

Brazos Valley Emmaus Community

April-May Newsletter



Table of Contents:

1. Letter from Community Lay Director David Claridge
2. Letter from Community Spiritual Director Gary Westbrook
3. Plans for Virtual Community Gathering May 9
4. Article of dealing with Stress
5. Resources for dealing with COVID-19
6. Updates to Brazos Valley Emmaus Community Bylaws



Letter from Brazos Valley Emmaus Community Lay Director David Claridge

Brothers and Sisters –

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! I never imagined when this year began that we would be having major changes in the way we come together as a community because of a pandemic! In my morning devotions today, I read the passage from I Cor. 10:13 where Paul states “God is faithful.” Paul is speaking about God’s faithfulness in not permitting us to be tempted without providing us a way out, but the message I heard today was simply that God is faithful! I believe He will faithfully give us opportunities as individuals and as a Community to grow through the difficult times we are experiencing now.

Our Community is finding new ways to minister! Our April Gathering was the Prayer Vigil that had 166 half-hour prayer slots filled as we prayed for many different things related to the current Covid crisis and our community and individual growth and Christian disciples. Our Reunion Groups are using new ways to meet and grow with video-conferencing, conference calls, small groups with social distancing, and undoubtedly more!

Our May Gathering will be Facebook Live on May 9 with details in a separate story. We expect to have the Fall Walks in October and ask you to pray that this will be possible. Please plan to join me at our May Gathering!

De Colores!

David Claridge



Letter from Brazos Valley Emmaus Community Spiritual Director Gary Westbrook

To my Brothers and Sisters in Christ-

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus!

What a wonderful way to remember our unity as the BVEC Community as so many of us were able to participate in the 72 hour prayer vigil in place of our April Gathering earlier this month. Indeed it was a great reminder that Paul encourages us to pray without ceasing! And, of course, it is especially important to remember when we are not really sure what else to do-- especially when we cannot gather as usual— we should definitely pray! And pray we did!

Every member of our BVEC Board continues to pray for the community and personally for many of you. Our board also asks you to continue to lift us up in prayer as we strive to find ways during this challenging time to keep us all in community. Undoubtedly many of you are already connected through the many different social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. However, if you are not, I encourage you to consider the many benefits of staying in community in this way until such a time as we are able to gather again face to face. If you are using one of these platforms, or when you do, please search your memory and reach out to anyone from the Emmaus Community you may not have established a connectional relationship with yet and get reacquainted. It is so vital that we continue in community so we remain strong in the relationships which have been forged through this wonderful instrument of God's Grace called the Walk to Emmaus.

Remember, God's Word reminds us to be of good courage, live out our faith, and fear not, especially in troubled times. If you are in need of any kind, please let myself and others know so we can lift you up in prayer and address any additional needs you may have. Do not be shy. Be bold in your petitions to the Father and to us. My email is wqw12@yahoo.com. May God's richest Blessings rest upon you!

De Colores,

Gary Westbrook

BVEC May "Virtual" Gathering

We chose to gather in a prayer vigil for our April "Gathering" but plan to come together as a Community for our May Gathering on May 9 (notice it is May 9 and not May 2) in a virtual Gathering just as so many of us are being blessed by virtual Sunday School classes and church services.

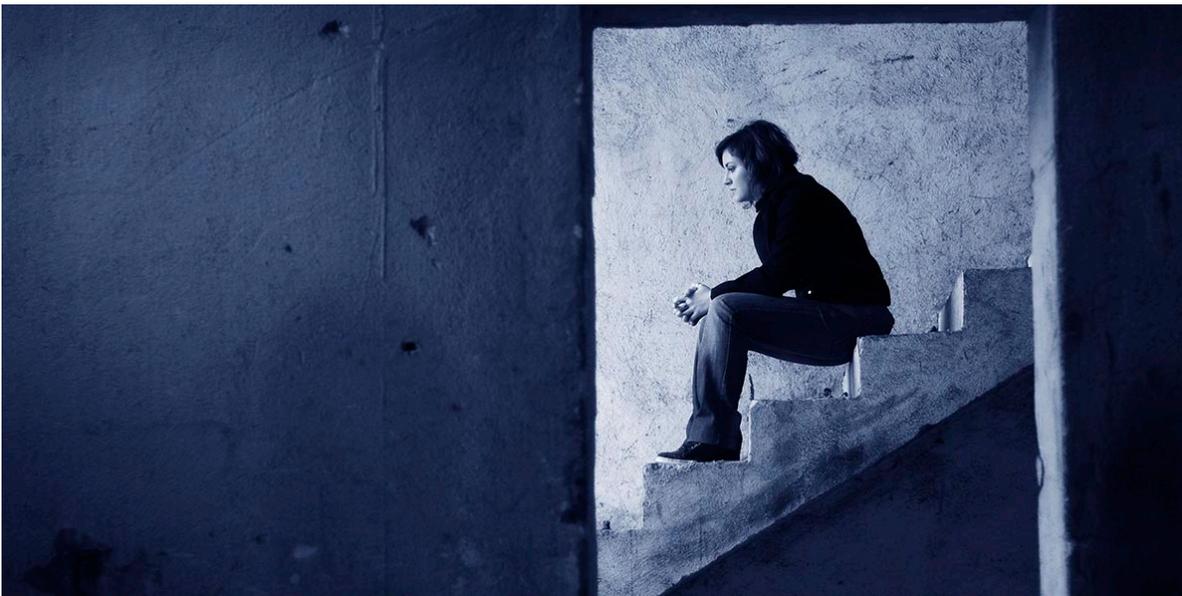
We invite you to enjoy your Gathering meal at home and then join us on Facebook Live at 6:00 pm for live Worship hosted by Millican UMC! This amazing time will include some lively Emmaus music led by Sally Miller, and an encouraging 4th Day Speaker, as well as something very special host Rev. Heather Leyland is cooking up for us all!

Remember- if you are logged in on Facebook live on the BVEC Facebook page you can not only see others who are logged in but you can chat with them as well!

Article for Dealing with Stress

Seven Suggestions for Healing and Renewal in the Midst of Stress and Anxiety

<https://www.upperroom.org/resources/seven-suggestions-for-healing-and-renewal-in-the-midst-of-stress-and-anxiety/?path=cvblog>



By Flora S. Wuellner

God longs to heal us and renew us in these difficult times. The greater our responsibilities, the deeper is our need for sustenance.

Jesus filled the nets of his disciples, built a fire on the beach and warmed them, cooked and served them breakfast before he sent them out to feed the hungers of the world (John 21).

Here are some suggested ways by which we can be fed by God at a deep level. We each respond to God's love in unique ways, so we may find some of these suggestions more helpful than others.

1. It is vitally important to be aware of, and to honor our feelings, and to let God's love enfold us as we feel them: whether anxiety, anger, grief, loneliness. Jesus felt all these things and trusted God enough to share them.
2. It is deeply healing also to share what we feel with a trusted friend or small group, especially those who know how to pray with us and for us, who know how to listen without interruption and instant spiritual prescriptions.
3. It is both healing and strengthening when in the midst of conflict and anxiety producing situations to pay attention to our breathing and to notice where our bodies feel especially stressed, tight, uncomfortable. It helps then to think of the living Christ beside us, enfolding us in God's healing light (or some other image or thought) especially around the tight, stressed bodily areas. Then let the breathing become slow, deep, and gentle.
4. In the midst of painful or intense encounter with others, whether in person, over the telephone, by letter or e-mail, we can think of Christ's light enfolding the other person as well as ourselves, sheltering, guiding, and renewing both of us, so that neither is drained or absorbs the toxicity. The same can be done in difficult committee sessions. The Bible is full of helpful images of God's sheltering love: God's hands, arms, enfolding wings, strong rocks, high mountains, healing rivers and pools of living water, green fields, empowering light. For some of us, an inwardly spoken word is more helpful: release, peace, love, Risen Christ, Healing Spirit, and so on.
5. Each day let us encourage one another to take some intentional time, even if for only a few minutes, just to rest in God's closeness, without any intense agenda. This fills our inner reservoirs of body and spirit. Some prefer to sit or lie down in silence or to listen to special music. Some prefer to walk and notice what God wants to show them. Some like to dance, stretch, paint, garden. Others may wish to hold a picture that reminds them of God's love, or a special cloth, a flower, a rock, or some other object. The important thing is to soak in God's healing nearness without agendas. This can be done either in various moments throughout the day, or at a scheduled time, whatever works best for us.
6. Before an appointment, committee meeting, a personal encounter, or a challenging piece of work, we can think of Jesus' promise to go ahead of us to prepare a place for us (John 14:3). We can picture the Healer already in that future place, filling that space with empowering, healing, guiding light: the doorway, windows, chairs, desk, etc. When we and others arrive at that future place and experience, we will feel the warmth and strength welcoming us.
7. At the end of a full, demanding day, as we prepare for sleep, it is deeply cleansing to take a few slow deep, gentle breaths and then to release the events and the persons we met during the day into God's hands or into God's heart.

Flora Slosson Wuellner, an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, is well known throughout the United States and Europe for her writings and retreat leadership that focus on the inner healing that God freely offers through Christ. She has been involved in the specialized ministry of spiritual renewal for over thirty years. Educated at the University of Michigan and at Chicago Theological Seminary, Wuellner has served pastorates in Wyoming, Idaho, and Illinois.

Source: Copyright © 2001 Flora S. Wuellner. Used with permission of the publisher, The Upper Room.

Resources for dealing with COVID-19

THE UPPER ROOM

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic – a Spiritual Companion in Times of Need

1. **Morning Prayer on Facebook Live – Each day at 11AM CT.** Please join [here](#). Each session of this brief daily communal prayer time is led by an Upper Room staff member or friend. On average, 59 people are joining us live each day, and videos are reaching over 5,000 people after they air.
2. **“New Every Morning” with daily video campaign.** This e-newsletter offers daily reflection featuring an excerpt from an Upper Room Books title, a reflection question, space to comment and/or to add prayer request, and a reminder of the weekly lectionary text. Since the pandemic, a video clip featuring a staff member or author has been added with each person responding to the question: “What does creating a life with God look like for you today?” These videos are reaching over 3,000 people through various social media channels, and now over 6,000 through the New Every Morning daily email. To view videos, click [here](#). [New Every Morning email sign up page](#).
3. **eLearning.** Nearly 400 students enrolled in the *Freedom From Worry* eCourse, offered free to all in the first three weeks it was available. This eCourse featuring Upper Room Books author Patricia Wilson is designed to help participants reduce their anxiety level and develop practices of prayer and trust. Robin Pippin is serving as the course facilitator. To register, go [here](#). Other individual eCourses are being offered for half price. To view all available eCourses, go here UReLearning.upperroom.org/courses and use promo code **URHALF** when registering.
4. [UpperRoom.org/covid-19 / Resources for Spiritual Wellness in Anxious Times](http://UpperRoom.org/covid-19/ Resources for Spiritual Wellness in Anxious Times) is one of our top viewed resource pages on upperroom.org for the month of March, with 16,916 page views since its creation. It includes our collective response, along with the following articles:
 - [Seven Suggestions for Healing and Renewal in the Midst of Stress and Anxiety](#) by Flora S. Wuellner
 - [A Blessing for Those Who Wait](#) by Beth A. Richardson
 - [The Work of Hope](#) by Luther E. Smith, Jr.
 - [Getting Started with Your Private Online Classroom](#)
5. [The Upper Room Prayer Wall](#) is available for posting prayers of concerns and for praying for those prayer requests by name and need. We have received a huge spike in prayer requests related to the corona virus and an increase in prayer volunteer applications. Beth Richardson has [created a helpful video](#) for all those who want to be serve in intercession for individuals who have posted concerns during these difficult days.
6. **The Academy** staff have worked diligently and creatively to reschedule the final sessions of Academy #40 and #41 as well as several Five-day Academy programs that were to be held this spring. The Academy also offers [this month’s podcast](#), where Claire McKeever-Burgett talks with Marjorie Thompson, a longtime Academy faculty person and author, about how to remain grounded faith leaders in the midst of chaos, disaster, and fear.

The **Upper Room Editions** team has created a new space on the daily devotional blog for the purpose of sharing personal, theological reflections on the current global pandemic. It can be [found here](#). Several new reflections have already been received and will be posted in the days to come.

Updates to BVEC Bylaws

The Brazos Valley Emmaus Community Board of Directors has taken action to amend the Bylaws. The Bylaws specify that the Board may propose changes to the Bylaws and publish those changes in the Community Newsletter. If no petitions signed by at least twenty-five (25) Community members objecting to the new amendments are received, the amendments will be considered adopted. Any objections must be received within sixty (60) days of the mailing of the notification.

Items that are recommended for deletion are highlighted and crossed out in the Bylaws that follow while proposed new wording is shown in red. Two Articles (5 and 9) are currently numbered instead of using Roman Numerals as done for all other Articles. These are proposed to change to be consistent with the other Articles. Section titles are also proposed to be added to sections 5 and VI for clarification.

There are four substantive changes.

1. The Bylaws currently specify in Article IV, Section 4 that the Board of Directors election will be held and “The ballot shall be provided to the Community members as part of the newsletter and shall be available no later than October 15 of each year.” The proposed new wording is:
Ballots shall be provided to the Community members in the most effective way possible and shall be available no later than October 15 of each year.

This change will enable submission of the ballots to the community via what the board deems to be “the most effective way”. This basically means that the ballots may be sent by email as an individual item.

2. The second proposed change will broaden the definition of quorum in Article VI, Section 2. The current language is: “Ten (10) Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum at a duly called meeting.” When the Board has a full complement of 17 members, 10 members is 58.8% of the membership. The Board currently has only 14 members; 10 members now constitutes 71.1% of the membership and some meetings have been unable to take action for lack of a quorum over the last year. The proposed wording is:

“Sixty percent (60%) of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum at a duly called meeting.

This would mean that with the current Board membership, eight members would constitute a quorum.

3. The third change simply adds a Kitchen committee to the authorized committees under the Board in Article VII, Section 1.
4. Article X is proposed for addition to make explicit that if a vote on any proposed amendment(s) is taken under the provisions of Article IX, Section 3, the effective date of any amendment(s) passed will be immediate.

Article X: Ratification

The amended bylaws take effect immediately upon certification by the board that a plurality of the votes cast by the Community approves them.

The Bylaws follow with wording to be removed shown with a strikethrough and proposed new wording shown in red.

BY-LAWS

Brazos Valley Emmaus Community

As Amended by the BVEC Board of Directors

Effective September, 2009 (to be replaced by a new effective date if changes adopted)

Article I. Name:

The name of the community shall be “The Brazos Valley Emmaus Community”, hereinafter referred to as the “Community”, a Texas nonprofit corporation.

Article II. Purpose:

Section 1. The purpose of the Community shall be to inspire, challenge, and equip church members for Christian action in their homes, churches, places of work, and the world community through the Emmaus experience.

Section 2. The community shall operate under an agreement with the Upper Room Ministries, Nashville, TN.

Article III. Membership:

Section 1. All persons who have completed the Walk to Emmaus sponsored by any Upper Room Emmaus community and who reside within the boundaries of this Community, or any person who completed the Walk to Emmaus in this Community shall

be considered members of this Community.

Section 2. Persons who have completed a Cursillo, Via de Cristo, or Tres Dias weekend may become members by participating in the activities of the Community and asking the Secretary or Registrar of the Community to include their names on the membership Listing.

Article IV. Board of Directors:

Section 1. Direction of the Community will be vested in the Board of Directors.

Section 2. The Board of Directors will consist of fifteen (15) elected members, the immediate past Community Board Chairperson, and the Community Spiritual Director.

Section 3. Term of Office

- a. Members of the Board of Directors shall be elected by Community members for three (3) year terms in three (3) classes; each class shall have five (5) members.
- b. Board members cannot succeed themselves in consecutive terms; a term is three (3) years.
- c. Terms of office shall begin January 1 and shall terminate December 31, except for officers who shall serve until election of new officers is completed in January as provided in **Section 5 Article V**, below.

Section 4. Election of Board Members

- a. Board Members shall be elected by the Community at large.
- b. The Nominating Committee shall submit to the Board a slate of seven (7) nominees from which five (5) shall be elected.
- c. ~~The ballot shall be provided to the Community members as part of the newsletter and shall be available no later than October 15 of each year.~~
Ballots shall be provided to the Community members in the most effective way possible and shall be available no later than October 15 of each year.
- d. Ballots will be received by the Board no later than November 15 of each year.

- e. The five nominees receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected.
- f. The immediate past Board chairperson shall serve on the Board one (1) additional year or the normal period of their term, whichever is longer.
- g. The Board may elect persons, upon nomination by the chair, to fill a vacant term until the next regular election for that term. Such persons are eligible for election to a full term by the Community at such regular election.

Article 5 V: Officers of the Board of Directors

Section 1. Officers

Officers shall be the Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, and in case of absences will chair meetings in this order. The Vice-Chair must be eligible to serve an additional year on the board and serve as the Chair if elected to that post. Officers can accept responsibility for a committee chair in addition to their elected position on the Board.

Section 2. Election of Officers

Officers shall be elected annually by the Board at the January meeting for a one (1) year term of office effective with the close of the January meeting.

Section 3. Spiritual Director

The Community Spiritual Director shall be selected annually by the Board of Directors. Term of office shall begin January 1. The Spiritual Director may be replaced during the term by ten (10) affirmative votes.

Article VI: Meetings

Section 1. The Board shall meet monthly in regular meetings unless otherwise ordered by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board in a regular meeting.

Section 2. Quorum

Sixty percent (60%) of the ~~Ten (10)~~ Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum at a duly called meeting.

Section 3. Special Meetings

Special Board meetings may be called by the chairperson, or when requested in writing by ten (10) members of the Board.

Article VII: Committees

Section 1. The Board shall name Board members to chair the following committees:

Agape, Candlelight/Sponsors Hour, Facilities (set-up and tear down), Music/Entertainment, Nominations, Team Selection, Prayer, Registrar, Training, Newsletter, Webmaster, Reunion Group/Fourth Day, Gatherings, **Kitchen**, Literature and Supplies.

Section 2. The Chairperson of the Board will be an ex-officio member of all standing committees.

Section 3. Any Community member may be appointed to serve on any committee. The Board may annually approve the establishment of additional committees and name Community members to serve on such committees.

Article VIII: Walk to Emmaus

Section 1. The Community shall follow the guidelines of the Upper Room Walk to Emmaus program in the presentation of the three-day (72 hour) experience called “The Walk to Emmaus”. The guidelines are attached hereto.

Section 2. The Board of Directors shall have general oversight in all matters relating to the local Walk to Emmaus.

Section 3. The Board of Directors shall choose a Lay Director for each Community Walk to Emmaus weekend.

Section 4. The Spiritual Director for each Community Walk to Emmaus weekend shall be selected by the Board.

Section 5. The Board shall establish a Team Selection Committee. The Team Selection Committee shall consist of a Board member, who serves as chairperson, the Community Spiritual Director and three (3) or four (4) members of the Community who have broad awareness of the Community membership and a solid understanding of team needs. Community members are appointed by the Board chairperson.

Article 9 IX: Amendments

Section 1. Proposed amendments may be presented to the Board by any member of the Community one (1) month in advance of consideration by the Board.

Section 2. If the amendments are voted in the affirmative by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Board, they will be circulated to the membership through the **most effective way possible** Community newsletter, and if no petitions signed by at least twenty-five (25) Community members objecting to the new amendments are received, the amendments will be considered adopted. Any objections must be received within sixty (60) days of the mailing of the notification. If any objection petition is received, the amendment will be considered void.

Section 3. If the Board then wishes to submit the amendment to the Community for a vote, it may do so. A plurality of votes cast by the membership will decide the matter.

Article X: Ratification

The amended bylaws take effect immediately upon certification by the board that a plurality of the votes cast by the Community approves them.