

NEW BEGINNINGS

*“Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’
And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” ~ Mark 1:17-18*

Growing up as a pastor’s kid, I have had my share for packing up, leaving home, and starting afresh in a new place. Looking back, it seems my father was reappointed to a new ministry setting every four years on average. Then add to the mix natural transitions such as graduating high school and college, and relocating because of new jobs, it is fair to say that, change was a constant reality. The old adage is true: the only thing constant is change. Yet, with each change I have gone through, I can’t say I have figured out how to go through new changes with grace and ease. Change can be difficult and messy, and change can be very exciting.

The turn of the new year is often an opportunity for me to consider the changes I have gone through in the past year, and to anticipate changes in the future. To help me in my reflections, I always turn to scripture. And every year, the lectionary gives us the same scripture passage for the second and third weeks in January: the baptism of Jesus and the calling of the first disciples. It seems to me—at least from a lectionary perspective—that the call to discipleship is a call to embrace change.

When Jesus called the first group of disciples, they were called to leave behind their nets, which meant leaving a sense of home and financial security. They were called to follow Jesus into an unknown future. Change is most fundamentally about leaving home and starting afresh. Home is whatever gives us a sense of familiarity, safety, and security. Starting afresh, on the other hand, is always accompanied with uncertainties and anxieties about what lies ahead. We cannot escape these. Even for those of us who like to plan things to the Nth degree, chances are there is always something about our plans that doesn’t always work out according to plan. So, with any change we’re often challenged to consider or embrace something we had not anticipated.

As you begin this new year, what are some “nets” that God is calling you to leave behind? What new possibilities is God calling you to consider? I imagine that the first disciples did not initially get what it would mean to “fish for people.” But as their life together with Christ unfolded, they gained new perspectives, new insights, and new understanding about the change they had been invited to. The same could apply for us. We may not know what lies ahead—it may not even make any sense—but we can trust that the unfolding journey can lead us to a new home and, by God’s grace, lead us to flourish.

May God bless you in this New Year, Pastor Shandi

LIGHTINGS AND ALTAR FLOWERS

The Tower lighting for January is given in loving memory of my mother and father, Mary & Norman Fletcher and my brother, David Fletcher by Barbara Fletcher.

The Rose window lighting for January is given in loving memory of Mrs. William B. Smith by the United Methodist Women.

The altar flowers on Sunday, January 14th are given in loving memory of Mrs. William B. Smith by the United Methodist Women.

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

- ✠ The D'Acri Family for their work to provide community breakfasts. We give thanks for them.
- ✠ Stanley Gutridge who is now in heaven with his Natalie. We pray that all his lessons of the good Lord are practiced each and everyday, and that his gifts to all may be remembered and cherished.
- ✠ Evette Walters who is home with upper respiratory infection.
- ✠ Pastor Vicki and her household who have undertaken to care for a friend and fellow pastor undergoing cancer treatment.
- ✠ The family of John Hanson as they prepare for his Memorial Service on January 16th at 1pm.
- ✠ 1SG Richard Reynolds, brother of Debi Ritacco, and the 3rd Battalion 126th Aviation Regiment HHC Company, as well as A-CO Company and D-CO Company as they deploy to Kosovo for the next year.

An All Church Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 21st following the 10:30 service. We hope to see you there.

PLEASE NOTE:

Statements for 2017 will be mailed on January 29, 2018. Please let Lorna know of any discrepancies by January 29, 2018. Thank you.

NEW PLAN FOR HERALD MAILINGS

As you may know, the church is undergoing a discernment period to restructure our ministry and church operations in order to live into a goal of responsible stewardship. Many changes will be explored in the coming months, and some changes are already underway. One such change is in regards to the bi-weekly herald publishing.

Beginning in April, Wesley Church will publish one Herald a month. This move will help us to be good stewards in a few areas. First, the move will help us to be good stewards of resources in creation. We believe that a reduction in the paper we use is good for the environment. Second, we believe that this reduction will help us to be good financial stewards, since it will provide cost savings on paper, ink and postage. And third, we believe that this move will help us be good stewards of our staff time and gifts, particularly since we have reduced staff hours in all the full-time positions.

The Herald publishing schedule for the next several months is as follows...

Article Due Date:

Monday, January 15th

Monday, January 29th

Monday, February 12th

Monday, February 26th

Monday, March 12th

Monday, April 9th

Monday, May 14th

Monday, June 11th

Publishing Date:

Wed., January 24th

Wed., February 7th

Wed., February 21st

Wed., March 7th

Wed., March 21st

Wed., April 18th

Wed., May 23rd

Wed., June 20th

Please note that while the Herald is published on a Wednesday, the due date for articles to the Herald is on the second Monday before the publishing date (see schedule above, this works out to be 10 days before the Publishing Date).

We will re-evaluate how this new schedule is working during the summer. In the meantime, we are grateful for your cooperation and support for this new plan.

*Yours in faith,
Pastor Shandi*

FROM THE CHURCH SECRETARY

OFFICE VOLUNTEER(S) NEEDED... With the change of our hours that has taken effect, the office is in need of volunteer(s) to help answer the phones, the doors, and other small office tasks. I currently have 2 volunteers, however I am looking for one or two more to help from 9 am to 1 pm, Monday-Friday. Having a few people will make it easier to create a schedule and have a backup person if need be. If you have time in the morning on one or more days and are interested in helping, please contact Debi in the church office (office@wesleyworc.org or 508-799-4191 ext 102). Thank you.

ONECALL FOR WESLEY CHURCH... Winter is here. Be one of the lucky ones and receive a phone call to find out if a meeting has been rescheduled, or if worship has been cancelled. OneCall is not only for storms and closings, it's for those unexpected cancellations or change of location of a meeting or even a reminder of a special event at Wesley — we are able to do any of this and more over the phone.

If you would like to sign up for this service, please stop by the Welcome Office and sign up on the clipboard. You can also email me (office@wesleyworc.org). I will need your name, home/cell phone number for each family.

This is just another way for us to help keep you informed of what is going on at your church. If you signed up last year, you are still on the list and there is no need to do anything, unless you have changed/removed a phone number. If this is the case, please email me the information.

ALTAR FLOWERS... Beautiful floral arrangements on the altar during Sunday worship is a special gift we offer to God as part of our praise and worship. The arrangements are usually dedicated in celebration of or in memory of a loved one. By your choice, you may take the flowers home to enjoy or you may request the flowers be delivered to a shut-in or member/friend in the hospital. If you are unable to join us in church, arrangements can be made for the flowers to be delivered to you at home after the service.

A calendar of available dates and order forms are available in the Welcome Office. The cost for altar flowers is \$60. If you are not able to come to church but would like to dedicate flowers, please call Debi in the office (508-799-4191).

Thank you, Debi Ritacco

MESSAGES FROM THE CHURCH BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

I am very pleased to present the preliminary financial results for 2017. Although our general fund donations were down \$8,605, and Harvest came in \$5,317 below budget, we still had a significant increase in all major income accounts including the three major holidays, and building/parking usage. In addition, expenses were under budget by \$8,662. Here are the highlights:

Income	Actual	Budget	Difference
Pledges	\$329,800 *	\$ 338,405	\$ -8,605 less than budget
Plate	\$ 13,474	\$ 10,750	\$ 2,724 more than budget
Easter	\$ 7,028	\$ 5,600	\$ 1,428 more than budget
Thanksgiving	\$ 4,254	\$ 3,500	\$ 754 more than budget
Christmas	\$ 9,240	\$ 6,200	\$ 3,040 more than budget
Harvest	\$ 39,683	\$ 45,000	\$ -5,317 less than budget
Parking	\$ 21,665	\$ 19,920	\$ 1,745 more than budget
Contract Bld Use	\$ 8,555	\$ 7,200	\$ 1,355 more than budget
Expenses			
SPRC Expenses	\$398,298	\$ 408,660	\$ -10,362 less than budget
Bldg/Maintenance	\$131,641	\$ 134,500	\$ -2,859 less than budget
Office	\$ 48,283	\$ 45,237	\$ 3,046 more than budget
Program Exp	\$ 31,633	\$ 35,900	\$ -4,267 less than budget
Mission Shares	\$ 63,000	\$ 63,000	\$ 0
Summary			
Total Income	\$699,858	\$ 681,994	\$ 17,864 more than budget*
Total Expense	\$689,823	\$ 698,486	\$ -8,662 below budget
Net Favorable	\$ 10,035*	\$ -16,492	\$ 26,527

*The favorable amount of \$10,035 is preliminary as I await a final confirmation on a mutual fund sale.

Thank you to all for your generosity!

Offering Envelopes

The envelopes for 2018 have arrived and are available in Brewer Hall for pickup.

If you would like offering envelopes, please sign up on the sheet in the Welcome Office. Your envelopes will be ready the following Sunday.

Thank you! Thank You!! THANK YOU!!!

THANK YOU, FAITHFUL HOPE FOR HOUSING VOLUNTEERS!

The Hope for Housing ministry remains small but mighty -- just as one small gift card purchase makes a big difference to a family facing homelessness. Many thanks to the dedicated crew staffing the table in Brewer Hall after church every Sunday: Cora Arsenault, Judith Barton, Earl Flagg, Amelia Hirtle, Donna Hirtle, Mark Muncey, Gerard Piscitelli, Latoya Singletary, Enoch Ukpong, and Bill Wong. Together, we sold \$15,916 in gift cards throughout 2017. Combined with cards sold at 28 other churches in the Worcester area, that adds up to helping close to 80 families remain in their homes.

Preventing homelessness is possible! Thank you to our customers for their ongoing support. And anyone interested in joining our team, just stop by the table in Brewer Hall!

~ Allison Hansen

MISSION MATTERS

Wesley's IHN Week is Sunday, Feb. 4 through Sat., Feb. 10

Please sign up with Mercy Peacock if you are able to do the evening shift (5:30 to 8:30 pm) or the overnight (8:30 pm to 6:30 am). Or you could sign up on the Mission Spotlight Bulletin Board chart. Each evening volunteer can now choose whether to provide dinner or not. Residents would appreciate our cooking 2 or 3 dinners (or providing takeout), if you're up for that. The other meals and kitchen staples during our week will be paid for by the Mission Committee, using (Big Y) Hope for Housing cards. Your donating Big Y cards (to Mercy or Betsy) would save money to give elsewhere.

UMW in Charge of Jan. 27th Community Supper...

UMW is once again in charge of the first supper of the new year. The menu will be macaroni and cheese with diced ham and peas, rolls, salad, beverages and dessert. If you could bake a dessert, help cook, serve and/or clean up, please contact Allison Hansen at ACHis4788@aol.com or 508-853-5339. Any Wesley woman who wants to find out more about UMW is invited to ask any of the servers or other supper workers to share info.

For 2018, Dates of Community Suppers

Community Suppers in 2018 are all on last Saturdays of the months, except for March 31st which is the night of the Easter Vigil. There will be the Easter Community breakfast the next morning. The March supper will be on March 24th. Thank you to groups who have volunteered to lead suppers through May! Please tell Betsy Pennino if you could take charge of a supper in June through October.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Living with H.O.P.E.

As we start the New Year for 2018 and set our resolutions and goals for the year, there is an underlying emotion that helps us achieve that goal, that being hope. Hope is the seed that is the beginning of everything good in our lives. Without it, people, relationships, organizations, even Churches start to fail. But with hope there are certain things that have to be done to make our dreams fulfilled which can be represented as an acronym:

H: Honesty. In order to start the process, we have to be honest with ourselves. Self-reflection is an important exercise that one must do to truly understand your emotions, strengths, weaknesses and what drives you. It may also reveal what you have to say no to, give up or set aside for the time being.

O: Options. What are the different options in achieving your goal? Laying out the options allows you to pick a path that you might decide the best way to reach your goal. It also allows you to have a backup plan in case some unexpected life curveballs get thrown at you. This could also be a good time to think outside the box.

P: Plan. Make a plan to achieve your goal. All goals are met when you have a plan. Unfortunately goals don't magically become fulfilled without a plan. Put your plans down in writing by making them specific and time bound.

E: Execute. What good is it to have a plan if you don't do it? Execute the plan and follow it but also learn to adapt as things happen.

Hope is mentioned quite a few times in the Bible with the most popular verse coming from Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future". Hope allows us to move forward, while hopelessness makes us stagnant. Learn to live with HOPE.

DID YOU KNOW?

The liturgical season of Christmas ends with Epiphany on January 6 (which we observe in Sunday morning worship on the Sunday nearest to January 6, which this year was January 7). Traditionally in the Western church the observance has been related primarily to commemorating the arrival of the Magi. In a larger sense Epiphany serves to identify Jesus as the Messiah for all the world, Gentiles as well as Jews. One of the best-known hymns of Epiphany is “We Three Kings” (UMH 254). This hymn often finds its way into worship earlier in the Christmas season, as it frequently is used as a “Christmas carol” in carol services and Christmas pageants. Both text and tune were written in 1857 by Rev. John H. Hopkins, Jr. an American Episcopal theologian and musician. The great American hymnologist Erik Routley identified this hymn as “the first modern American Christmas carol.”

In the Bible, the story of the visitation of the Magi is related only in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 2:1-12). Many of the traditions related to the visitation by the Magi are not based on the Biblical account, but evolved later. By the middle of the 2nd Century, the sages from the East were identified as kings, at least in part to emphasize fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies of homage to the Messiah by Gentile kings. It is believed that in the 3rd Century Origen (one of the Greek Fathers of the Church and one of the earliest Bible commentators) was the first to propose that there were three bearers of gifts based on the fact that there were three gifts offered. By the 6th Century the kings were given names: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. One explanation is that these names evolved from yet another tradition: an ancient custom of blessing homes at the beginning of each year on the day of the feast of the Epiphany. A blessing was spoken in Latin—*Christus mansionem benedicat* (May Christ bless this home)—and the first letters of each word C-M-B were written above the doorway of the home. The names of the kings were a mnemonic device for remembering the words of the blessing. The legends surrounding the kings became even more widespread when a subgenre of “three kings plays” became popular among the “Mystery Plays” of the Middle Ages.

Hopkins’ hymn incorporates all of these traditions and takes the form of a narrative to be sung by the kings. In the tradition of the dramas of the Middle Ages, Hopkins included instructions in one of the early editions of this hymn for the stanzas to be sung by the kings—all together on the first and last stanzas, and individual kings on each of the other stanzas—Caspar st. 2 (gold), Melchior st. 3 (frankincense), and Balthasar st. 4 (myrrh) with the congregation singing the refrain each time. The first stanza relates the story of the magi’s journey to find Jesus in Bethlehem; stanzas 2, 3, and 4 explain the meaning of each of the gifts; the final stanza summarizes the multifaceted nature of the true identity of Jesus. In our times, in the context of most worship services the entire hymn is generally sung by the congregation, allowing us to become participants in the story.

Submitted by Deborah O’Driscoll

2018 HERALD SCHEDULE

Below are the next Herald mailing dates along with the deadline dates.

Article Deadline Date	Herald Mailing Date
Mon., Jan. 15	Wed., Jan. 24
Mon., Jan. 29	Wed., Feb. 7

If you have an article, please email it as a Word attachment to:

office@wesleyworc.org

ALTAR FLOWERS

On Sundays altar flowers are available for donation in honor, celebration or in memory of a loved one or friend. Stop by the office and reserve the date in the Altar Flower book. You can reserve the chapel or the sanctuary. After church you are welcome to take the flowers home to enjoy or you may leave them to be delivered to a shut-in or member/friend in the hospital or in rehab. The cost for the two arrangements in either the chapel or sanctuary is \$60. Please be sure to complete a form with the dedication and return it to Debi with the payment as soon as you are able.



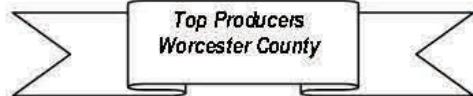
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

WESLEY HERALD
JANUARY 10, 2018

***DON'T MISS OUT...
READ THE HERALD TODAY!***

WESLEY STAFF & LEADERSHIP TEAM

Pastor	Rev. Shandirai Mawokomatanda
Director of Christian Formation & Discipleship	Lisa Fagerstrom
Director of Music Ministries	Brett Maguire
Director of Children's Music	Nan Gibbons
Music Assistant & Layleader	Deborah O'Driscoll
Building Superintendent	Tim Murphy
Business Administrator	Lorna Mattus-Merrill
Church Secretary	Debi Ritacco
Custodians	April Dylewicz Tom Friend Gerard Piscitelli
Security	Steve Boyns
Head Usher	David Dagle
Church Council	Tom Ingrassia
Board of Trustees Co-Chairs	Yaw Enyim Gary Robinson
Carty Cupboard Food Pantry	Nancy Spencer
Communion Steward	Linda D'Acri
Finance & Stewardship Co-Chairs	Michael Edmunds William Wong
Ghanaian Association	Paul Hayfron
Hospitality Co-Chairs	Vivian Assie Judy Hoffman
Medical Ministry	Ron Ramsay
Mission Coordinator	Betsy Pennino
Staff-Parish Relations	Gifty Bentum-Asante
Youth Directors	Anthony & Adrienne Phillips
United Methodist Women Co-Chairs	Barbara Ingrassia Allison Hansen

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