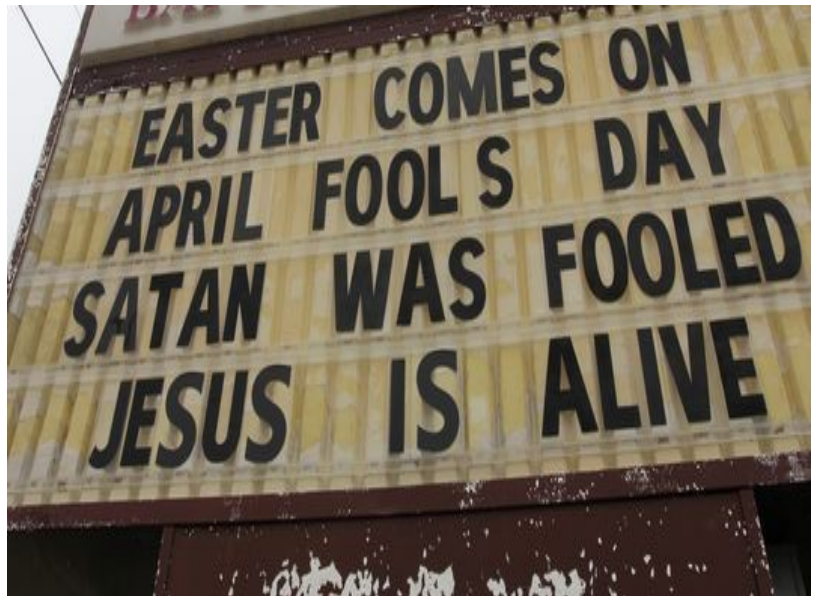


April 2018

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## Easter Fools Day!

This year, Easter falls on April Fools' Day, which means that countless sermons will be able to employ some version of the following introduction: "On Easter Sunday, we Christians celebrate the fact that a dead man came back to life. This might seem like the ultimate prank -- dead people just don't climb out of their graves, period -- but this year, it turns out, God's April Fools' joke is actually true!" (More adventurous preachers might even try reviving the old "fish hook" theory of the atonement. According to that ancient model, in the ultimate April Fools'-style prank, God dupes Satan by enticing him to kill Jesus -- only thereby to ensnare the devil and win a victory at his expense.)



Were I to occupy a pulpit this year, I too would happily take advantage of this fortuitous convergence of holidays. But I'm not sure the real divine April Fools' prank is quite what many preachers will say it is.

### *The Scandal of the Cross*

It's true, of course, that Jesus' resurrection came as a shock to his first followers. And one of them, famously, did, in fact, view it as a hoax. "Doubting Thomas," as he's usually called, was like me when I was a child. Every April 1, I determined that this would be the year I'd avoid being taken in by the jokes my family and friends were sure to be peddling. Thomas, likewise, having had his hopes shattered by Jesus' crucifixion, promised himself he wouldn't be hoodwinked by any ghost stories about a resuscitated corpse.

Even so, I think it's telling that when the apostle Paul tries to pinpoint the real "foolishness" of Christian faith, he doesn't locate it in the events of Easter Sunday -- as if the idea of resurrection were inherently unbelievable. Rather he finds it in the scandal of what happened on Good Friday: "For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1:22-23, NRSV, emphasis added). For Paul, it seems, if God played an April Fools' joke on humanity, the joke was more in the crucifixion than it was in the empty tomb.

### ***The Apostle Paul's Backwards Thinking***

When the apostle Paul met Jesus for the first time, Jesus had already died. That may seem an obvious enough fact but consider: Paul, marching toward Damascus, his fist clutching a mandate to jail the Christians he found there, was suddenly blinded by the dazzling appearance of the resurrected, exalted Jesus. Having grown up Jewish in a pagan town hundreds of miles north of the Jerusalem temple and having thus memorized in his youth the stories not only of the smoking crags of Sinai but also of the resplendent Greek and Roman gods who hurled thunderbolts from mountain peaks, Paul would scarcely have considered it unusual that Jesus would appear to him in radiant light with a thunderous voice. That was just what the nations' gods -- as well as the true God -- did.

But what was unusual -- what turned Paul's entire way of thinking upside down and made him eventually declare that the message of Jesus was, to worldly minds, utterly laughable -- was what this glorious apparition said to him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). It soon became clear that this radiant person speaking to Paul from heaven was claiming solidarity with beleaguered, earthbound human beings.

Jesus' question to Paul implied that when he threw Christian believers into prison, Paul was actually wounding Jesus. The eternal Son of God had somehow become vulnerable to human whips, chains, and even death. The great glorious titan of splendor had apparently descended to feel the sting that human beings had long endured below the heights of Sinai and Olympus.

As the New Testament scholar John Knox observed years ago, the direction of Paul's thinking thus moved "backwards." Paul first encountered Jesus as the king of heaven, the one whom another early eyewitness described having hair that was "white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters" (Rev. 1:14–15).

Paul would have been unfazed by this kind of splendor. He knew that, if there was such a thing as a God-man, this was how he should appear. What shocked Paul to his core was the dawning realization that this one -- this shining King—had submitted to abject humiliation, had, in fact, died naked while gasping for breath under the watchful gaze of idolatrous, hubristic foreign occupiers. And that's why Paul wrote to the church in Corinth that the "message about the cross is foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18).

### ***God's Easter Sunday Prank***

To this day, I suspect most of us find it easier to believe that God could show up in the miracle of a resurrected body than in the senseless murder of a good man. For instance, if someone tried to prank me by claiming that my deceased friend Chris had turned up at his favorite pub, I'd laugh and wink, but it wouldn't necessarily undermine my fundamental convictions about how the world works if it turned out to be true. I'm prepared to meet God in the miraculous, in the glitter of the supernatural and in the joy of favors I've repeatedly prayed for.

If, however, someone tried to convince me that God was "hiddenly" at work in the year that I collapsed in depression and had to take a hiatus from grad school or in the moment when I got the news that a beloved colleague was given six weeks to live, I'd frown in skepticism. "I don't think you realize just how painful that was," I'd say. "God couldn't have been connected with those heartaches."

But such, it seems, is what Paul finds most bizarre and offensive and, indeed, foolish about Easter. For Paul, the Resurrection wasn't so much a neat parlor trick -- "Look, God knows how to re-enliven a cadaver!" -- as it was an ironic statement of where God is now to be looked for. The Resurrection revealed a suffering, humiliated

man as the Lord of the universe, thereby inscribing defeat and suffering into the definition of what salvation is all about.

What the Resurrection communicated to Paul, in other words, wasn't just that God was at work in the world's most hopeless and stomach-churning event -- the execution of his Son -- but that that execution would from here on out serve as the fundamental marker of Jesus', and indeed his Father's, identity. The Resurrection freeze-framed the scars on Jesus' body, permanently projecting them onto the silver screen of the cosmos, you might say.

Every Easter Sunday from here on out, we can all look up and remember the most famous April Fools' joke of all time: that God was there at "the place of the skull" (John 19:17), in the blood and the tears of broken humanity, reconciling the world to himself. And that is he is now to be found in our tears too.

*Wesley Hill is an associate professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, PA*

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### Camp Overlook

A mobile day camp is being planned for July 9-13. An opportunity for children in the community to learn about Jesus and his love at a location in their community (*a Staunton church has agreed to host*). Camp Overlook needs everyone's help in funding to support this project. On April 11<sup>th</sup> at the mid-week meal, a free will offering will be taken to support Camp Overlook. Checks should be made to New Hope UMC with a note on the memo line for Camp Overlook.



### United Methodist Women

Our first meeting will be April 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am for a covered dish lunch. This will be a lunch, a retreat and a meeting for all ladies of our church. More details will be forthcoming.

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### JUST FOR LAUGHS.....



A friend was in front of me coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside

The Pastor said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!"

My friend replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor."

The Pastor questioned, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?"

He whispered back, "I'm in the secret service."

# Mission Opportunities

## Kits for Conference

This year the Conference is only accepting health, school and cleaning buckets at Conference.

More information about kits instructions will be forthcoming.

Deadline for having this ready will be June 10<sup>th</sup> so they can be packed and sent with our Annual Conference representatives.

**Valley Mission** - Items needed: mostly cereal, but other items are welcomed as well.

**Mission Central** - District project at Cedar Grove UMC in Harrisonburg - Items needed: children's socks and underwear  
Prison Ministry - District project at Kingsway Prison Ministry - Items needed: junior legal pads, pencils, toothpaste, toothbrushes, chapstick, etc.

**Verona Community Center** - They are in need of donations, including coffee and snack items, drinks, etc. They are also in need of volunteers to spend a few hours a month at the Community Center inviting people in and helping them out whenever necessary. Please see Cindy Sheets for more information on donation and volunteer opportunities.



**Thank you to everyone who made our Maundy Thursday Meal and Service very meaningful and a blessing to us all!**







## Flag Placement in the Sanctuary

The United States and United Methodist Church flags have been displayed in our Sanctuary for many years. They were removed during the Audio/Video project to allow placement of the

large monitors at the front of the Sanctuary. When the A/V project was completed, both flags were placed in the Sanctuary on the same level as the congregation. They were later moved up to the altar area and placed on both sides of the cross. Correct placement and handling of the United States flag is covered by a United States law known as The Flag Code. It is specific as to how the United States flag will be displayed in various settings and with other symbols such as a cross or other flag in a church.

The Bible and the Methodist Discipline are also specific about the designated areas of the church. Our Sanctuary, like most, is designed to be a likeness of the tabernacle, the plans were given to Moses from God. In the tabernacle there are three designated places:

- 1) The Court (for the people – the area for our church pews).
- 2) The Holy Place (for the priest – the pulpit area).
- 3) The Most Holy Place (for God – the altar area and our wooden cross).

We feel the correct placement of these symbols is important for presentation in our Sanctuary and compliance with U. S. law and the Methodist Discipline. During the March Church Council meeting, a discussion was held concerning the correct placement of the United States and the United Methodist Church flags in the Sanctuary. Research from the Flag Code and the Methodist Discipline was presented and discussed. After the discussion, the Church Council agreed the flags should be correctly placed on the level of the congregation. The U. S. Flag will be to the right of the congregation and the United Methodist Church flag will be placed to the left of the congregation.

This decision is not a question of patriotism, but rather an effort to make sure we show a proper reverence to God. The placements of these flags reflect that reverence to God and are in compliance with The Flag Code and the Methodist Discipline.

~ Bruce Rogers, Church Council Secretary

# STAY IN THE KNOW

The following are the minutes from the March meeting of the Church Council. They are available for you to help the entire church congregation Stay In The Know about what and how this group are caring for the people and the church building of New Hope UMC - in the past, the present *and into the future!*

**The New Hope United Methodist Church Council met on Thursday, March 22, 2018** with ten

members present. Sam Arnold, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. JoEtta Walker presented the devotions.

Those members present: Sam Arnold (Chairman), Cindy Deavers, Wanda Harding, Pastor Shin Hong, John Morse, Dale Rankin, Bruce Rogers, Dallas VanLeer, JoEtta Walker, and Karen Whitmer. Helen Morse and Cindy Sheets also attended the meeting.

Minutes of the February 22, 2018 meeting were approved as submitted with corrections.

**Treasurer's Report:** Cindy Deavers presented the Treasurer's Report.

- 1) A copy of the Treasurer's Report is included in the file with these minutes.
- 2) As authorized by the Church Council during the February meeting, the credit line payoff (\$663.78) for the A/V Room project was paid from the general fund.

**Finance Committee:** There was no Finance Committee Report.

**Trustees:** There was no Trustees Report.

**Worship Ministry:** We are looking for someone to head this important ministry. The Worship Ministry Report was presented by Pastor Shin.

- 1) The A/V Room dedication will be on Sunday, April 29. DS Rev. Tommy Herndon will preside over the dedication and deliver the Sermon. A covered dish luncheon will be held after the service to recognize Tommy and Carolyn as they move to retirement at the end of June.
- 2) Children's Music Hour is every Wednesday night at 5:00 pm. We need more children to participate.

**Nurture/Spiritual Development Ministry:** JoEtta Walker presented the Nurture Report.

- 1) April 1 – There will be an Easter Egg Hunt following the Sunday service on April 1.
- 2) April 29 – Fifth Sunday Luncheon to honor Tommy Herndon.

**Evangelism Ministry:** Pastor Shin presented the Evangelism Report.

- 1) Pastor Shin presented the nomination of Dale Rankin to be the Team Leader for the Evangelism Ministry. A motion (Bruce Rogers/John Morse) was made to approve Dale Rankin. The motion was approved. Congratulations to Dale who brings a strong faith and leadership to this important ministry.

**Missions/Outreach Ministry:** John Morse presented the Mission/Outreach Report.

- 1) Phyllis Jarvis is home and continues to improve.
- 2) Owen Harner has moved to the special care facility at Bridgewater. Dolly is also there in a different facility.

- 3) John encouraged everyone to take time to visit our members who are not able to get out and participate in church activities.

**UMM:** Dallas VanLeer presented the UMM Report.

- 1) Due to weather considerations, the UMM meeting and meal scheduled for March 20 has been rescheduled for 6:30 pm Tuesday, March 27. All men of the church are invited to attend. Our next regularly scheduled meeting and meal will be Tuesday, April 17 at 6:30 pm.
- 2) UMM will serve a pancake breakfast immediately following the Easter Sunrise Service, April 1.
- 3) Our Ladies Night Out has been rescheduled from May 15 to May 8 at Wood Grill in Harrisonburg. All ladies of the church are invited to attend.

**UMW:** Wanda Harding presented the UMW Report:

- 1) April 8, UMW Sunday. Special recognition will be given to the ladies for whom the circles were previously named. The circles have been renamed: Faith, Hope and Love.
- 2) April 14, Ladies Luncheon and Retreat at New Hope beginning at 11:30 am. All ladies of the church are invited.
- 3) Plans are being made to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UMW in 2019. We are working on a special speaker for that event.

**Youth Representative:** Pastor Shin presented the Youth Report.

- 1) Pastor Shin will lead a group of three youths on a mission trip to New York City, leaving on March 25 and returning on March 28.

**Staff/Parish Relations:** Bruce Rogers presented the SPRC Report.

- 1) Our search continues for an accompanist to support the choir.
- 2) We are talking to two people who are not interested in the part-time position, but are willing to play piano on an occasional basis.

**Historian:** There was no History Report.

**Membership Secretary:** Karen Whitmer presented the Membership Secretary Report.

- 1) Harold Strickler, a member of our church, passed away last week. He was not buried in Oak Lawn Cemetery.

**Lay Leadership/Nominations:** Kim Maugans was absent, but the following Lay Leadership Report was presented.

- 1) The Planning Team will meet on April 8 at 6:00 pm with an agenda to continue working on key dates and discuss ways we can better communicate.
- 2) There will be a District Lay Service Training event for lay servants on April 14.

**Communications:** Wanda Harding presented the Communications Report.

- 1) Continue to look at the foyer bulletin board for dates and special events.

*(Please see our 'Upcoming Events' on Page 12 for a complete list of all of our upcoming events at New Hope UMC.)*

**Pastor Shin:**

- 1) Due to health reasons, Larry Hinebaugh has resigned as Chairman of the Trustees. He will continue to serve as a member. The Trustees will meet to select a new chairperson.
- 2) Pastor Shin reported that due to the change in District Superintendents the timing is not good to consider supporting a church in Indonesia. We will look at it at a later time. The program is designed to bring Christianity to people in Indonesia. A donation of \$15,000 is used to build a Seminary in Indonesia which will be used to train local people who will carry the gospel into the community.

- 3) There was a discussion about recognizing Rev. Tommy Herndon's dedication as DS during the service to dedicate the A/V Room. Wanda agreed to work with Pastor Shin to determine an appropriate gift.
- 4) We are still looking for a Worship Ministry Team Leader. Several people are being considered.
- 5) Pastor Shin reported there may still be an opportunity to acquire a quality upright piano. He will continue to monitor the situation.

**Unfinished Business:**

- 1) Bruce Rogers advised no one has expressed an interest in the Church Council Secretary position.
- 2) Karen Whitmer talked with members of the Hospitality Team about how we continue providing this important service ministry to our congregation. As Membership Secretary, Karen will lead this Team. They decided not to offer a sit down meal, but instead to provide a selection of light fare (cheese/crackers, fruit, vegetables, etc.) and beverages. Most of these items will be purchased. If the family wants to have something different or additional, they can provide it. A motion (Karen Whitmer/John Morse) was made to accept the above recommendation and provide additional funding from donations the family may make toward the reception. The motion was approved.
- 3) Karen Whitmer reminded everyone about the Waynesboro Choral Society Easter Program at 7:30 pm on 3/25, 3/30 and 3/31 at the Main Street UMC in Waynesboro. Tickets are available at Waynesboro Nursery on Main Street in Waynesboro.

**New Business:**

- 1) Cindy Deavers mentioned we needed more people to count the offering on Sunday mornings. An announcement will be placed in the bulletin requesting additional volunteers.
- 2) There was a discussion about the correct placement of the United States and United Methodist Church flags in the Sanctuary. After reviewing research from The Flag Code and the Methodist Discipline, the Church Council agreed the United States flag should be placed to the right of the congregation and the United Methodist Church flag should be placed to the left of the congregation. A presentation will be made to the congregation and an article placed in the Hilltopper.

Pastor Shin closed the meeting with a prayer.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday, April 26, 2018 at 6:30 pm.

*~ Respectfully prepared and submitted by Bruce Rogers, Secretary.*

**Real-Life Church Bulletin Bloopers...**

**This being Easter Sunday,  
we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come  
forward and lay an egg on the alter.**

**The outreach committee has enlisted  
25 visitors to make calls on people  
who are not afflicted with any church.**

**During the absence of our pastor,  
we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good  
sermon when J. F. Stubbs supplied our pulpit.**

**The Back Pew - Jeff Larson**

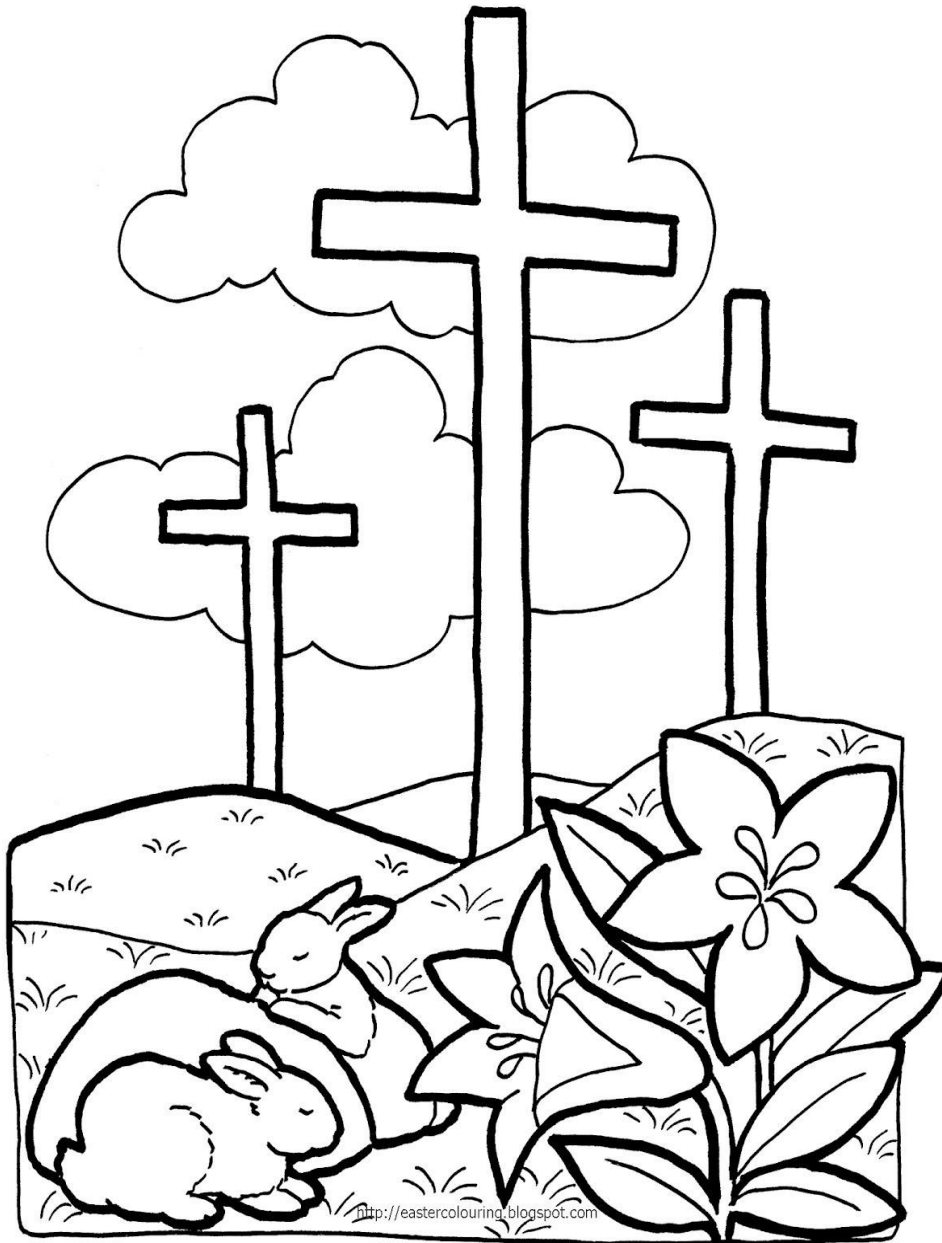


**FOR SALE -** Single owner tomb. Only used three days, and still has that new tomb smell. Reason for sale.. resident was resurrected.



# Kid's Corner Easter ~ Jesus Is Alive!

*(Parents please feel free to print this page for your kids to color while you read them the story of Easter.)*



Jesus died on a Friday afternoon. His friends quickly placed his body in a tomb cut into a rocky hillside and blocked the entrance with a great stone. Guards were sent to secure the tomb.

On Sunday, when two women, one named Mary Magdalene and the other named Mary were visiting the tomb, they felt a great earthquake.

They saw an angel come and roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. The guards were so frightened that they shook and fainted!

The angel told the women not to be afraid, that Jesus was not there for he had risen. This meant that Jesus was alive! The angel told them to go quickly and tell Jesus' friends that he is alive.

On their way back, suddenly Jesus met them and said *"Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, there they will see me."*

And just as Jesus had promised he rose from the dead on the third day after his death!

Christians celebrate Easter Sunday to remember this important event.



1 - Margaret Breeding  
- Wanda Harding

3 - Regina Chestnut  
- Bill Shipe

4 - Bill Lalla  
- Dale Rankin  
- Mark Craun  
- Samantha Arnold

5 - Morgan Craun  
- Kindra Kraisser

6 - Lauren Stout

7 - John Brock  
- Josh Hitt  
- Naomi Ritchie  
- Brendan Kraisser




Steve & Terri Carter

9 - Rocky Simmons

10 - Cindy Sheets


13 - Melinda Booth  
- Brittany Killough  
- Desirae Killough  
- Stephen Layman

16 -  Marc & Susan Mehler

17 - Michael Morris

18 - Patty Corbett  
18- Kathy Floyd

19 - Michael Huff

20 - Glenna Beard  
 Bill & Judy Lalla

21 - Lane Bennett

22 - Corey Baldwin  
- David Howdyshell  
- Brenda Pace

23 - Madison Harding

24 - Harlow Bennett  
- Judy Riner  
- Ray Price  
- Tim Lank

27 - Sherrie Eacho  
- Eric Stogdale  
- Peyton Meier

28 - Robert Critzer  
- Bette Rickman  
- Alex Bergman

30 - Kay Moore  
- Joseph Shreckhise

# Upcoming Events at New Hope - April 2018

## \*EVERY WEDNESDAY IN MARCH

Children's Hour of Music - 5:00pm  
Bible Study - The Book of Acts - 5:00pm  
Wednesday Night Dinner - 6:00pm  
Choir Practice - 6:45pm

April 1 - EASTER SUNDAY - at 6:30am - Easter Sunrise Service and morning breakfast provided by the UMM.

- (There will be No Sunday School Classes on Easter Sunday)
- 10:00am - Easter Sunday Worship Service
- After Worship Service - Easter Egg Hunt for the Children

April 2, Monday at 7:00pm - Circle of Hope at the church w/ Shelvie Critzer

April 3, Tuesday at 1:30pm - Sisters of Faith Circle with Pat Ewers

April 3, Tuesday at 7:00pm - Circle of Love

April 4, Wednesday starting at 5:00pm - Wednesday Night Events\*

April 7, Saturday at 8:00am - Sweet Hour of Prayer

April 8 - UMW Sunday - (Recognition of ladies whom circles were named.)

April 8, Sunday at 6:00 - Planning Team Meeting

April 11, Wednesday starting at 5:00pm - Wednesday Night Events\*

- Proceeds benefiting Mobile Camp Overlook

April 12, Thursday at 7:00pm - District UMW Evening Together at Mt. Tabor

- UMC with guest speaker Tommy Crosby - Director of Camp Overlook

April 14, Saturday at 8:00am - Sweet Hour of Prayer

April 14, Saturday at 11:30am- Ladies Lunch and Retreat

April 17, Tuesday at 6:30pm - United Methodist Men Meeting and Meal

April 18, Wednesday starting at 5:00pm - Wednesday Night Events\*

April 19, Thursday at 7:00pm - 24 to Double meeting at Weyers Cave UMC

April 19-April 20 - Wesley Class sponsored trip to Lancaster, PA

April 20, Friday from 5:30-8pm - Parents Night Out and Party For The Kids

April 20-April 21 - Annual District Lay Servant Academy at Concord UMC in Chatham, VA

April 21, Saturday at 8:00am - Sweet Hour of Prayer

April 21, Saturday at 6:00pm - Movie Night - "A Case for Christ" - (Snacks will be provided by the Networkers.)

April 25, Wednesday starting at 5:00pm - Wednesday Night Events\*

April 26, Thursday at 6:30pm - Church Council Meeting

April 28, Saturday at 8:00am - Sweet Hour of Prayer

April 29, Sunday - Dedication of A/V Project by Rev. Tommy Herndon followed by our 5th Sunday Covered-Dish Luncheon



## Nurse's Health Corner

### April ~ National Humor Month

April is National Humor Month. National Humor Month was founded in 1976 by comedian and best-selling author Larry Wilde, Director of The Carmel Institute of Humor. Steve Wilson, Psychologist, Joyologist, Cheerleader of the Bored and Founder of World Laughter Tour, is the Director of National Humor Month. Fun and Happy designated days in April are International Fun-At-Work Day on April 5<sup>th</sup> and Pursuit of Happiness Day on April 13<sup>th</sup>. (April 13<sup>th</sup> is Thomas Jefferson's birthday. He is author of the famous 'pursuit of happiness' phrase in our Declaration of Independence.) To bring joy into your life through humor, pick one of the above days to celebrate.

Gelotology is the study of laughter and its effects on the body, from a psychological and physiological perspective. Many studies exist supporting the use of Humor to cope with our day-to-day stressors as well as improve our health.

According to the World Laughter Tour website, a few health benefits of laughter are:

- Combats Respiratory Infections - By increasing antibodies in saliva - Decreases serum cortisol
- Reduces Pain - Releases endorphins to provide pain relief
- Relaxes Muscles - Muscular tension and laughter are incompatible
- Positive Mental Function - Changes perspective with improved mood
- Changes perspective with improved mood - Through cardiovascular efficiency
- Helps the Body Fight Infection - Liberates numerous immune boosters
- Improves Tissue Function & Growth - Supplies nutrients and oxygen to tissues
- Happiness Linked to Longevity - Live a longer, more fulfilled life

Laughter is a healthy way of dealing with stress in our lives. Stress affects us all, but finding healthy ways to cope can lessen the burden on our health. Please find the 5 Things You Should Know About Stress from the National Institute of Health attached.

*Article provided by Dana H. Breeding, RN Health Educator of Community Outreach, at Augusta Health.  
To contact Dana Breeding, RN related to the above information please call (540) 332-4988.*



# 5 Things You Should Know About Stress

Everyone is stressed from time to time.

But what is stress? How does it affect your health? And what can you do about it?

Stress is how the brain and body respond to any demand. Every type of demand or stressor - such as exercise, work, school, major life changes, or traumatic events—can be stressful. Stress can affect your health. It is important to pay attention to how you deal with minor and major stress events so that you know when to seek help.

## Here are five things you should know about stress:

### 1. Stress affects everyone.

Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Some people may cope with stress more effectively or recover from stressful events more quickly than others.

There are different types of stress—all of which carry physical and mental health risks. A stressor may be a one time or short term occurrence, or it can be an occurrence that keeps happening over a long period of time.

#### Examples of stress include:

- Routine stress related to the pressures of work, school, family, and other daily responsibilities
- Stress brought about by a sudden negative change, such as losing a job, divorce, or illness
- Traumatic stress experienced in an event like a major accident, war, assault, or a natural disaster where people may be in danger of being seriously hurt or killed. People who experience traumatic stress often experience temporary symptoms of mental illness, but most recover naturally soon after.

### 2. Not all stress is bad.

Stress can motivate people to prepare or perform, like when they need to take a test or interview for a new job. Stress can even be life-saving in some situations. In response to danger, your body prepares to face a threat or flee to safety. In these situations, your pulse quickens, you breathe faster, your muscles tense, your brain uses more oxygen and increases activity—all functions aimed at survival.

### 3. Long-term stress can harm your health.

Health problems can occur if the stress response goes on for too long or becomes chronic, such as when the source of stress is constant, or if the response continues after the danger has subsided. With chronic stress, those same life-saving responses in your body can suppress immune, digestive, sleep, and reproductive systems, which may cause them to stop working normally.

Different people may feel stress in different ways. For example, some people experience mainly digestive symptoms, while others may have headaches, sleeplessness, sadness, anger or irritability. People under chronic stress are prone to more frequent and severe viral infections, such as the flu or common cold.

Routine stress may be the hardest type of stress to notice at first. Because the source of stress tends to be more constant than in cases of acute or traumatic stress, the body gets no clear signal to return to normal functioning. Over time, continued strain on your body from routine stress may contribute to serious health problems, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other illnesses, as well as mental disorders like depression or anxiety.

## 4. There are ways to manage stress.

The effects of stress tend to build up over time. Taking practical steps to manage your stress can reduce or prevent these effects. The following are some tips that may help you to cope with stress:

- **Recognize the Signs** of your body's response to stress, such as difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, being easily angered, feeling depressed, and having low energy.

- **Talk to Your Doctor or Health Care Provider.** Get proper health care for existing or new health problems.

- **Get Regular Exercise.** Just 30 minutes per day of walking can help boost your mood and reduce stress.

- **Try a Relaxing Activity.** Explore stress coping programs, which may incorporate meditation, yoga, tai chi, or other gentle exercises. For some stress-related conditions, these approaches are used in addition to other forms of treatment. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy and relaxing activities. Learn more about these techniques on the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) website at ([www.nccih.nih.gov/health/stress](http://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/stress)).

- **Set Goals and Priorities.** Decide what must get done and what can wait, and learn to say no to new tasks if they are putting you into overload. Note what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.

- **Stay Connected with People** who can provide emotional and other support. To reduce stress, ask for help from friends, family, and community or religious organizations.

- **Consider a Clinical Trial.** Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), NCCIH, and other research facilities across the country are studying the causes and effects of psychological stress, and stress management techniques. You can learn more about studies that are recruiting by visiting [www.nimh.nih.gov/joinastudy](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/joinastudy) or [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) (keyword: stress).

## 5. If you're overwhelmed by stress, ask for help from a health professional.

You should seek help right away if you have suicidal thoughts, are overwhelmed, feel you cannot cope, or are using drugs or alcohol to cope. Your doctor may be able to provide a recommendation. You can find resources to help you find a mental health provider by visiting [www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp).

## Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Anyone experiencing severe or long-term, unrelenting stress can become overwhelmed. If you or a loved one is having thoughts of suicide, call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The service is available to anyone. All calls are confidential.

## For More Information:

For more information on conditions that affect mental health, resources, and research, visit [www.mentalhealth.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.gov), or the NIMH website at [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov). In addition, the National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus service has information on a wide variety of health topics, including conditions that affect mental health.

National Institute of Mental Health  
Office of Science Policy, Planning, and Communications  
Science Writing, Press & Dissemination Branch  
6001 Executive Boulevard  
Room 8184, MSC 9663  
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663

Phone: 301-443-4513 or  
1-866-615-NIMH (6464) toll-free  
TTY: 301-443-8431  
TTY: 866-415-8051 toll-free  
FAX: 301-443-4279

E-mail: [nimhinfo@nih.gov](mailto:nimhinfo@nih.gov) / Website: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

## Lectionary Readings for April

### April 1

Acts 10:34-43  
Psalm 118:1-2; 14-24  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
John 20:1-18  
or Mark 16:1-8

### April 8

Acts 4:32-35  
Psalm 133 (UMH 850)  
1 John 1:1-22  
John 20:19-31

### April 15

Acts 3:12-19  
Psalm 4 (UMH 741)  
1 John 3:1-7  
Luke 23:36b-48

### April 22

Acts 4:5-12  
Psalm 23 (UMH 754 or 137)  
1 John 3:16-24  
John 10:11-18

### April 29

Acts 8:26-40  
Psalm 22:25-31 (UMH 752)  
1 John 4:7-21  
John 15:1-8

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*If you would like to add an article or announcement to the Hilltopper, please contact  
The Hilltopper editor, Cindy Sheets at [cds3501@gmail.com](mailto:cds3501@gmail.com) or call/text at (540) 280-1860*

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## New Hope United Methodist Church

55 Round Hill School Road Ft. Defiance, VA 24437  
(540) 363-5940 - Church phone

NewHopeVA.net  
Facebook: @MyNHUMC

Pastor Shin Woo Hong  
[willydisney@hotmail.com](mailto:willydisney@hotmail.com)  
call/text: (540) 480-2602