



The Window into the heart of

Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church

Volume 8, Number 2, Spring/Summer 2022

Faith for Today 2022 Sunday Summer Speaker Series

9:30 am June 12 - August 28 The Welcome Center



June 12 - Mitchell Stecker - Organ Transplant

Mr. Mitchell Stecker will introduce the congregation to the new organ in Sanner Chapel. Because of the organ's location, this session will take place in Sanner. All other Faith for Today

sessions will be in The Welcome Center.



July 10 - Make a Joyful Noise

Enjoy vocal and instrumental musical offerings from church members of all ages.

(Faith for Today continued on page 3)



June 19 - Making Juneteenth a Holyday?

Pittsburgh Anti-Racism Team co-chairs Rev. Don Blinn and Jay

Pendleton will discuss the importance of making Juneteenth a day on versus a day off, and what actions may enhance the celebration of this historical milestone.



June 26 - Refugee Crisis: Hello Neighbor and SHIM

Hello Neighbor founder Sloane Davidson and South Hills Interfaith Movement program director Courtney Macurak will team up to speak about refugees and immigrants in the Pittsburgh area.



July 3 Francie Robb - Adventures!

Church member Francie Robb will share her recent adventures.

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From Pastor Tom Strandburg:

The Church is of God

The traditional text from the rituals of baptism of the former Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches state that *“the church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time.”* These words have provided a source of encouragement for me in the midst of the challenging times that the church has experienced over the past two years. During the days of pandemic shut-down in 2020, and throughout the painfully slow days of recovery since, I have found myself repeating these words as a mantra of hope through days of discouragement. I cling to them still.

Perhaps you have recently heard that as of May 1st, a new denomination has emerged under the umbrella of world-wide Methodism – the Global Methodist Church (www.globalmethodist.org). This new denomination aspires to establish itself as a “traditionalist alternative” to the United Methodist Church (www.umc.org). I have previously written to you concerning the longstanding rift in the United Methodist Church over the issues of sexual ethics and biblical interpretation. If this rift develops into a full-blown denominational split in the coming months and years, then we are likely witnessing the beginning of a process which will result in the creation of at least two new denominations within Methodism, each of which will adopt significantly different views on the controversies in question. A moment of decision is likely coming for our local church, in which we will be called upon to decide with which expression of Methodism we will choose to align ourselves going forward.

In this regard, it is important for me to note that some of what I have previously written to you has not yet come to pass. Many were hopeful that a bipartisan “Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation,” which had been negotiated in 2019, could be adopted by the 2020 General Conference. As I previously informed you, that international conference was postponed first to 2021, and then to 2022, due to the complications posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It appears that all parties understood the need for the postponement of General Conference to the fall of 2022. Recently, however, the Commission on the General Conference has announced that the meeting which had been scheduled for later this year will not be able to occur, due to the lingering impact of the pandemic upon global travel and vaccination status. With this announcement, the next meeting of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church is now scheduled to occur sometime in 2024. Suffice it to say that everyone is not pleased with this delay. Both traditionalists and progressives share in their dismay that they must live with this denominational dysfunctionality for two more years before the General Conference can meet to redress their grievances. In frustration, the organizers of the Global Methodist Church moved up the date for the launch of their new traditionalist Methodist denomination to May 1st, 2022. I would not be at all surprised if a progressive-leaning group would take similar action. There are certainly plans being made for a “progressive Methodist church” moving forward. We will share more about that in the days ahead. If you would like to learn more about this constantly-changing issue over the summer, I would encourage you to attend our Faith For Today program on Sunday, August 14th, at 9:30 AM when this will be our topic for discussion. We also intend to resume our series of congregational unity gatherings from now through the meeting of the next General Conference in order to facilitate discussion within our congregation on these critical issues.

Now you can appreciate why I continue to meditate upon those old words from our traditional baptismal liturgy – *“the church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time.”* I try to remind myself both of what this phrase says, and what it does not say. It says that the church is of God, and that it will be “preserved” to the end of time. It does not say that our present denominational structures will be preserved until the end of time. However, what is eternal and essential in the church will survive – a community of believers whose mission it is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. That understanding of “church” will survive, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!

Blessings to all,
Pastor Tom Strandburg

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Monica Kao, Communications Coordinator

Faith for Today 2022 Sunday Summer Speaker Series

9:30 am June 12 - August 28 The Welcome Center



July 17 - Brian Cook - Fellowship of Christian Athletes
FCA's mission is to engage, equip and empower local coaches and athletes to know and grow in Christ. Pittsburgh Metro Director Brian Cook will update us on local initiatives.



August 21 - Dr. Amy-Jill Levine
Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, retired professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School, will discuss her book, "The Difficult Words of Jesus" via Zoom. She will conduct a question and answer session concerning this interesting topic.



July 24 - United Methodist Church Union
President Larry Homitsky will present current projects at Church Union, which has served the Pittsburgh area for 125 years, including services such as Daily Bread

and the Manchester Reading program.



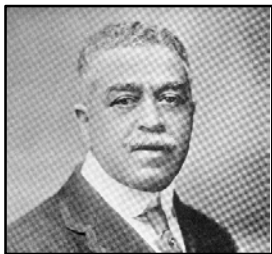
August 28 - Youth Mission Trip
Youth and adults will share photos and reflections from the 2022 Youth Mission Trip to Marion, Virginia.



July 31 - Dr. Steven Tuell - Why Should Christians Study the Old Testament?

Dr. Steven Tuell, retired professor of Old Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, will help us understand why the Old Testament is vital to

understanding the New Testament.



August 7 - The Life, Legacy, and Music of H.T. Burleigh

Mr. Mitchell Stecker and UMC staff mezzo-soprano Ms. Timothy Williams will present a lecture-recital of the works of African American composer Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866-1949).



August 14 - The Future of the United Methodist Church

General Conference has been delayed again, and the Global Methodist denomination launched May 1, 2022. What does this mean for us as members of the UMC?

MLUMC Staff

Rev. Thomas Q. Strandburg, Pastor
Rev. Scott A. F. Miller, Associate Pastor
Kim Rhoton, Director of Christian Education
Mitchell Stecker, Director of Music
Mettelise Ziegler, Weekday Ministries Director
Monica Kao, Communications Coordinator
Michelle Rizzo, Office Administrator
Stephanie Lowe, Youth Director
B.J. Collins, Contemporary Music Director
Juliette Mariani, Administrative Support
Michael Drabick, Maintenance Manager
Michael Staab, Facility Prep and Setup

MLUMC Volunteer Staff

Bishop George Bashore, Bishop-in-Residence
Dr. David H. Watson, Pastor Emeritus
Nancy R. Lutz, Director of Handbells
Joanne Dempe, Financial Secretary
Kirk Lowe, Multimedia/Sound
Natalie Miller, Multimedia/The Gathering
Ethan Von Hedemann, Sound

United Methodist Women is now United Women in Faith!

On March 3, the United Methodist Women became the United Women in Faith. The move is part of a refreshing of the organization that includes a new logo and an array of new and improved programs to nurture current members and welcome new women to join to put their love in action on behalf of women, children, and youth.

The new programs are the result of research conducted over the past five years with more than 24,000 United Methodists and women of other Christian traditions participating in surveys, focus groups and interviews. This input informed the prayerful discernment of staff and elected leaders.

The changes are designed to address the different needs and life stages of current members and new women and expand options for membership and engagement. The new name also aims to welcome current members whose local churches may choose to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church as well as women of other faith traditions who want to join.



United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.

Frequently Asked Questions on United Women in Faith

Are we still a part of the United Methodist Church?

Yes! We are still the only official women's organization of the United Methodist Church, and our legal name will remain United Methodist Women.

Will these changes impact me and my local unit?

All our traditional structures on the conference, district and local levels – circles included – remain intact. However, there are new tools and programs that are now available to us and our unit to help us better nurture current members, recruit new women into the organization and managed our unit's finances.

Where can I learn about all the changes underway?

Resources are available on the website at uwfaith.org. There, you'll see an overview of the changes underway – and more!

SAVE THE DATE!

Please join United Women in Faith (formerly UMW) for a get together on Wednesday, June 22nd from 10:00 am to noon in Wesley Hall. There will be coffee/tea and refreshments. Come see your friends and make some new ones. Transportation will be available.

A Church Committed to Embodying Anti-Racism

by Clark Remington

Since its inclusion in the UMC Constitution in 1968, "The United Methodist Church proclaims the value of each person as a unique child of God and *commits itself to the healing and wholeness of all persons*. The United Methodist Church recognizes that the sin of racism has been destructive to its unity throughout its history. Racism continues to cause painful division and marginalization. The United Methodist Church *shall confront and seek to eliminate racism*, whether in organizations or in individuals, **in every facet of its life and in society at large**. The United Methodist Church shall work collaboratively with others to address concerns that threaten the cause of racial justice at all times and in all places." (UMC literature)

In the last two years at MLUMC, we have had focused book discussions, unity lunches, and interactions with African American churches. At our winter Unity Dinner, Debra Mason, WPAUMC's Diversity, Development and Inclusion Coordinator, spoke to us. Additionally, we have a staff member serving as our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) leader. This month, the Pittsburgh Anti-Racist Team of our WPA United Methodist Conference conducted a session at MLUMC. The session demonstrated how MLUMC and other churches could conduct an **Equity Audit**. So far, so good!

(continued)

MLUMC can *commit to continue confronting and seeking to eliminate racism*. This requires not only faith in God, but enough faith in one another to continue the journey of healing and hope. At MLUMC some people have been advocating for social justice for a significant amount of time, some people have begun to be actively engaged, while some choose not to engage in the conversation.

Can we commit MLUMC to becoming more **actively** anti racist? What else could we do? For example, could we **actively seek** qualified people of color to fill church vacancies? Could we have a VBS that actively addresses inclusion? Could we add another phrase to the, *"Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Doors"* and put an explicit anti racist statement? Could youth Sunday school teachers utilize some free online anti racist lesson plans? Could we participate in The Prayer and Action Racial Justice Challenge this summer?



Dr. Angelica Perez-Johnston (center) with participants in "The You in Equity Audits" workshop. The event, taking place at MLUMC, was sponsored by the WPAUMC Anti Racist Team.

MLUMC can actively work to address racism in our world. If you have ideas for MLUMC in this regard, please email Clark Remington: corkrem@verizon.net



An MLUMC Welcome Sign - What's your Opinion?

With the encouragement of our church's Do No Harm social advocacy group, Church Council has been considering ways to "roll out the welcome mat" to all members of our community. The design above has been suggested for two large banners, which would hang for a time above our church's two front entrances (the main entrance and the office entrance along West Liberty Avenue). The background to the "Welcome" message includes every color, symbolizing the full spectrum of human diversity.

Your response to this proposal would be most welcome. There are several ways to respond. You can call or e-mail Michelle in the church office (412-531-7131 or churchsecretary@mlumc.org). Or you can take a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire below and drop it in the collection plate, mail it or place it in the office.

What does this sign mean to you? _____

Should the church hang it above the West Liberty entrance? _____ yes _____no _____unsure

Why or why not? _____

Name (optional) _____

June 5 - Pentecost, Confirmation and Graduation Sunday



At the 10:45 Traditional Service on June 5, let us welcome the confirmands with our love and care, and do all in our power to increase their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

On June 5, we will also honor graduates on their special day. If you are graduating, or you know someone who is graduating from high school, college or a post-grad program, please contact Kim Rhoton at krhoton@mlumc.org.



Youth Group News

The youth spent the spring focused on preparations for Youth Sunday and the Mission trip. We appreciate everyone who supported our sale of chocolate-covered pretzels. We will be returning to work with Project Crossroads in Marion, Virginia, from June 26th until July 2nd. Please keep our group, the family we will be working with, and the Project Crossroads staff in your prayers. We look forward to sharing our trip with the congregation later this summer during Faith for Today.

Traditionally, youth group is much more relaxed during the summer. We will meet in parks, play games, and probably eat some ice cream. We like to take advantage of the nice weather to fellowship together and welcome our new members. As always, we thank the congregation for their ever-faithful support.

Christ Church Sponsors "Kaps for Kids" For TNC Trip

Christ UMC of Bethel Park is sponsoring "Kaps for Kids," an opportunity to donate homemade or purchased caps for children at the Home of Hope Orphanage in Nyadire, Zimbabwe.

Because the seasons are opposite in Africa compared to the U.S., it's now cold in the mornings. The Nyadire Connection has a mission team headed to Nyadire in June, and the team is requesting homemade or purchased caps for children in kindergarten through high school, cap sizes small to large. Caps can be knitted or purchased. If you're able, feel free to use your random yarns to make a creatively colored cap, or use your best yarn for a show-stopper. The team will take as many caps as possible.

If you are moved to participate, please drop off the caps by June 2 at Christ Church (44 Highland Road, Bethel Park), inside door #2 in bins marked, "Kaps for Kids."

If you have questions, please contact TNC's Marie Hunt at: emptynest05@comcast.net.
And if you're looking for patterns you can use to make caps, feel free to check out these links:
<https://www.ravelry.com/account/login> [Lovely Ribbed Hat](#) | [Purl Soho](#)

As always, thanks for your interest in and support of The Nyadire Connection!

Weekday Ministries Child Care Center

by Mettelise Ziegler, WDM Director



Before retirement, I will tell you a story about a shy little girl who was given a priceless inheritance.

In 1962, the girl was barely three years old and a bit timid. On a Sunday, the little girl's mother walked her to a humble, white church near their house in Norway.

A beautiful brunette lady with swirling skirts smiled brightly at the child. A half dozen children sang happy songs, laughed, and clapped for joy. The little girl recognized Jesus Christ in this lovely Methodist woman.

The joyful brunette lady could not possibly predict the lasting influence she would have on the child. Although the girl immigrated to the United States and was raised Lutheran, her faith grew from the seeds sown when she was just three in that humble white church.

Of course, that child was me. I find it interesting that The United Methodist Church was founded on my birthday in 1968. By then, I was nine years old and very much involved at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Trumbull Connecticut. When I was a senior at Bethany College – West Virginia, a persistent Methodist minister somehow convinced several education students to visit Webster Springs, West Virginia in the middle of January for two weeks hoping we'd like it so much we'd return to teach after graduation. Of course, we became snowed in and had to stay a little longer.

In 2008, when Weekday Ministries was searching for a new director, I was led here. Truthfully, there were times I had no idea what to do. More than thirteen years have passed. Between our God who always knows best, wonderful church people, staff and parents, our childcare center is doing well.

To connect with our families, please feel free to attend Pre-K Graduation on May 26th at 4:00 PM. We expect our thirteen graduates to be accompanied by forty family members. Follow up with the children we send

to Vacation Bible School. Continue to pray for our families and staff.

Through His Word, the Sacraments, and His people, God leads those who are willing to do small things that reveal His glory. I do not know his specific plans for me, but I look back to the little girl I was and see how my faith was formed. I am very grateful to you, the members of Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church. Thank you to the pastors, church staff colleagues and members alike. I will be praying that you hear God speaking through His Word on the narrow road ahead that leads to a priceless inheritance.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Ephesians 1:11)

Food Truck Party



The world is full of unique creatures, and this summer they are coming to Mt Lebanon United Methodist Church!

This summer's VBS theme is **Food Truck Party: On a Roll With God**, and will take place July 25-29 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Each day will focus on a different Bible story that teaches about God's abundant love and provision for God's people.

Any child aged 4 years through fifth grade may attend. Church membership is not required, so please invite your friends and neighbors! To register, please contact Kim Rhoton krhoton@mlumc.org.

Teens and adults are needed to make this year's VBS a success. If you are able to help out, even if only for one day, please contact Kim Rhoton or the church office.

Church Financial Information

by Rob Spicher, Finance Committee Chair

One of the recommendations in early 2017 from our Church stewardship consultant, Scott McKenzie, was more transparency regarding financial matters. The Finance Committee implemented this recommendation in early 2018, and began to share quarterly financial information in *The Window*. Pursuant to this recommendation, summarized below are the Church's 2021 actual, 2022 budgeted, and 2022 first quarter financial results.

The 2022 budget projects a deficit of almost \$100,000, assuming payment in full of the Connectional Contribution. This is the latest in a series of negative budgets approved by the Finance Committee and Church Council. A balanced 2022 budget would require more revenues and/or less expenses – both are easier said than done. Although the first quarter numbers (if annualized) look favorable compared to the budget, the prepayment in full of several large pledges on the revenue side plus a staff vacancy since mid-February on the expense side have skewed them.

As we move into the second quarter and beyond, it will be imperative for pledgers to keep up with their pledges and for non-pledged givers to contribute on a regular basis. In 2021, the combination of many pledgers falling behind in their giving and fluctuations in non-pledged giving created significant cash flow challenges throughout the summer and early fall. It is hoped that such can be avoided in 2022.

Any questions regarding the actual and budget information shown below should be directed to Rob Spicher (Finance Committee Chair). He can be reached by calling the Church office (412-531-7131).

	2021	% of	2022	% of	2022 1st Qtr.	% of
Church Budget	<u>Actuals</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Actuals</u>	<u>Expenses</u>
Revenue:	\$704,368	93.5%	\$744,310	88.4%	\$208,690	98.2%
Expenses:						
Personnel	\$455,492	60.5%	\$470,255	55.9%	\$108,357	51.0%
Programs & Facilities	129,549	17.2%	154,883	18.4%	45,129	21.2%
Utilities & Taxes	92,293	12.2%	98,240	11.6%	37,116	17.5%
Insurance	41,589	5.5%	48,687	5.8%	15,863	7.5%
Connectional Contribution to WPA UM Conference *	34,560	5.0%	69,652	8.3%	6,000	2.8%
Total Expenses	\$753,483	100%	\$841,717	100%	\$212,465	100%
Total Net Income (Loss)	(\$49,115)		(\$97,407)		(\$3,775)	

* \$69,119 requested in 2021, did not pay \$34,559

Net losses are covered by cash on hand, special gifts, and reserves.

2022 Good Friday Community Fish Fry

The Tradition Continues, Better Than Ever!



Our church's Good Friday Community Fish Fry, held on April 15th, was a tremendous success! Thanks to all who were able to make it happen through donations of time, talents, and monetary gifts.

Approximately 500 meals were served via a combination of dine-in, take-out, and delivery, primarily to Food Pantry clients. What a joy it was to see people eating together and sharing fellowship inside Asbury Center at a Fish Fry for the first time since February 2020. Various adjustments were made to the set-up to ensure ample spacing for seating, limited common touch points, and prompt clean-up after diners were finished. In addition, dine-in and take-out were separately serviced so there would be no jam-ups or long lines. Sending the deliveries out first also was a big help.

The meal, although not as varied as in past years, was nonetheless more than plentiful. The menu included fried or baked cod with a bun, French fries, cole slaw, macaroni 'n cheese, hush puppies, fruit, and assorted desserts. No one went away hungry.

The church did not charge for the Community Fish Fry, ensuring that all who wanted to eat could do so with no concern about cost. Free will donations were accepted. Thanks to the generosity of those who attended as well as those who provided donations separately, all costs were covered! Truly amazing, particularly given the cost increases in so many items - cod prices alone were up 20% from 2021.

As long as Covid 19 doesn't challenge plans, the Community Events and Outreach Committee will be hosting several more community meals this year. We look forward to your help and/or patronage in making them happen! Thanks again to all who helped to make the 2022 Good Friday Community Fish Fry an event to be remembered and cherished.

Rob Spicher, Community Events and Outreach Committee Chair



Community Events and Outreach Committee

Financial Partners Needed

Many events such as large community meals sponsored by the Community Events and Outreach Committee are self-sustaining, with free will donations covering event costs. However, this is not always the case.

As the Committee continues with its 2022 activities, there is an opportunity for members of the congregation to play a major role in covering event costs. By becoming a “financial partner” of the Committee, you will not only help to underwrite the activities, but also be given the opportunity to assist with them.

Recent Outreach Committee activities have included: 1) providing backpacks filled with school supplies to children/grandchildren of our Food Pantry clients; and to St. Paul AME, Warren United Methodist, and Beulah Baptist church members; and 2) providing baby and toddler supplies to Hello Neighbor, a social service organization that assists refugees and immigrants. Individual donations primarily funded the backpacks and supplies. Having “financial partners” in place ensures that activities such as these can continue throughout 2022.

Opportunities to Reach Out to Provide Outreach

The Community Events and Outreach Committee has relationships with numerous outreach partners, including social service organizations, churches of color, and agencies that support refugees and immigrants. These partners are as follows:

Social Service Organizations – Church Union - North Side, East End Cooperative Ministries - East Liberty

Churches of Color – St. Paul AME and Beulah Baptist - Beltzhoover, Warren UMC - Hill District

Agencies that Support Refugees and Immigrants – Hello Neighbor -East End, South Hills Interfaith Movement - South Hills

During the past year, the Outreach Committee has heard representatives from each of these groups discuss their respective missions, priorities, and ways for congregations such as MLUMC to help. Working with disadvantaged youth at Church Union, doing minor construction repairs at Warren UMC, and providing household supplies for refugees at Hello Neighbor are just a few of the many ways that we may individually or collectively help.

In the coming weeks, the Outreach Committee will identify and publicize opportunities to assist one or more of these outreach partners. While the Committee will continue to be heavily involved in working with these groups, we are hopeful that others in the congregation will feel the call to help. Look for worship bulletin announcements, weekly e-mail announcements, or separate e-mail blasts on these opportunities.

If you would like to be placed on a list to ensure that you are contacted as opportunities arise to “reach out to provide outreach,” call the church office, 412-531-7131.

For more information on “reaching out” or becoming a financial partner, contact Outreach Committee Chair, Rob Spicher at either 412-720-4589 or robert.spicher@pnc.com.

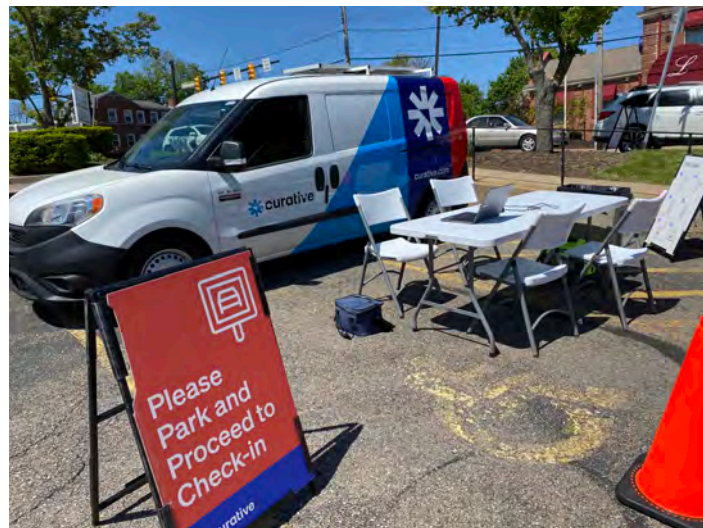
Updated Covid Recommendations

With the recent change to CDC masking recommendations, the Church Council asks that everyone make a decision for mask wearing based on their own personal needs. Therefore, masking is now optional in the large common spaces in our church, including for services of worship. Please extend grace and understanding to those who need to continue masking due to health concerns for themselves or those they care for. Due to the more confined spaces in our Educational Building, we ask that all of our children, youth, and teachers come to Sunday School prepared to mask, as circumstances warrant. Other small groups may make similar decisions for themselves, and Council supports them wholeheartedly

COVID 19 Testing Site in MLUMC Parking Lot

Come for your free, quick and easy COVID-19 test, available on Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 AM to 12 noon. That's when healthcare company Curative, in conjunction with the Allegheny County Health Department, is providing a trailer in our parking lot with testing services.

You don't need an appointment – just show up at the trailer for your shallow, nasal PCR test. The test is self-collected, while being observed and directed by a healthcare worker. The results will be available in 1-2 days, once the lab has received your test. The testing service will continue on Wednesday and Friday mornings in the MLUMC parking lot through the summer.



Flower Planting Time

Friday, May 27 6-8 pm and

Saturday, May 28 9 am-12 pm

Be a part of helping plant the spring flowers at Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church. All the flowers will be there, just bring a hand shovel, gloves and knee pads. Planting will take place on Friday, May 27th from 6 pm - 8 pm and Saturday morning, May 28th from 9 am to 12 noon. After the flowers are planted, we can enjoy them all summer through fall. Any questions contact Tom Michael at trilobitesix@aol.com or (412) 389-9411. Thanks!



Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church

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Email List for Church Communications

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Opt In Electronic Mailings, Opt Out of Paper:

Name _____ Email Address _____

I would like to receive by email (check all that apply):

☐ *The Window* as a PDF once a quarter

☐ Special emailings (closures, deaths, major church events)

☐ Announcements

☐ I would NO LONGER like to receive the mailed paper version of *The Window*.