No time in recent history has this been more true: “The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people.” In this familiar song written by Richard Avery and Donald Marsh (United Methodist hymnal #558), the message is clear. Our church building is a sacred space where we are blessed to gather and “do church,” but WE are the PEOPLE who ARE the CHURCH.

Since March, when we were advised to stay home to avoid coronavirus exposure, we’ve halted our usual church routines. In fact, some of us might even miss the building; and that’s okay, so do we! But, as Pastor Mark revealed in a summer sermon: here, at Towson Church, we are not the height of our steeple, but rather the reach of our people. And, reach we absolutely did!

(Continued, p. 8)
Inclement Weather Policy
Monday-Friday Church Office & Building
At this time, the church building remains closed to the public due to COVID-19 regulations and safety protocols. Thank you for your continued kindness and patience!

Sunday In-Person Worship
Check the church’s Facebook page for up-to-date information. We do our best to post any closings or schedule changes at least one hour prior to the start of worship time. Please use your best judgment if you venture outdoors in inclement weather. Be safe!
Dear Friends,

C’mon, admit it. Aren’t we all feeling at least a bit Ebenezer Scrooge-ish as the 2020 Christmas holidays approach? Christmas parties on Zoom. Family gatherings on Facetime. I’m told that even ‘Jolly Old’ St. Nick plans to replace his miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer with Amazon and UPS. Go ahead... Get it out: Bah! Humbug! Now, don’t you feel better?

Some of us have even more profound reasons to feel loss and sorrow during this season. For many, this will be the first Christmas without a dear loved one. COVID-19 has taken a terrible toll with hundreds of thousands lost across our country, including many in our own Church family.

As I am writing this article in early November, I can only imagine the political climate as you read this. I pray our country has begun to heal its divisions, but I fear we will have not. Yet another reason for anxiety during the holiday season.

And, still, we are Jesus followers, not disciples of Ebenezer Scrooge. We listen, not to the Bah! Humbugs! of the world, but instead to the angel chorus who proclaimed: ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’ (Luke 2: 10-12)

Soon the Advent season will be upon us. This is a time of waiting and anticipation. What will be has not yet been revealed. And so we seek Signs of the Season. Signs of hope, peace, joy, love, and most of all – Christ.

Recently, Towson Church mailed you an Advent devotional that uses the poetry of Maya Angelou to help us seek, recognize, experience and share the hope, peace, joy, love found in Jesus Christ during the Christmas holiday season and throughout the New Year. If you have not received an Advent devotional, then please call us at 410.823.6511 and request a copy.

Granted, our Christmas celebrations will be unusual this year. Who knows? You might find a new practice to hold on to. Whatever happens, the Good News of Christ with us is reason enough for celebration. Thanks be to God!

Yours in Christ’s Strong Love,

Pastor Mark Johnson

Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

—Luke 2: 10-12
Coffee & Conversation

Pastor Mark continues to meet for “a cuppa and a chat” on Wednesdays at 9:00 AM. The Zoom link is published every week in the inSPIRE newsletter. Or, contact Pastor Mark Johnson at leadpastor@towsonumc.org and he will email it to you. If you would like to chat with Pastor Mark and Wednesday mornings are not convenient, then email or call church at 410.823.6511 to set up a time.

Stroll for Peace

Take a stroll down the footpath at the edge of the parking lot into our beautiful Prayer Labyrinth. Find tranquility in this easily-accessible location. It’s good exercise for the heart and soul!

Men’s Breakfast Bible Study

All men of Towson Church are invited to participate in a weekly 7:00 AM Bible study on Thursday mornings. Presently, we meet via Zoom and the link – as well as the Bible passages we will study – are emailed earlier in the week. When it is safe to do so, we will resume meeting at the Nautilus Diner on York Road. Interested? Contact Pastor Mark Johnson at leadpastor@towsonumc.org to get on the weekly email distribution list.

Soul Deep Resources

Want copies of our Soul Deep Prayer and Devotions Mini Fliers? Just call the church office at 410.823.6511 or write us for a supply: communications@towsonumc.org. They are one-page, personal resources and group conversation or Zoom meeting starters!

Need a break? Take a quiet, self-guided walk and be sure to carry a copy of our Spiritual Walk meditation booklet. It’s chock full of scripture, activities, brain boosts, and more. Download a digital PDF copy at www.towsonchurch.org. Or write communications@towsonumc.org for a paper copy.
Dear Towson Church —

We want to say thank you to all of you for making TUMC so special to us. We are leaving Maryland and relocating to Virginia to be closer to our daughter's family. It was almost 50 years ago that Sandy moved to Maryland from Western New York for her teaching job. Upon moving to Towson, she was directed by friends to attend TUMC. On her first Sunday at church the pastor's wife, Grace Jones, introduced her to Alice Gallop who invited Sandy home for lunch. Alice had just retired after many years at Black and Decker and shared a lot about the church with Sandy. Sandy joined the Young Adult Group and participated in many of the activities at church. When Tom and Sandy married in 1980 Tom joined the church and both of us have been active members since that time. We love TUMC and we leave Maryland with mixed emotions---sad for missing all here and happy for our new adventures. We have served on many committees and most recently Sandy was chair of the Hampton Lane Child Development Center Committee. As COVID-19 hit in early 2020 it presented many challenges to the Center. Sandy appreciates the tremendous help the church gave the Center during that time. Special thanks to Mark, Kim, Nancy A., Dale, Dwight, Maryanne, Kevin, Joe, Bob A., and the Kings for helping the Center survive. Sandy will especially miss all of her Sojourner Sisters!!! Thanks to Sue LaHatte for this wonderful group!!! We will miss our Sunday Coffee Hour friends! And we hope our pew mates will keep our pew warm—especially the Kluens, Carol Woodworth, the Duntons, the McWilliams, the Rogers...etc....we will miss you all.

Thanks for making TUMC such a warm and happy place!

We will keep you in our prayers!!! — Tom and Sandy Clawson

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Holiday Worship

**Advent Sundays**
Join us for weekly 10:15 AM services on 11/29, 12/6, 12/13 and 12/20 to celebrate the Advent season.

**“The Search for Saint Nicholas” Worship, Dec 13**
10:15 AM service, featuring our youngest church members in two amazing video presentations

**Blue Christmas, Dec 21**
6:00 PM Meditation video on YouTube filled with hope and healing. In the midst of difficulty, grief, uncertainty, and illness, find the light.

**Christmas Eve, Dec 24**
9:00 AM Christmas Eve Worship Video on YouTube
5:00 PM Children’s Worship
8:00 PM Traditional Candlelight Worship

**Year-End Celebration, Dec 27**
10:15 AM Worship
11:15 AM Carols & Cocoa via Zoom

NOTE: At the time of this publication, all Sunday worship services are scheduled to be live (in-person) at church and livestream/recorded on our YouTube channel. Follow us on Facebook for the most up-to-date information about coronavirus containment strategies that might limit live access to our Sanctuary.

Christmas will always be as long as we stand heart to heart and hand in hand.
— Dr. Seuss

E-News SIGN UP
Submit the “Sign Up” form at www.towsonchurch.org for the inSPIRE e-newsletter with the most up-to-date church info.
Re-Opening Well Task Force

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, Bishop Latrelle Easterling directed each United Methodist Church in the Baltimore-Washington Conference to convene a Re-Opening Well Task Force made up of key church leaders and medical personnel. The purpose of the team was to ensure that proper health and safety precautions, as well as governmental directives, were observed as churches resumed in-person worship.

Our team has met regularly to think through the obstacles facing us as we determined how to resume in-person worship safely, and continues to meet to plan for re-opening our facilities for our ministries and other community groups. You may recall that we sent an all-congregation survey in spring and an Indoor Worship Wellness Guide in late summer to help us preserve the good health of our entire church community. We continue to follow all Maryland state and Baltimore City government, Centers for Disease Control and United Methodist guidance, procedures, and protocols.

Please take an opportunity to thank our team for their hard work this past year:

- Erin Giudice, MD
- Ginny Cummings, MS, CRNP
- Dale Springer
- Dwight Kines
- Joe Corson
- Michael Gambuto
- Robert Kimmons
- Stephanie Kimmons
- Pastor Mark Johnson
- Maryanne Arthur

Do good & Be well

- Stay home if you do not feel well.
- Wear a face mask properly over your nose and mouth.
- Wash hands and use hand sanitizer often.
- Keep at least six feet of physical space between yourself and others.

COVID Resources

- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) Centers for Disease Control
- [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) World Health Organization
- [www.coronavirus.maryland.gov](http://www.coronavirus.maryland.gov)
- [www.bwcumc.org](http://www.bwcumc.org) United Methodist Church

2021 Lay Leadership Vital to Towson Church

This year, Bishop Latrelle Easterling asked district and conference level leaders to extend their service for another year due to the demands and hardships imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic. Further, she asked leaders in local churches to also extend their terms of service to provide continuity during this critical time. Many of our lay leaders have consented to continue serving through 2021; and, we are also welcoming additional leaders who will begin their service on January 1. Present committee chairs will receive a list of all persons approved at our Church Conference on November 22.

Thank you to all who serve in vital ministries at Towson Church. Just a note, committees who will be electing new chairs for 2021 should do so at their January meeting and immediately pass that information on to Kim Ayres, our Business Manager, at kayres@towsonumc.org. THANK YOU!
Music Notes

This long pandemic has shaken us and caused us to rethink how we do many things – and worship is certainly no exception. I would like to thank all of the singers who have been making recordings for us these past many months. It usually takes over an hour to get just one good recording, and that’s not including choosing and finding a song, plus the rehearsal before-hand to learn it.

The Bell Choir and the Ukulele Choir have greatly blessed us with live music, and I appreciate them so much. And even in this unique time that we are in, we have picked up new members in the bell choir!

I want to thank the praise band, those who have made recordings for us; and our all-new and all-volunteer tech folks on the balcony.

In these times that can be stressful and unhappy, it’s so heartwarming to see folks being there for each other, jumping on the band wagon, figuring out new ways of doing things…. You are all troopers, and we all appreciate you. You lift us all up!

God bless,
Rev. Doug Hollida, Minister of Music

The Search for Saint Nicholas

Children’s Sunday

December 13, 2020
10:15 AM Worship

Mark your holiday calendar for a very special Advent worship service that includes two amazing video presentations by our youngest church members. Our younger children are working on reciting poems; and, the older children are working on a Christmas Play!

Enjoy worship by watching the 10:15 AM YouTube livestream or the recorded video at a later time. Let’s Celebrate Together!

Upcoming Worship Sermons

Advent is the four-week period leading up to Christmas and this year begins on Sunday, November 29. This year’s worship theme is “Signs of the Season” and is based on Luke 2:12: “This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” Join us each week as we seek signs of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ.

After Christmas we will seek God in the rhythms of everyday life. Our worship theme through the season of Epiphany will be “Feel the Rhythm.” Why not invite a friend who is looking for a church home and join us for worship – live or virtually?

January 3  “Rhythms of Everyday Miracles”
January 10 “Rhythms of Sacramental Life”
January 17 “Rhythms of Daily Life”
January 24 “Rhythms of God’s Call”
January 31 “Rhythms of Holiness”
February 7 “Rhythm of Discipleship”
When the church doors closed, the pastors and staff learned new video and YouTube skills to continue Sunday worship and communications without interruption. The Emergency Food Pantry transformed into a Drive-By monthly mission. Educational classes, Youth Group and committee meetings, prayer and social gatherings, and conference events moved to a digital Zoom platform; and, all of our community events moved outdoors. We hosted summer picnics, REFUGE gatherings, a Spiritual Walk, the Trunk or Treat, fellowship hours, communion, goodbye/hello parades, and more on the front lawn. We recorded summer Sunday school and posted the entire program online. We stitched facemasks and distributed them to anyone in need. We kept in touch with our homebound members and re-opened our Sanctuary and Child Development Center with limited capacity. And, we designed a variety of letters, bookmarks, fliers, postcards, booklets, email campaigns, and Facebook and website posts to spread the word. Our church life did not stop for COVID-19. That’s because WE — the vibrant, creative, tenacious, generous, well-connected PEOPLE — WE ARE CHURCH! And we will continue to find ways to “come together” as the hymns play on. [End]

Thanksgiving Baskets & ACTC Distribution

Towson Church members and friends packed 96 bags to give hungry neighbors a bountiful Thanksgiving Dinner this year. As part of the Assistance Center of Towson Church’s (ACTC) annual collection drive, we are providing nourishment and hope to Towson’s most vulnerable citizens.

Our own Emergency Food Pantry “regulars” will receive ACTC baskets at the Center’s main distribution center in Towson this year. Mission Team Member Debbie Maciolek shopped for 60+ pre-filled grocery bags, then Debbie, Carol Sims, Maria Springer and Dale Springer transported ALL the donated bags and meals to ACTC. Thanks to everyone for your kind and faithful support of this valuable mission!

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA CELEBRATION 2020

Rejoice! I would like to order _______ # quantity) plants at $15 each. Check Amount: ________

In honor of ____________________________

In loving memory of ____________________________

Remit this form and check (payable to Towson Church with ‘poinsettia’ on memo line) to the church Business Office by Sunday December,13, 2020. Mail to: 501 Hampton Lane, Towson MD 21286.

Your Name(s):______________________________

Circle One of the Following Pick-Up OR Delivery Options:

YES Send my plants to a shut-in. YES I will pick up plants after the 8:00 PM service on 12/24/20.
The world has changed due to the unforeseen predicament of the COVID-19 pandemic. At Hampton Lane Child Development Center (HLCDC), we’ve changed also. We are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of our students and staff at Hampton Lane Child Development Center, while continuing to operate and serve our community.

We need to follow the Maryland State Department of Education’s (MSDE), The Office of Child Care’s and the Maryland Department of Health’s regulations and guidelines. As the Coronavirus remains a concern, we continue to implement our new procedures, modifications, and changes. While it is our goal to prepare and plan our education process with as much normalcy as possible, here are some ways we’ve changed on the Lane:

- We have limited our enrollment numbers to accommodate social distancing within the classroom and hallways.
- Each class and teaching staff have been separated as much as possible. We are not overlapping schedules or mixing the children from different classes or age groups.
- Temporarily, we have changed our hours of operation, which allows us the staffing ability to keep the classrooms separate.
- We created a Sign-In area that is set up daily between the main entrance door and the 2nd hallway door. All Staff and students will be screened upon arrival, including temperature checks and asking COVID-19 screening questionnaire that are completed and signed by the parents and staff members.
- Only Hampton Lane employees and students have been allowed in the center. Parents/Guardians and Visitors are not permitted past the 2nd hallway door. Which means we were not able to have visitors, such as: our special readers, the Providence Fire Department, or Magician visit our center. Not to mention our Parent readers or parent community helpers.
- We are required to report any illnesses defined by the CDC, to our health department and MSDE. We are strictly required to enforce their instructions as far as all exclusions, closures, and follow-up procedures.
- Masks are worn by staff, children and parents. MSDE states that children two (2) years and older must wear masks, except for while sleeping, while outdoors and while eating. Surprisingly, the children are doing a great job wearing masks. They love to show off all the cool patterns they come in.
- Activities and materials have been individualized and separated as much as possible. Each child had their own container of supplies.
- While six-foot spacing between students is not always practical in a Preschool setting and within the size of our center, we have utilized spacing and distancing as much as possible. We have marked distance spots during hallway lines. We have encouraged the children to keep the windmill distance while walking in lines, which is holding their arms out to their sides (like a windmill) allowing that much distance. Seating and naptime is spaced to help maintain social distancing as much as possible.
- At HLCDC, we strongly teach and reinforce proper handwashing procedures, often utilizing songs to encourage the length of time needed.
- Cleaning and disinfecting is extremely important. All surfaces, materials, toys and art supplies used by the students are disinfected on a daily, and between-use, basis. Common Happy to be Open! Our New Normal on the Lane — by Erin Rigley, Director of HLCDC
areas such as door knobs, chairs, and tables are disinfected throughout the day. Children’s cots, bathrooms and the playground are disinfected after each child’s use.

- Water fountains have been closed and the children are required to bring a personal, drinkable water container daily.
- For our dismissal of students at the end of the day, parents are asked to ring the outdoor bell upon their arrival; and an HLCDC staff brings the child and his/her belongings to the parents.

Our limited enrollment allowed has greatly affected our budget, however we are hoping that we will soon be allowed to accept more students. We have missed the normalcy of our day and the inclusion of our families in our every day procedures. But our hard work and diligence has created a positive outcome. Our parents are extremely appreciative of the extra efforts that we are taking to keep our doors open for their families. While we have had to adapt to the new rules and regulations, we continue to educate the children with our high-quality standards.

At Hampton Lane Child Development Center, we greatly appreciate the Church’s support through these difficult times.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
— Romans 15:13

Streets of Hope Meals & Mission

Our church Mission Team will continue to provide meals for folks who visit a homeless shelter in Essex for dinner and respite this winter. Contact Mission Team Member, Dwight Kines, at drkines4@gmail.com to join a meal mission team.

Emergency Food Pantry 2021 OPEN Third Saturdays 9:00-10:30 AM

In 2020, the Emergency Food Pantry transformed itself into a marvelous drive-by pantry on the third Saturday of each month. It is still functioning in this new capacity to keep volunteers and visitors healthy and safe from coronavirus. Want to donate nonperishable food items? Call church to make drop-off arrangements. You may also donate $ and have a pantry team member shop for you. To volunteer, contact Dwight Kines at 410.828.0792. Still have donation questions? Contact Valerie Wehrle at valw4321@yahoo.com. Thanks!
Congregational Care Team Spreads Love

by Susan Killian

The Congregational Care Team Members have been hard at work! In the face of COVID-19 restrictions, many of our activities look different, but we are here caring about you in a variety of ways.

♦ The Card Ministry, coordinated by Susan Gralley, sends handmade cards to 45 homebound church friends. In normal, non-pandemic times, a group of volunteers gets together to socialize and make the cards. Sue has a faithful team of volunteers who write personal messages before the cards are sent. This year, a special thanks to Kim Ayres who made the Valentine’s Day cards! Handmade greetings have also been sent at Easter, July 4th, and this fall. The staff is planning something for Christmas. Next Card Ministry mailing will be after January 1.

♦ Our Prayer Vine, led by Linda Brooks, is a chorus of voices lifting persons to God’s care. Contact Linda with prayer requests: TUMCcaring@towsonumc.org or 410.823.6511 (select option #3).

♦ The Visitation Ministry, which Diane Crider and Carol Matlin coordinate, cannot meet our homebound members in person, but they continue to make phone calls on a regular basis, sharing information from our church family.

♦ Stephanie Kimmons coordinates a Meal Train Ministry for those who have temporary needs. We have good cooks who support these calls, and recipients are most thankful for the help. She also hand made and delivered “Chill Pill” ornaments as a fun recognition gift to thank the teachers in our congregation (for their service during the pandemic).

♦ The Funeral Ministry Team, led by Margot Gerding, is here to help with the many details a family needs during bereavement.

♦ A Phone Tree has been created to connect those who do not have email. We call to share news from church.

♦ The Prayer Shawl/Yarn Ministry Team members have continued to create prayer shawls (and baby caps) throughout these past months in spite of the fact that in-person meetings have been cancelled for now. We still have a substantial collection of shawls in the parlor at church. If any of our members would like to have a shawl for themselves or anyone else, then we can arrange to get one to them. Just call or email church to request one. Sue Gralley, Susan Brown, and Carol Matlin are the co-leaders of this ministry.

Know Someone Who Needs a Boost?

Our Congregational Care Committee will confidentially help with any needs for you, your family, or other church members. Reach out to us: TUMCcaring@towsonumc.org: 410.823.6511 (press option #3)

Tech Team Rocks

You may not be able to see their faces, but this is the 2020 Technology Team that has been keeping everyone plugged in to our Sunday worship services each week. Our church extends a HUGE “THANK YOU” to Patrick Stewart, Gina Fugate, and Harley Bennett for running “virtually everything” from the balcony, including the soundboard, cameras, PowerPoint Presentations and YouTube livestream — like the PROS they are!
PHOTOS: Even though our church building is closed, Youth Group members continue to gather via Zoom, at local destinations, and on the front lawn (with face masks and physical distance). This determined group is not letting a pandemic dampen their zest for service, knowledge, prayer, and play!

Youth Group News
by Pastor Christine Kumar
associatepastor@towsonumc.org

Students in Grades 6-12 may participate in fun, educational, missionary and fellowship activities throughout the school year. Bring a friend!

Upcoming Youth Group Events

November
11/29 NO Youth Group—Happy Thanksgiving!

December
12/6 Bible Study via Zoom, 5:00 PM
12/13 Power Socks Mission, 5:00 PM
12/20 Christmas Games, 5:00 PM
12/27 NO Youth Group—Happy New Year!

January
Birthday Box Mission Project, TBD
Youth Group Sunday meetings, TBD

February
We will NOT have a 2021 ROCK Retreat due to COVID-19 containment precautions. The ROCK team of the Baltimore-Washington Conference is working on virtual opportunities for youth to stay connected. We will let you know all the details as soon as we get them!

Special THANKS for Youth Group Guides
A very special thank you to all the adults who share their expertise, time, energy, and faith to keep our Middle and High School students creatively engaged in Youth Group. We thank: Allison Jackson, Stephanie Kimmons, Susan Brown, Carolyn Schnur, and Sushma Roberts.
Mission Focused!

Right: Youth Group members and parents at First Fruits Farm, gleaning potatoes. Below: Pastor Christine shows her crop.

Below: Youth Group members and mentors tidy up the labyrinth.

Above: Food Pantry coordinators and volunteers greet guests in a drive-by capacity during COVID restrictions. Left: Towson University’s Gymnastics Team hosted a Food Drive that yielded more than 100 bags of nonperishable food for Towson Church. Wow!

Right: Barbara Ditto’s little knit dolls for Operation Shoebox that we will donate to the Baltimore-Washington Processing Center to include in the worldwide shipment to the children. Below: Caps and blankets from the Prayer Shawl Ministry.

Tower Class Feeds Hungry Neighbors

by Kevin Gralley

While we all have our stories to tell of lives altered and deprivations endured during this time of pandemic, it is all too easy forget those for whom this crisis is more than inconvenient. Feeding America estimates that, due to COVID-19, the number of people in our country who have limited or uncertain access to sufficient food has risen from 35 to 54 million, and that of these 18 million are children.

With these grim statistics in mind, and with a profound sense of gratitude for the many blessings we have received and continue to receive, the Tower Class has made a $1,000 contribution to towards hunger relief in our community and in our country, with $500 going to the Assistance Center of Towson Churches (ACTC), and $500 going to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

Editor’s Note: The Tower Class meets each Sunday to discuss current topics from thoughtful, spiritual perspectives. Contact Kevin to join the stimulating conversation via Zoom. kevin.gralley@gmail.com
Learning Opportunities for ALL Ages

Want to join a laser-focused Bible discussion? Delve deeper into your faith? Meet like-minded folks? Learn more about being a United Methodist? Chat about current events as they follow Jesus’ footsteps? We have a group for that! Check out all the possibilities:

**Preschool/Kindergarten Education** on Monday Nights : Zoom 6:30 PM
Children Ages Pre-K to Kindergarten

**Elementary Education** on Tuesday Nights : Zoom 6:30 PM
Children Grades 1-5

**Women’s Read and Relate** 2nd/4th Wednesday Nights : 7:30 PM
Open to any age or stage. Interested? Contact Jaymie Watts jswatts@comcast.net to learn more and receive the readings + Zoom link for the next meeting.

**Christian Connections for Ages 18+**
Tower Room Class : Zoom 8:30 AM Sundays
Interested? Contact kevin.gralley@gmail.com

Christians Under Construction : Zoom 9:00 AM Sundays
Interested? Contact phutsell@verizon.net

These classes are going well! The children are learning about Creation, Abraham, Sarah and their families. Thank you, teachers, for your tireless work and love for children!

Women's Retreat Moved to 2022

What a year 2020 has been! It's probably no surprise that Towson Church's annual overnight Women's Retreat 2021 is not happening next spring. Regretfully, with the current state of the pandemic, we do not feel that our format would allow us to keep everyone safe. We are moving our conference center reservation to 2022, We’ll let you know the dates for that retreat when we have more details. Thank you for understanding!

Contact Susan Brown: sbrown@boyslatinmd.com

We have had REFUGE services outdoors since September. So far, the weather has been nice. The team is working on other alternatives to meet when the weather gets colder. All ages are welcome to worship with us! Stay tuned for more details. Contact associatepastor@towsonumc.org.

All real education is the architecture of the soul.
— William Bennett

**20/30**
Young Adult Ministry
Stewardship Campaign 2021

Thanks to everyone who has returned a pledge card for our annual Stewardship Campaign! It’s not too late. Our church will thrive with your generous and continued financial and spiritual commitment. Join us for December 6 to celebrate our faithfulness during worship.

“Sing to God a new song, for God has done marvelous things. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy.”

+ Psalm 98

Finance Update by Dale Springer

2020 Outlook
As with most things in 2020, the financial situation at Towson Church has not followed original plan. There have been many ups and downs, but the good news is that we are projecting to break even financially in 2020.

Thanks to all who continue to meet their annual pledge. Everyone, please pray on how you might fulfill your commitment by the end of the year. Several income sources are down significantly with the building having been closed for so long. Expenses are also down with the closed building. We applied for, and did receive, a PPP Grant. This was split with the Child Development Center. This grant has been critical to our balancing 2020 income and expenses.

So far we have spent about $1,800 on expenses related to COVID-19. We anticipate paying 100% of apportionments this year. A new Church Data Management System (ShelbyNext) has been installed and we are in the process of converting records to the new database. Your most recent statement was run using this new database.

For those who may have fallen a bit behind with annual pledges, see the “Different Ways to Donate” located elsewhere in this newsletter for alternative methods of fulfilling your contributions by year-end.

2021 Budget
The 2021 Budget is being developed. You now have the opportunity to pledge your commitment for 2021. Budget requests are being carefully reviewed. We anticipate a difficult financial year in 2021 as things in life get back to our “new normal”. The budget likely will not be approved until early next year. We look forward to your support and participation in all of Towson Church activities this next year.

If you have questions, comments or concerns please contact Towson Church’s Finance Chair, Dale Springer or Pastor Mark Johnson at 410.823.6511.

‘Fruits of the Spirit’ Summer Picnic FUN!

PHOTO CREDITS:
Maria Springer & Annemarie Merow
December : The Board of Child Care

The Board of Child Care of the United Methodist Church, Inc. (BCC) is a 146 year-old organization which was founded in Baltimore and whose mission is "Enriching communities, one family at a time." The BCC operates many programs throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region designed to ensure that the children in their care can reach their potential and fully contribute to our communities. These programs include:

- Adoption Services
- An Early Learning Program for children from ages 6 weeks to 5 years old.
- The Strawbridge School - A nonpublic special and regular education school serving preschool through age 21 in a therapeutic environment.
- Youth Reporting Center - providing full-day educational/therapeutic services for middle/high school students.
- Outpatient Mental Health Clinic - Individual and group sessions provided for youth, ages 3 to 18, and families.
- Residential Homes - Campuses provide engaging experiences for youth within a safe, structured setting.
- Treatment Foster Care - Provide therapeutically structured home environments for youth ages 2 to 21.
- Caminos - Provide safe, secure placement options for children who have recently migrated to the United States and are seeking opportunities for reunification with family as well as the chance to pursue their education and legal immigration cases.

Towson United Methodist Church has a long history with the Board of Child Care. Many members have served on the Board of Directors and in leadership positions. Currently, Kevin Gralley and Bob Kimmons serve on the Board of Directors. Kevin is the current Chair and Bob is a former Chair. For more information, visit www.boardofchildcare.org.

January : Christ Deaf Church

Christ Deaf Church worships in ASL with tactile and voice interpreting, and captioning so that all God's children can accept the Word of God into their hearts and lives. The congregation’s all-Deaf Choir enhances the service with hymns of praise and thanksgiving. People of all faith traditions, or none, are welcome to join. In Fellowship Hall on Sunday afternoons, attendees share a free meal and a variety of social activities. The church is located at 1040 S. Beechfield Ave. Baltimore MD 21229. www.christdeafchurch-umc.org.

February : Assistance Center of Towson Churches (ACTC)

The Assistance Center of Towson Churches (ACTC) hails back to a study in the early 1980s conducted by the Towson Area Ministerial Association exploring an effective and efficient way to better meet the needs of people coming to churches for help. The center opened its doors in 1985 with 14 churches providing emergency help, including food, eviction and utility cutoff prevention, payment for prescriptions, and lunches for the homeless. Currently, with the support of 50 churches and other generous donors, ACTC’s service area incorporates 21 zip codes in central Baltimore County extending up to the Pennsylvania line. The center is located at 120 W. Pennsylvania Avenue in Towson, MD. www.actconline.info

How to Give

| Sunday Worship: Give the first Sunday of each month at church or mail your donation to the Business Office. Note “Board CC”, “Christ Deaf Church”, or “ACTC” on your check. |
| Celebrate Your Special Day by Giving: Do you have a birthday or anniversary coming up? Consider asking friends and family to donate to your charity of choice in lieu of gifts. |
| Matching Gifts: Does your company sponsor a matching gift program? If so, ask the human resources department for forms and information. Thank you for your generosity! |
Generous and Gracious Food Pantry Donations

This year, our Emergency Food Pantry has been the recipient of our members’ generosity and that of our neighbors and community partners. Not only did the Goddard School collect and donate more than 500 canned goods and other nonperishable foods items, but also the Gymnastics Team of Towson University donated and delivered more than 100 bags filled with shelf-stable food. In addition, THB Bagelry & Deli donated delicious, fresh sandwiches one Saturday. And, an anonymous donor bought crates of fresh fruit each month during the summer. We are so blessed to receive incredibly generous donations, particularly at a time when so many people face financial hardship during the COVID-19 crisis.

Many thanks to church members, Val Wehrle and Dwight Kines, for coordinating the Food Pantry each month and to all the faithful volunteers who ensure our neighbors are fed well and loved much. God is good!

Hellos and Goodbyes

2020 has certainly brought many changes to Towson Church. In June, we said “Goodbye” to Pastor Margery Schammel and Youth/Young Adult Minister Rachel Livingston. And, in July, we welcomed Pastor Christine Kumar. To celebrate all of these changes, we did the ONLY thing we could do at the time — host DRIVE-BYs! Thanks to everyone who decorated vehicles and drove through the front circle to show your love and appreciation for Margery and Rachel, and your welcoming hearts for Christine. Here are a few photos from these fun days. Check out the FULL photo gallery at https://towsonumc.smugmug.com

THANK YOU!

The Mission Work Area wishes to thank everyone in our congregation for their continued support of communion/mission activities. Your monetary donations at communion and gifts throughout the year definitely make a difference to the less fortunate of our community and beyond. Here is a summary of our 2020 donations:

- ACTC: $3510
- Christ Deaf Church: $1137
- Heifer International: $662
- Food Pantry: $15,175
- Araminta: $675
- One Great Hour of Sharing: $415
- UMCOR/Disaster Relief: $1880
- First Fruits Farm: $280
- Hampton Lane CDC: $570
- Streets of Hope: $285
- Domestic Violence (11/19): $771
- Board of Child Care (12/19): $1120
- Boy Scouts: $400
- Manna House: $2500
Business Office

Do you know there are several different ways to make your contributions? At year-end, all contributions must be submitted to the Business Office by December 31st to receive credit on your contribution statement for the current year.

Here are the different ways to send in your contributions:

- **Cash or Check** placed in the offering box before or after worship. Please consider using an envelope including your name when donating cash.

- **Mail check donations** by the U.S. Postal service to Towson Church attention ‘Business Office.’

- **Online Banking** you set up online checking with your bank. You control the frequency and amount sent. The bank sends a check to Towson UMC. Set up Towson UMC as a “vendor” and include your envelope number if you have one —and name as “account number.”

- **Online-Giving (Credit Cards and Electronic Funds Transfers)** Giving online, with credit cards and with electronic fund transfers, is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions. Contributions can be deducted automatically from your checking or savings account at any time, or can be processed using a credit/debit card.

  **Follow these easy steps for online giving:**
  - Choose ‘Give’ on the main menu.; click “Give Here”
  - Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and schedule recurring contributions.

- **Stock Transfer** Stocks and mutual funds may be transferred to Towson Church’s broker. Details may be obtained from the Business Office. Please notify the Business Office of any stock transfers made to account below.

  **Merrill Lynch**
  901 Dulaney Valley Road, Suite 516
  Towson, MD 21204
  Phone: 410.321.4323  Fax: 410.970.4295
  DTC #8862
  Account # 813-04316 Towson UMC
  Include the following information with the transmittal from your broker/bank to Merrill Lynch: Donor Name: ___________________________
  Designated to: Towson United Methodist Church
  Purpose of Gift: ex. Annual Pledge, Capital Campaign

Everyone is called to be faithful servants. We pray you may find the level of giving that is right for you as you progress in your journey of faith and commitment. Your pledges and contributions are a critical part of how we can make a difference in our church, our community and our world.

As always, please contact Kim Ayres in the Business Office with any questions or concerns: 410.823.3689 or kayres@towsonumc.org.

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Set Deep Roots

When you leave a bequest to your church, you invest in its future. And you set deep roots for rising generations to grow in Jesus’ eternal love.

To make a gift to Towson UMC, simply include the following statement (with the amounts specified) in your will: “I give $ ____ (or ____%) of my disposable estate to Towson United Methodist Church.”

The future depends on it.

410.823.6511
In the News

In the past few months, our church has been fortunate to receive positive publicity from multiple sources. First, WMAR television interviewed Pastor Mark Johnson about local religious institutions’ response to the COVID-19 crisis. The segment was filmed in the front church circle and broadcasted on the evening news! And, most recently, our database provider, Shelby, interviewed Kim Ayres to feature Towson Church in a video presenting all the cool and innovative things we did, and are still doing, in the wake of building closures and gathering limitations. This feature was posted on Shelby’s website and broadcasted to customers. Great job, Mark and Kim!

Shop from Home and Send FREE $ to Our Church!

Now that we are all spending more time at home and, perhaps, less time shopping in public, this is an excellent opportunity to select Towson Church as the recipient of our online Amazon shopping sprees!

You can select our church as an approved charity with Amazon Smile each time you checkout online. This will prompt the AmazonSmile Foundation to send us their generous donations directly to us—WOW!

To designate our church as the recipient of your online shopping, log onto www.smile.amazon.com and choose “Towson United Methodist Church.” You will see the church’s name under the search box at the top of the page, following the word “supporting.” Every time you check out, church gets a monetary donation — and every little bit helps to keep the missions and ministries moving at Towson Church. THANK YOU!!!
Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties.

—Helen Keller