

THE *Laurel* Leaf

MARCH 2026

The monthly newsletter from Laurel United Methodist Church, Springfield, Illinois



Talent and Dedication

by Deb Watts Elliot

Laurel United Methodist Church is home to so many talented and dedicated musicians, but this month I specifically want to highlight how we prosper from our visiting musicians—those who were previously involved in our music programs, but moved away for college, jobs, etc., and now, to our great delight, visit us over and over, and continue to share their gifts!

Nadia Armsworth, daughter of Dianne Barghouti Hardwick, was with us last summer while visiting her mom. We asked if she would play a piece on flute for us during her days here. She not only said yes, but volunteered to play along on every piece of music at our 9:30 and 10:45 services that day (which honestly only left us wanting to hear more). Nadia also sings beautifully, and we look forward to enjoying a vocal piece or two on her next trip to Springfield. Nadia grew up at Laurel, and is generous with her time and talents when she returns. She teaches music at Treeline Elementary School in Fort Myers, Florida where she lives with her husband and two children.

Heidi VanDeVoort, who also grew up at Laurel, blessed our Easter morning services this year (as she has on many occasions, and not just at Easter) with a fantastic solo, as well as jumping into a choir seat for anthems. She also brought us the poignant “He Never Said a Mumblin’ Word” at our Good Friday service this year. What an amazing gift that was! Heidi and her husband and three children live near Chicago, but fortunately for us visit mom and dad Deb and Andy VanDeVoort for special days, so we get to see and hear them regularly!

Rebecca Watts and Richard Garretson, who created our God’s House Band and now live and perform near New York City, regularly return to Springfield. The arrangements these two wrote for God’s House Band are used every week at Laurel’s 8:30 service, and are as fresh as the day they wrote them! Dick sits in with the band when here, sharing beautiful improvised trumpet solos. Rebecca likewise re-joins the band on keys and vocals and delivers lovely solo vocals at our other services, as well as scooting into whichever section the choir needs most for our 9:30 and 10:45 services, holiday concerts, and special services.

Violet Filipiak, daughter of Carissa and Jason Filipiak, who’s now off to study at the University of Illinois, gladly jumps in with a solo or collaboration on piano, trumpet, or recorder when she’s in town. Her diversity and talent are big blessings!

Ross Jones also adds to our worship as a vocal soloist who in addition joins the bass section of the choir, and as a saxophonist. Ross’s parents are Jen and Glenn Jones. Ross now teaches Spanish and coaches the Scholastic Bowl team at Mascoutah High School, as well as working toward his Master’s Degree in Spanish and singing in the Southwestern Illinois College Choir in Belleville. Ross still manages to spend good amounts of time in Spain, is always willing to praise God with his musical talents, and does so very skillfully.

Allegra Larson and her husband Andrew recently returned to Springfield after some time away. She regularly contributes vocal solos to our in-person and online services, as well as contributing to our choirs’ presentations. Allegra’s parents, Roma and Paul Larson, justifiably beam with pride on each of these occasions!

Music and Worship Arts Recognition Sunday

We hope you can be with us in worship on **Sunday, May 17, 2026**, when we will celebrate Music and Worship Arts Recognition Sunday. Lots of music from many of Laurel's groups will be included in all three services that day, and of course the congregation will be able to enjoy singing hymns and other musical responses. It's always a joy to recognize the dedication and talent of our music-makers as well as those who make it possible for our Sunday services to occur by driving our vans, making and serving coffee and lemonade, ushering, greeting, and serving as liturgists.



Later that same day, at 4:00 p.m., The Capital City Men's Chorus will present its spring concert, and you won't want to miss it. This group rehearses and performs at Laurel, and what a blessing that is! Tickets are \$10 and can be obtained in advance from any member of TCCMC or from its director, Mary E. Myers. Several Laurel men are members. The theme of the May 17 concert will focus on America's 250th birthday, and will celebrate several cities in song.

Clara Swain circle making pbj sandwiches



Easter Worship 2026

photos by Rich Saal



Quilts, quilts!!

Stitch n Go recently donated 68 quilts to the Aperion Rehab Center (formerly The Avenues) on MLK Drive. Our quilters have been busy slicing and assembling. The facility has also been the recipient of adult coverings thanks to the coordination of Rosalie McCafferty.



Mother's Day Carnations

Stitch 'n Go is taking orders this morning for carnations which will grace the Parlor this **Mother's Day, May 10**, in honor of the special women in our lives. It is a great way to recognize mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, special friends, anyone you'd like to remember, both living and those who have passed. **Carnations are \$3 each; place your order on Sunday mornings in April or during the week at the church office.** A brochure will be handed out on Mother's Day that lists the donors and honorees, and you may take your carnations from the bouquet as you leave church on Mother's Day.

Welcome New Staff...



Michelle Meredith

Bookkeeper

Michelle is a Springfield native who has worked in the Accounting field for 15 years. She enjoys cooking, baking, and reading. Michelle is looking forward to knowing the Laurel family.



Jeffrey Marcy

Custodian/Groundskeeper

Jeff works full time as the Kitchen Manager at Jane Addams Elementary School, where he takes pride in feeding the K-5th grade children. He is the great nephew of long time Laurel member, Betty Marcy. Jeff is also the fiancé of Laurel's Secretary, Tiffany LeVeque. He is happy to be a permanent member of the Laurel Staff and will continue to keep the building and grounds neat and tidy!

Diaper Depot Announcement

Kathryn Gowda is the founding leader of Diaper Depot, starting with the idea of a diaper drive in late 2021 which culminated in four diaper giveaways in 2022. She notes "this mission and cause have been so near and dear to my heart." Four years later, reassessing her career goals and the needs of her children, Kathryn has decided to step back from the running of Diaper Depot. She will, however, continue to work the distribution as her children's schedules allow.

Tiffany LeVeque and Jeff Marcy have offered to take over the diaper ordering as well as being the point of contact moving forward. With this change, diapers can now be delivered directly to the church which will facilitate getting them on the Diaper Depot shelves. We are grateful for Tiffany and Jeff Marcy to assume these coordination efforts.

Diaper Depot will continue with monthly distribution on the third Saturday of each month with our rotating group of volunteers who have recently braved very frigid weather conditions. Spring with warmer temperatures is eagerly anticipated!



MIRACLE SUNDAY
INITIATIVE

FORMING TRUSTED LEADERS | Endowing United Methodist Theological Education Africa | Europe | the Philippines

Miracle Sunday

The Miracle Sunday Campaign is a global effort to strengthen theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. By equipping pastors, teachers, and lay leaders, the Church invests in leaders who will guide communities with wisdom, compassion and courage both now and in the future. Every church is encouraged to receive an offering on May 17, 2026 to support theological education in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. Laurel will be taking an offering on that Sunday to support this campaign. We have set a goal of raising \$1,000 towards this effort. I hope you will prayerfully consider a gift that will have a lasting impact on the churches and leadership in our denomination throughout the world.



Follow Laurel on Social Media

[Laurel United Methodist Church](#)
[Laurel United Methodist Church Youth](#)
[Laurel United Methodist Church - Healthy Together](#)

Instagram
[@laurelunitedmethodist-church](#)

God's Housekeeping

Caring Prayer List

April 12th -- April 18th

Brenda Allen, Chad Franks, Joy Franks, Carolyn Leach, Tim, Rhonda, Matthew, & Kathryn Loyd, Merlene Mundhenk

April 19th -- April 25th

Tim & Lib Granzeau, Heather Langley, Joe & Betsy Goulet, Fran Langum & Bill McMahan and Family, Lori Ackerman, Gerald Aldrich

April 26th -- May 2nd

Tracey Bauman & Deacon, Caroline Patterson & Family, Joe Santhuff, Steve & Lisa Beebe and Family, Dave & Janet Chastain, Jonathan Clark

May 3rd -- May 9th

Roger & Christy Blickensderfer, Tom & Lacy Michael & Family, Lori & Bill Cour and Family, Robert & Lori Cox, Carissa & Jason Filipiak and Violet

May 10th -- May 16th

Kenneth Crutcher, Shirley Distlehorst, Howard Hennessey, Sandy Jurgens, Gene & Lisa Kamp, David & April Cook and Family

May 17th -- May 23rd

John & Kelley Davidson, Patrick & Vera O'Donnell, Jeff & Robin Small, Meghann & Danny Olkonen and Family, Patrick & Stephanie Small and Casey

Upcoming Events

Diaper Depot

April 18th & May 16th
10am-Noon LUMC Parking Lot
No early arrivals

Stitch 'N Go

April 28th & May 12th
9:30am - 2:30pm
Fellowship Hall

Book Club

May 5th, 6:00pm
Room 201

Thank You

To our amazing church volunteers, thank you for serving so faithfully this Easter. Your involvement helped create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for everyone who attended. Your dedication reflects the true spirit of the season and the Laurel family.

Thank you for joining Lydia Circle in their April mission. Because of your generosity, the women will be packing 270 Personal Dignity Kits for Midwest Mission on April 27 at 5:30 PM. Join Lydia Circle, women in mission!

Welcome Dot!

Dorothy "Dot" Heuman, Janine Heuman's mother, is officially a new member of Laurel as she recently transferred her membership. She's been very active in the Laurel family in Stich N'Go as well as being a new member of the choir.

The Class of 2026 Graduation!!

Do you have a High school or college graduate in your family??

Please send us the names of the graduates, where they graduated from, what they are planning for the next part of their journey and any other information you'd like to share. We would also like a photo that we can use online and in the newsletter. We want to honor our grads for their accomplishments!!

Please e-mail the information ASAP to JoAnn at joverholt@laurelumchurch.org

We do not want to miss anyone! Send your information today!!

Laurel United Methodist Church
631 South Grand Avenue West
Springfield, IL 62704

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Mark Your Calendar!

Snowball Mountain Challenge

VBS Mini Camp

June 16, 17 and 18

(Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday)

**Get ready to register all the kids you
know!! Volunteer to help!!**

Laurel United Methodist Church

631 South Grand Avenue West,
Springfield, IL 62704

217-525-1866

www.laurelumchurch.org

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sundays at 8:30am

Worship with God's House Band

Sundays at 9:30am

*Blended Worship with Choirs and
Asbury Bells*

Sundays at 9:30am

*Faith Formation
(Sunday school for adults and
children)*

Sundays at 10:45am

*Traditional Worship with Chancel
Choir and Asbury Bells*

At Laurel you'll find a welcoming
community that cares about
others, including YOU.