

**“Embracing that Wilderness *Feeling*”:
Reflections along the Lenten Journey**

Doubt, Shame, Fear, Anger, Worry, Grief: These emotions sometimes capture and describe our experiences with what we might call a “wilderness experience”; that is, those times when it seems like life’s journey is taking us through trial, testing, and difficulty. The wilderness experience is often imagined as dark, barren, and isolating. As we retreat into the wilderness, the emotions we feel sometimes lead us to retreat within ourselves.

In their book, *“Shadows of the Heart: A Spirituality of the Painful Emotions,”* Evelyn and James Whitehead venture to explore a spirituality of embracing negative emotions, such as anger, guilt, and shame. These emotions are “negative” because they often make us feel bad and sometimes lead to distressing consequences. However, can these emotions be transformed for positive ends rather than destructive ends? This is the question the authors ask, to which they provide this answer: while negative emotions may make us feel miserable, they often come bearing gifts. The gift of negative emotions sometimes comes in the self-examination they provoke. Emotional distress challenges familiar patterns. We realize: Something is not right. Our regular ways of thinking and acting no longer work. Troubled and confused, we review our expectations, reexamine our values, raise questions about how our life is going. Such reflections, the authors argue, carry the seeds of significant transformation. Both personal and social change can start here because negative emotions frequently benefit us by compelling us to act.

I agree with the authors’ idea that there is a spiritual component to how we experience our emotions. Negative emotions help raise special spiritual questions - questions such as: What do these feelings have to do with our life with God? Do people on the spiritual journey ever get angry or feel ashamed? Do these feelings separate us from God? How does God meet us in our experience? Sorting out these and other questions give shape to a spiritual experience of negative emotions.

While one spirituality might counsel us that emotions are unruly instincts with destructive effects which we must then keep at bay, another spirituality would say that, “negative” emotions are ambiguous and are a part of the image of God created in us. The invitation we receive is learning how to employ them toward creative and constructive ends rather than distressing and destructive ones. During the journey through Lent, I will be offering a preaching series that invites us to reflect on the sustaining power of God’s grace in the midst of difficult experiences and emotions. I invite you to come and join us as we reflect together on the calling to “embrace that wilderness *feeling*.”

Pastor Shandi

LIGHTINGS AND ALTAR FLOWERS...

THE TOWER lighting for February is given in loving memory of Lois and Bill Bird and Paul Carlson by Timmy and Charlie Bird.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS on Sunday, February 1st were given in celebration of Harry Spencer, Jr.'s 90th birthday with love from Nancy, Harry, Carol and their families.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS on Sunday, February 15th are given in loving memory of Natalie Gutridge by Stanley Gutridge.

THE ROSE window is available for lighting for February. The cost of the lighting is \$40. If you are interested in this, please call Debi in the office. Thank you.

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER THIS WEEK...

- ✝ Donald Robinson (father of Gary Robinson) who is in ICU with pneumonia and is approaching death.
- ✝ Harry Spencer, Jr. as he celebrates his 90th birthday on February 3rd.
- ✝ Gerard Piscitelli and family on the death of their mother Doris on February 1st.
- ✝ Linda Ward's sister who is going through major hardship. May the Lord grant her courage.
- ✝ Gladys Kerce, grandmother of Phil Smith, as she struggles with her health.
- ✝ All those who are suffering with colds or the flu during this winter season. May God grant healing.
- ✝ Someone who is unemployed and seeking new work.
- ✝ George Abeka Hammond, who celebrated his 1st birthday on January 27th.
- ✝ Mrs. Helena Attah, mother of Ivy Hammond, who celebrated her birthday on January 28th.
- ✝ Lawrence and Ivy Hammond celebrating their 13th Anniversary on February 1st.
- ✝ Abby, a young woman who has a disease which causes tumors throughout her body. She's having several tumors removed on Feb. 4, and needs prayers for the surgery and for healing.
- ✝ Peter Storey and family on the death of his wife Elizabeth last week.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED FOR HOPE FOR HOUSING... *Do you have a little time on Sundays after the 8:30 or 10:30 worship service to spare?* If so, why not help us help others in need. All you need to do is sit at a table and let people purchase gift cards from you. One shift on Sunday's is all you need to do. If we get enough volunteers to help, we can have a rotating schedule. If you are interested, you can sign up at the table on Sunday or speak with Allison Hansen (508-853-5339 or email achis4788@aol.com).

IHN NEWS – We will be assisting the IHN families the week of Feb 8-14. If you cannot be at the IHN home, you can still help the families by purchasing Hope for Housing cards in Brewer Hall. Please buy Shaw's, Big Y or CVS cards as these are the places closest to the IHN house. Give them to me and I will forward them to the IHN director to use for expenses of food, diapers, toiletries, etc. This will be on going thru the year, not just our assigned weeks. You can support two good causes with this one purchase!
~ Nancy Cook

CLEARING THE PATH FOR THE JOURNEY WE WILL TAKE WITH GOD THIS LENTEN SEASON.



On Ash Wednesday, February 18th, at 7:00 PM at Aldersgate UMC, Worcester, we will be taking time to clear away the obstacles that are blocking our path to following God. Come and rid yourself of those things that are separating you from God. We will have the distribution of Ashes along with a celebration of Holy Communion as we prepare ourselves for the journey through Lent to the celebration of Easter.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS SHROVE TUESDAY CELEBRATION, February 17, 6-7:30 PM. You are invited to come enjoy our **PANCAKE SUPPER** with all the extra goodies (pancakes, fruit, toppings, bacon & sausage)! We are blessed to offer a special time for adults to enter into a holy discussion and fellowship about *The Meaning of Lent through the Years*, led by Lisa Fagerstrom in East Hall from 6:45–7:15 PM. Come to share or just to listen and take it all in. The children will join Jean Grant and the Education team for a special time of Lenten activities in Brewer Hall. This event is hosted by Sarah Circle and Christian Education Ministry. Great time to invite friends! If you are interested in volunteering with cooking, clean-up, crafting, or donating food, please contact Jean Grant.

NEW MEMBER CLASS... Are you interested in becoming a member of Wesley UMC? We invite you to consider entering into a membership covenant with Wesley. Local church membership is one way to live out your commitment to the way of discipleship. Through membership you covenant to live out vows of faithfulness in worship, learning, stewardship and witness. Through membership you commit to serve Jesus Christ by your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness through the shared ministry of our local congregation. If you're feeling called to make this commitment, please let Pastor Shandi know. A New Member class will be held during Lent on Wednesday nights or Saturday mornings, depending on people's schedules.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: A CLASS FOR YOUTH... The Massachusetts State Police, with the leadership of Captain Fran Leahy, is going to be leading a class for youth on "knowing your rights" on February 28, 2015 at 9am here at Wesley. This offering is initiated by Isaac Berko and the Wesley Basketball program and it is open to all young people who would like to learn about their rights. Parents are welcome to join their youth in the class. The event is free to all as it is a public service by the MA State Police. If you have any questions please contact Isaac Berko, at Isaacb94@hotmail.com.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

As Pastor Shandi takes us through a video series on "Race: The Power of an Illusion," I welcome an opportunity for children to be invited in discussion with me as we share age-appropriate stories and an introduction to the Civil Rights movement. We will meet after Sunday School on February 8th and 15th (12:15 PM, after choir) during the video series. Please let Jean know if your child will be staying.

~ Jean Grant

WESLEY YOUTH GROUP

New Meeting Time: 1st & 3rd Sundays 12-1 PM after church in the Youth Room.

Youth2015 Update: We have 14 youth and 5 adult chaperones sign up for Youth2015! Fantastic! Now we need to start fundraising. Sunday February 15th after church we will meet in the youth room to discuss fundraising ideas. If any groups/committees/circles would like to donate money towards this trip, we would greatly appreciate it. Please see Phil Smith.

CARTY CUPBOARD FOOD PANTRY

WE HAVE A VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY... We are in need of someone to work at Friday morning's food distribution. You will be distributing the pre-packed grocery bags of food, so you must be able to lift 40 lbs. This opportunity runs from now until the beginning of May, and is on Fridays from 9:00 AM until 12:15 PM. If you are interested please call Nancy Spencer at 508-887-1481.

WE ARE IN DESPERATE NEED OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS... *Meals in a can and Hearty low sodium soups.*

To everyone who donates to Carty Cupboard ~ ***Thank You!!***

~ *Sincerely, Nancy Spencer*

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

SAVE THE DATE!

WOMEN'S RETREAT

Right here at Wesley!

SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2015

8:30am – 1:30pm

Theme: SHINE OUT GOD'S LIGHT

What dark places can we light up today?

Join women from all of the Worcester area United Methodist Churches for a time of worship, singing, fellowship, and workshop sessions. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. Free will offering. Childcare will be provided. Invite a friend!! Ingathering of household goods to help the Florence House mothers get started in their own apartments. PLEASE REGISTER BY MARCH 2 by calling Barb Ingrassia at 508-829-6359 or by email: umw@wesleyworc.org.

LET GOD'S LIGHT SHINE OUT THROUGH YOU.

MISSION TRIP PRESENTATION

On Sunday, February 22nd, following the 10:30 service, Phil Smith and I will be giving a presentation on our Mission Trip to Sheephead Bay, Brooklyn, NY. You will be able to hear the witnessing of God working through the Ministry of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM).

This is only one of many ministries in the United Methodist Church and as New England Disaster Coordinator for our Conference, which by the way is 6 states—Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts, I can tell you that this ministry is one of the best ways to spread the word.

Through our action and presence after a disaster, we were able to join the NY Conference to help them with their disaster from Hurricane Sandy.

Gods Grace, Gerard Piscitelli

MISSION MATTERS

HOSPITALITY NEEDED FOR EYEGASSES MINISTRY ON FEBRUARY 9TH AND 23RD

Pastor Shandi has noticed that people seeking eye exams and glasses start lining up hours before our doors open. On days which are very cold or raining/snowing, volunteers are needed to offer light refreshments and give out numbers from 4:30 to 6 PM on Mondays. We will start with two people on alternate Mondays, when the optometrist is here giving eye exams and prescriptions. If you could volunteer to offer hospitality, please tell Pastor Shandi or Betsy Pennino.

FEBRUARY 28TH COMMUNITY SUPPER... The Worcester Regional High School (WRHS) Mission Possible group is in charge of the February community supper, led by Rachel and Cordelia Ferdinand. They will be preparing and serving baked chicken, rice pilaf, steamed vegetables, beverage and dessert. Let's welcome these youth to Wesley by providing extra workers. Donations of cupcakes, brownies, or bars are also requested. Could someone put together a craft for children?

IMAGINE NO MALARIA (INM) UPDATE... Our New England Conference calculates that Methodists here have saved over 68,000 lives by our donations from fundraising efforts. The annual death rate from malaria is down 54% in Africa since 2000. The Mission Committee is planning our 3rd INM Event at Wesley on Sunday, May 17th.

2015 LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

Connecting with your



February 28, 2015 ~ 8:30 AM — 3:00 PM

Leominster United Methodist Church

77 Hall Street, Leominster, MA 01453

\$20 EARLY REGISTRATION, (BEFORE OR ON 2.15.15)

\$25 REGISTRATION- AFTER 2/15/15

\$15 PP FOR TEAMS OF 7 OR MORE

You may also register online: www.cmdresourceday.com

February 28, 2015 the CMA District Congregational Development Team will be sponsoring the Annual Church Leadership Workshops and we are inviting you and members of your church to come and experience a world-changing journey.

There will be great music and outstanding workshops, life changing conversations, yummy food, and authentic people. What more could you ask for?

You will be a part of a transformational experience taking place in the Central Massachusetts District of the New England Conference. You can't miss it!

All of our workshops will be designed to equip church leaders to bring about a personal and cultural transformation to their local congregations. The workshops will be practical giving you the tools you will need to begin the work or to share with your congregation. Be transformed as you learn new ways of doing effective ministry in the 21st century

For more information there is a brochure in the welcome office. You may go ahead and register directly with the district office, but please let Shandi know if you plan on attending so he can have a chance to follow up with you. See you then!

JOHN IN ULTRA-HIGH CONTEXT: JOHN 2:13-3:21

(notes from the Brewer Hall Study Group, January 25—February 1, 2015)

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Chapter 2 concludes (vv. 13-25) with Jesus' opposition to the merchandising of livestock and doves in the temple's outer courtyard in this first visit to Jerusalem with his disciples.

vv. 14-16 Besides being a religious center of ancient Israel, the temple was also the central economic and political reality in the society. The sacrificial animals for sale would have been bought by those who either could not or preferred not to bring suitable animals of their own. The money changers changed the Roman coins in general use for the Tyrian coinage for payment of the temple tax. Jesus accuses the buyers of making what should be a house of prayer into an *oïkon emporíou* ("house of trade"). [Mark's Gospel (11:17) uses the unambiguously synonymous phrase *spēlaiōn lēston* ("den of robbers").] **vv. 17-22** The complete quote from Ps 69:9 is, "For zeal for thy house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me". The implication is that Jesus has taken upon himself the shame that has been directed to God, and the requisite task of restoring God's honor. **vv. 23-25** Although the signs spoken of are not described, the power of signs to elicit belief prompts John's recounting of them (20:30-31). Nevertheless, signs must be supplemented by teaching and explanation, which may account for Jesus' comment about not fully entrusting himself to others. To know what was "in man" (i.e., the secrets of the heart) is for God alone (Ps 44:21).

Chapter 3 begins with a private conversation between the Pharisee Nicodemus and Jesus, about becoming a child of God (born **from above**) and receiving new **life** – a favor from God through his Son (the Son of Man), sent from God's realm.

vv. 1-2 That Nicodemus approached Jesus at night might be interpreted as fear of his fellow Judeans {or a wish to have time alone with Jesus}. **v. 3** begins with Jesus giving his word of honor – *amēn amēn* ("truly truly") and his play on the ambiguous term *ánōthen* (meaning either "again" or "**from above**").

John in Ultra-High Context continued...

Because one's physical birth determined baseline status and honor ranking, to be born *again* would be to reset this baseline, and to be born **from above** (i.e., from the realm of God) would signal a qualitatively higher baseline – that of a child of God, among which differences in status disappear, except for the firstborn. **vv. 4-5** To be “born of water and spirit” refers to experiencing new life from God through the Son of Man. On the cross, Jesus is not said to “die”, but rather to incline his head and deliver up his *spirit* (19:30), and while still “lifted up” (i.e., crucified), his side was pierced and out came blood and *water* (19:34). **vv. 6-8** How the Spirit-birth happens is as mysterious as the *pneûma* (“wind”, “spirit”, “breath”) was to the ancients. **vv. 14-16** John's concern for **life** is its quality – **life** of a new and better sort (20:31). The discussion with Nicodemus ends with v. 15 [“that everyone believing *en* (in) him may have life eternal”]. John's commentary (3:16-21) incorporates v. 15, but substitutes the UHC preposition **into** [that everyone believing *eis* (into) him...may have life eternal”]. **vv. 17-21** The language about being “sent” is patronage language, with Jesus as the broker for God, and those to be “saved” (i.e., to enjoy “eternal life”) as the clients. Good acts derive from kinship with God (v. 21).

– Charles Kiefer {& the members of the Brewer Hall Study Group (open group; Sundays, 9:30)}

Marshall, A. The R.S.V. interlinear Greek – English New Testament. London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd., 1958.

Malina BJ, Rohrbaugh RL. *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the last few years Wesley has sponsored several labyrinth walks but each time we have used a rented labyrinth. Recently, however, a portable labyrinth has been purchased for the church, and once it has been assembled and painted, there will be upcoming opportunities to participate in walking the labyrinth. At first glance the pattern of a labyrinth might appear to be complicated or confusing; sometimes the terms *labyrinth* and *maze* are used synonymously, but there is a distinction. While a maze is a form of a puzzle with complex branching passages, a labyrinth, no matter how complex the patterns of its path, has only one entrance and exit with a single path that leads to a center. Still the path through a labyrinth often does meander with many changes of direction before the center is reached. Another contrast to mazes is that labyrinths do not have any dead-ends. Because they are not puzzles, labyrinths help to quiet and focus the mind as one walks the path.

The labyrinth is not unique to Christianity but existed in many cultures and many religions and predated Christianity by at least 1000 years. The first known Christian labyrinth is in a 4th Century basilica in Algeria. It is believed it is at this time that the labyrinth began to be used for Christian prayer and meditation. Labyrinths in churches flourished during the era of the great Gothic cathedrals in France and Italy during a time when religious pilgrimages were very important. The ultimate pilgrimage destination for Christians at that time was Jerusalem, but the cathedrals of Europe also became pilgrimage sites as stations along various pilgrimage routes or as pilgrimage destinations in and of themselves. For those who could not make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem walking the labyrinth became a symbol of that journey with the center of the labyrinth the substitute goal representing Jerusalem.

The labyrinth came to be viewed as a very powerful symbol of spiritual journey, and some pilgrims “walked” the labyrinth on their knees as a symbol of repentance. At one time the labyrinth was also part of worship services. At Chartres during the Easter celebration the priest and congregation would dance into the center of the labyrinth to symbolize Jesus’ death and resurrection.

After the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century and the rationalism of the Enlightenment of later centuries, the traditions of the use of the labyrinth in Christian worship, prayer and meditation were lost. Now in the late 20th Century these traditions have been rediscovered and offer us a new yet ancient means to explore our spirituality.

Submitted by, Deborah A. O’Driscoll

2015 HERALD SCHEDULE

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

<u>Article Deadline Date</u>	<u>Herald Mailing Date</u>
Tues., Feb. 17	Thurs., Feb. 19
Mon., March 2	Wed., March 4

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

office@wesleyworc.org

2015 ALTAR FLOWER calendar is now available in the Welcome Office. If you would like to donate flowers on a particular Sunday in honor, celebration or in memory of a loved one or friend, stop by the office and reserve the date. 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. The cost for the two arrangements in either the chapel or sanctuary is \$50. Please be sure to complete a form with the dedication and return it to Debi with the payment as soon as you are able.



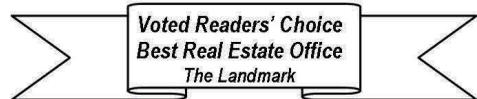
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WESLEY HERALD
FEBRUARY 5, 2015

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

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| Music Assistant | Deborah O'Driscoll |
| Director of Children's
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| Director of Christian
Formation & Discipleship | Lisa Fagerstrom |
| Toddler Care Leader | Lori Conlon |
| Building Superintendent | Phil Johnson |
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