderson said in an email. The services may be accessed at online.crosspointnow.net at the following times:

5 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m. Sunday; 6 p.m. Sunday; 6 p.m. Tuesday; 6 p.m. Thursday.

Operation Christmas Child Craft Event Canceled

The Operation Christmas Child craft event scheduled from 3:30 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, March 29, at Messiah Lutheran Church has been canceled.

After 5 Fashion Show, Brunch Canceled

The Hays After 5 Christian women's group has canceled its spring fashion show and brunch scheduled for Saturday, April 4, at the Rose Garden Banquet Hall.

Hospice Seeks New Volunteers; Training Postponed

Hospice of Hays Med is seeking volunteers to serve in non-medical capacities. The training session for new volunteers scheduled for Thursday, April 16, has been canceled in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

However, those interested in becoming a volunteer may contact Tonia Houghton, the volunteer coordinator, at (785) 623-6200 or tonia.houghton@haysmed.com and she will put their names on a list and contact them when the training session is rescheduled.

Ellis, Palco Churches Schedule Holy Week Services

Ellis and Palco United Methodist Churches have scheduled the following Holy Week services:

In Ellis, on Palm Sunday, April 5, the Christian Education Committee will host "Hunt for Easter" from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. for all school age children to hunt for the journey Jesus took to the cross. Snacks will be provided.

The children will lead the procession into worship at 11 a.m. with palm branches.

Holy Thursday Service will be held at 7 p.m. April 9.

On Good Friday, April 10, "Stations of the Cross" service will begin at 7 p.m.

Easter Sunday service, April 12, will begin at 11 a.m.

Palco United Methodist Church will have Easter Sunday worship service, April 12, at 9 a.m.

The Rev. Scott Tempero, who pastors both churches, said at press time that there were no plans to cancel Holy Week services at either church.

Luke 24:1-12: Christ Is Risen! He Is Risen Indeed!

Mike Rose

Hays United Methodist Church

Luke 24:1-12

It must have been an amazing, but unsettling time; unprecedented, really. The women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women had gathered after being sequestered during the events surrounding Jesus' horrible crucifixion on the cross. Adhering to their Jewish faith traditions, Jesus' body was hastily taken down from the cross and left in a newly hewn tomb. The rock tomb had been furnished by Joseph of Arimathea who, after Jesus' death on the cross, had gone to the authorities so that Jewish laws regarding the sabbath and those concerning the dead at the time of the Passover might be upheld. And so, because the sabbath was upon them and it was getting dark, the appropriate spices were not administered to Jesus' body. That would have to wait until after the sabbath. A huge round stone had

been rolled over the entrance of the tomb to protect the body from animal or human disturbance. Talk about 'social distancing'!

Then, at dawn, the women gathered with the appropriate spices to lovingly administer them to Jesus' body. He had done so much for so many; certainly, they could at least do this one final act of love and kindness for him. On their way to the tomb, they were concerned about who might help them roll away the huge stone covering the entrance at that early hour. But when they arrived, they found the stone had been rolled away! The body of Jesus was gone and two men in dazzling white stood beside them. "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?... He is risen," the men would say. Then the "Men-in-White" told them about Jesus; how he would have to die and rise again on the third day, and they remembered Jesus' saying this. It seemed too amazing to believe, but that's how

God's grace is. They ran and told the disciples, and Peter returned, finding only the linen burial cloths. He would find Jesus later...

It does seem to be too amazing to believe, even, maybe especially, today. Our culture is all about empirical data. We not only want proof, but proof that can be replicated. However, Jesus' death and resurrection cannot be replicated. It is a one-time event, and our choice is to believe or to not believe. I choose to believe.

Why? Because what can be replicated is the message of the Risen Christ to go and share the Good News with our actions, words, and deeds. The Easter message of "He is Risen!" rings hollow if we don't follow the one who said, "Follow me," especially in these unsettling and unprecedented times. So, go out and BE the body of the Risen Christ in a world that desperately needs him. It is the proof that Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, Indeed!

"Because of the empty tomb, we have peace. Because of His resurrection, we can have peace during even the most troubling of times because we know He is in control of all that happens in the world." - Paul Chappell

Luke 24:13-35: Three Long Days

Reverend Celeste Lasich
Hays First Presbyterian Church

As I write this it is March 18, 2020. We are mere days into ever expanding COVID - 19 shutdowns and social distancing protocols. Empty shelves, unexpected home schooling, layoffs, uncertainty, and anxious people struggling to know what to do next in a world that feels broken. Three days so full of breaking news, sudden changes, and overwhelming emotion that each day feels like dog years.

So it was for the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, three days after they saw Jesus, their Teacher, Lord and Friend suffer the horror of crucifixion. Even though they had heard Jesus tell them that that his suffering and death was coming, it was more comforting to put that grim reality out of their minds. Jesus' arrest must have shaken them to their core, but they probably hoped that somehow, miraculously, he would escape death and that they would join with him in victory.

They heard the stories of those who saw the empty tomb and a vision of angels.

They heard the witness of the women, but likely discounted their testimony as idle talk. Three days while their plans, their hopes and dreams of a flourishing future, were buried with Jesus. Three days that in their grief and confusion no doubt felt like dog years.

So it was with the two disciples on the Emmaus road. They were so despondent and focused on their own grief they could not even recognize Jesus. How often do we not see Him walking right beside us because our hearts are too filled with grief, confusion, and shattered expectations? And still Jesus speaks to us eternal words of comfort, hope, and challenge to daily practice resurrection as disciples and followers of our Savior and Lord.

In the breaking of the bread, Jesus opens our eyes so that we can recognize him. In my community of faith we do not know when we will next be gathered for Holy Communion. We will be experimenting with ways to be at Table and celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion wherever we may be. God always makes a way. Whenever our community of faith is next

able to physically gather together, that will be a day of Resurrection Easter joy!

While we are social distancing and keeping social isolation, we must still be connected to God and to our neighbors through phone or virtual presence. We can check-in with one another, run errands, study together, make music and art, encourage, support, and pray for one another. Please continue to financially support your local church. Ministries of comfort, connection, and compassion have not been cancelled and expenses still are being paid.

In this pandemic season, when the world feels broken and each day feels like dog years, keep your heart and eyes open. Church is not a building. It is people, open to see and follow Jesus. When you keep your heart and eyes open, you will see the face of our Risen Lord all around you. You will see Him in those who are struggling with grief, loss, and a future that appears so different from what they anticipated. With all that is changing so rapidly, the Easter declaration is still true. The Lord has risen! Death has been defeated and nothing will even be the same. Christ is Risen. He is Risen indeed!

Luke 24:39-49: Feed Your Spirit

Becky Rogowski

Hays First Presbyterian Church

"See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

"Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

- Luke 24:39-49 (ESV)

As I reflect upon this particular passage during

uncertain times in unchartered waters, the one thing that strikes me is Jesus asking about something to eat. He runs across the disciples and greets them with "Shalom." This phrase is somewhere between "Peace" and "Hey." It's both a meaningful greeting and a casual and every day one. The friends didn't take it as such, though! They were absolutely terrified! Do you blame them? Their dead friend was suddenly among them! Not only was he present with them; he was acting as though nothing weird is going on.

He's got this type of attitude: "Hey, man. Here I am. It's me. It's really me. See my scars. You can touch me and see that I'm not a ghost (ok, that's reassuring, right?) It's okay." Put yourself in the disciples' place - your dead friend has shown up and wants you to believe it's really him and you get to touch his scars as proof he's not a ghost. Terrified much? Just as his friends start to believe it IS actually him, he asks for something to eat and they give him a piece of fish.

How human is this? After three days of being locked up in a tomb, he's HUNGRY. Who wouldn't be? When he walks in, his friends are so scared they've lost all sense

of common hospitality. They haven't offered him a place to sit, something to eat and drink, or the traditional welcome.

He smells food and is looking around while they are busy being terrified. In the midst of reassuring them he's even "real," he can't wait any longer and has to ask for food. They watch him eat and were probably thinking, "Ghosts can't eat, can they?" As they're busily processing this event, he's simply there eating the leftovers. After eating, he's able to engage in genuine conversation.

I've never felt closer to saying "I feel ya, Jesus!" I've never been locked up without food for three days, but I've definitely gotten to the point of being what many in modern times call "hangry" (the combination of being hungry and angry). Feed me so I can be rational again! This is exactly what they're saying here!

Spirituality and relationships are frequently connected to eating. It makes sense. It makes us human. We talk about "being fed" by our faith. We call friends and make plans to eat together (not now, but again soon!). Eating is human. Relationships are human. Being spiritual is human. We can't live without all of these things. While access to food

is somewhat limited now, and our access to relationships is also limited, our access to spirituality is not. Your spiritual leaders are busy

working on ways to continue relationships and being able to "feed you."

During these uncertain times, my friends - stay connected!

Keep the relationships going! We are resilient. We will get through this. We will be stronger on the other side. Feed your spirit.

Luke 24:50-53: Blessings, Worship in Our Time of Need

Pastor Kevin Daniels

Hays Christian Church

"Then Jesus led them to Bethany, and lifting his hands to heaven, he blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. So they worshiped him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. And they spent all of their time in the Temple, praising God." - Luke 24:50-53 (NLT)

As I read these words from Luke, I consider the final moments of Jesus being with his disciples. In the verse before my passage, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to his followers. And here, Jesus' final act on earth, is a blessing for them.

We live in a time of uncertainty right now. We are facing a global pandemic unparalleled in my lifetime. Yet, when I think of these early disciples, what they were going to face, I see that our situations are somewhat similar. These followers of Jesus, whether they knew it or not, were going to face severe persecution in the coming days ahead. They

were going to face mocking, imprisonment, and even death simply for believing that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the Living God. Their world was going to be shaken - uncertainty for them would abound.

Jesus knew that.

Jesus knew what they didn't - that their lives were in great danger. So, what was Jesus' response to them as they stood on the precipice of this danger? He blessed them and he promised them the Holy Spirit.

I believe that in our current time of distress, it is important to remember that Jesus does not leave us during this time. He does not abandon us in our time of need. The Holy Spirit is present in every believer and through him our strength is found. When we encounter our worry and anxiety in the coming days and weeks ahead, it's important that we remember that. We're not in this alone.

The other key to this passage is how the disciples responded; they responded

with worship. In this crisis our response should not be fear and dread; it should be to worship. It should be to recognize the blessings that God has given each of us and the positives that are coming from this. No question, this is a terrible virus that is costing many lives, but even in the midst of all of this, there are still some positive things happening. Neighbors are coming together to help one another. Families are spending more time together. Churches are becoming more creative and technologically savvy. More people are praying.

Even though we cannot physically "go to the Temple" as the disciples did, we can still connect with our church families through other means. We can still show our care and concern and support each other during this time. We can still reach out to our neighbors who are looking for answers. The key thing to remember is that God is with us, even in our darkest hour, and we can't let worry or fear dominate our mindset or push Christ from the center of our lives.

Church of the Pioneers

Becky Rogowski

Hays First Presbyterian Church

A sign in the front entry of the First Presbyterian Church reads “Church of the Pioneers.” I’ll admit – I’ve always thought it was a little “cheesy” even though we were the first church formed in Hays, back in the early days. I have found the phrase to not feel accurate mostly because we have a long history of being very much traditional.

When I was called to my position as Generations in Faith Together Coordinator four years ago this month, it was to work for a new vision and new direction to keep us alive and engaged in a way not yet determined. Needless to say, I have spent countless times beating my head against the wall and feeling frustrated. I am part of an international group working toward the same goals, and we all do the same.

Change is hard, is it not? I don’t like change any more than most of you. I like routine and patterns and my comfort-zone. I grew up in the church I now serve. It gives me unique

perspective and I feel fortunate to have long-standing relationships with the majority of our congregants. While they often refer to my forty-something self as “Little Becky,” they have been quite compliant and accepting of most of my “new ideas.” I’m so glad we’ve spent four years testing the waters, per say. Little did I ever guess we would take a full “DIVE” into the waters in the middle of March 2020.

I’m sure by the time you read this, you will have had more than your share of information and news about the COVID-19 virus. I have always been an eternal optimist and “glass half full” type. My daughters hear so much negative and I work at building up the positive. I have been taking “baby steps” with my congregation as we make changes. My heart and soul want to jump in and make big changes, but I have known it wouldn’t make lasting changes. The virus made us “dive”!

With just over 24-hours’ notice, we moved our worship online and asked our

congregants to not attend worship in the sanctuary. We knew that opening our doors would put our most vulnerable at risk. If we were open, they would be there. In order to love our people, we made the difficult choice of having them stay home. We had our service with just a handful of people present – our leadership team was present in order to conduct our “Ordination and Installation of Elders (Leaders).” We had a small, but beautiful, service on Facebook Live. Was it perfect? No. Did we make mistakes? Yes. Was it genuine? Absolutely! Did we reach nearly SIX TIMES our average attendance? YES! Did we reach members who moved away 30+ years ago? YES!

As many of you consider what to do and agonize over your plans – I urge you to be pioneers and keep it simple. If the Presbyterian Pioneers can, YOU can. If you need ideas or assistance, you know where to find us. It takes a village. We are the village. God’s village!

