

Lent, Christian Formation & Discipleship in the Wesleyan Tradition

“[The disciples] devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all as any had need.” ~ Acts 2:42,45

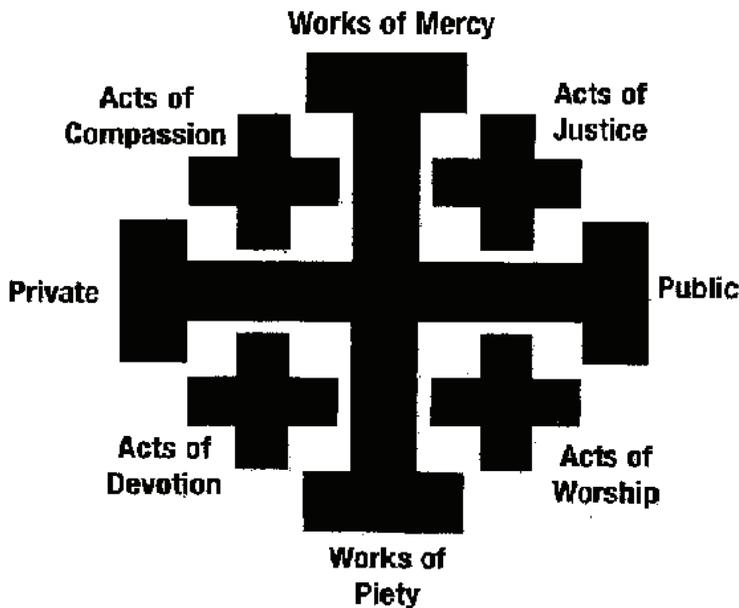


Diagram by David Lowes Watson

During this season of Lent, many Christians are entering into an intentional observance of Christian formation practices and spiritual disciplines. Remembering that, in the early church Lent was a season of preparing new converts to Christianity for Baptism, Lent is sometimes understood as a season of intentionally forming, reforming, and transforming disciples of Jesus Christ. During this Lenten season, I would like to invite you to a life of deeper discipleship as you engage in intentional practices of Christian formation and discipleship.

In our Wesleyan and Methodist tradition, “Christian disciples are formed by shaping their lives according to the General Rule of Discipleship, which is: *‘To witness to Jesus Christ in the world, and to follow his teachings through acts of **compassion, justice, worship and devotion**, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.’*” Using the above diagram, I would like to invite you to consider which of the areas you feel you may need to intentionally grow in this Lenten season. Then I encourage you to find one other person with whom you can share this hope.

LIGHTINGS AND ALTAR FLOWERS...

The Tower lighting for February is given in loving memory of Lois and Bill Bird and Paul Carlson given by Charlie Bird and his son, Timmy.

The Rose window lighting for February is given in loving memory of my mother, Virginia Ross by Chris and Earl Flagg.

The altar flowers on Sunday, February 14th were given in loving memory of Natalie Gutridge by Stanley Gutridge.

The altar flowers on Sunday, February 21st are given in loving memory of Janette C. Hedenburg by Ken Hedenburg and family.

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER THIS WEEK...

- † Margaret Barrett, a friend of Margaret Watson, who is undergoing chemotherapy for lung cancer
- † Linda D'Acri on the passing of her friend Irene Millet this past week.
- † John Hansen recuperating at home. Calls and visits (please call first) are welcome and appreciated.
- † Bill Woodring who celebrated his 90th birthday on February 9th.
- † For Diane Hedenburg Kane, continued prayers for healing and comfort
- † For Daniel Kwakye and family for good health and prosperity
- † For Joan Dickinson who had shoulder surgery on Tuesday, Feb. 9th and is recovering at home.

FOR SALE: Wheelchair available, \$100.00, proceeds will go to Carty Cupboard Food Pantry... please see Dot Ellis if interested.

THE WORCESTER CHORISTERS ARE COMING TOGETHER AGAIN!

In what is becoming an annual event, The Wesley Choir is hard at work preparing for a combined choral event with several other area church choirs. In addition to singing shared movements from John Rutter's beautiful Requiem, each choir will perform individually as well. Come hear the sound of many voices singing together, accompanied by organ, piano, harp, and cello.

Venue: All Saints Episcopal Church, 10 Irving St, Worcester, MA 01609

Date & Time of Concert: Sunday, February 28, 2016 at 5.00 p.m.

Free (snow date: March 13)

Continued from page 1...

Invite that person to be a spiritual accountability partner/friend with you – someone who will remind you of your commitment, encourage you, and pray for you as you set out on your Lenten journey. I promise you, God’s grace is able to meet you where you are, to lead you to be formed, reformed, and transformed into the image of Christ.

I hold you in my prayers while I am on leave. May God bless you always!

Pastor Shandi

¹Definition provided by David Lowes Watson in the book “*Forming Christian Disciples: The Role of Covenant Discipleship and Class Leaders in the Congregation.*”

2016 OFFERING ENVELOPES are available in Brewer Hall. Please stop by and pick yours up the next time you are at church. If you did not request offering envelopes and would like them, please let Lorna or Debi in the office know or sign up on the sheet in the Welcome Office. Thank you!

SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 9:30: GIFTS FROM THE DARK WOOD STUDY meets in John Wesley Room, co-led by Anthony Phillips & Lisa Fagerstrom. This DVD study is based on the book *Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics (and Other Wanderers)* by Eric Elnes and parallels our Lenten worship themes. There will be time for reflection on the previous week’s theme as well as time for sharing and discussion of the video presentation. Each Sunday will be a “stand alone” session and all are welcome to any or all of the Sundays! [Note: If there is interest, an additional evening session will be added for those unable to attend the Sunday group.]

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY: WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

THURSDAYS, 10:30 A.M.-NOON (BEGINS FEB. 25)

Do you long to better know the stories of the Bible? Do you want to know how the Bible is organized and how those texts were chosen? Have you ever thought about all the different ways people approach the Bible and wondered for yourself what to think? Join us on Tuesday mornings as we consider these and other questions in exploring the many things that the Bible has to offer us.

This first course in the Massachusetts Bible Society’s “Exploring the Bible” series gives a broad overview of the entire Bible, including chapters on how to select a Bible suitable for your needs, how the Bible is organized, how the collection of books that comprise the Bible were chosen, different ways that people approach the text, and what archaeology has to tell us about the text and its stories. Lisa Fagerstrom will lead this study group.

Sarah Circle will again be collecting useful or edible items for Worcester shelters. On Sundays in Lent through Palm Sunday (March 20th), you're invited to leave any of the following in the purple bag you'll find in the church pantry:

- Soap, hand sanitizer, shampoo, toothpaste, lotion, deodorant
- First Aid supplies, sunscreen, Chapstick
- Chocolate, dried fruit, cereal bars, small bags of cookies or crackers, or other snacks which have some food value
- Packets of hot chocolate, small juice containers
- Socks, hats, washcloths, pens, Post-its, Scotch tape
- whatever else you think a person at a shelter would appreciate

The items will be delivered to shelters on Easter weekend. Questions? Contact Betsy Pennino.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

VBS! Vacation Bible School for this summer will be July 11-15, from 5 – 8 p.m.—beginning with dinner. We're looking forward to another great week of VBS at Wesley! Be on the lookout for registration forms for this exciting and rewarding event!
Thank you very much! Jean Grant

MISSION MATTERS

Thanks to IHN Volunteers... IHN expressed their thanks for all Wesley did last week in caring for the homeless families who live there until they can regain housing, often because they have also found new jobs. Thank you Allison and Peter Hansen, Beth Vietze and family, Bill and Michael Kilmer, Bruce Pennino, Caroline Sherman, Chloe Sundberg, Chris Kerns, Cindy Muncey, Donna Hirtle, Emmanuel Okrah, Esi Korsah, Gladys Poku, Kimberly Lindsey-Amoah, Maria Gorsuch-Kennedy, Marilyn Baptist, Nancy Cook, and Paul Arsenault. Thanks also to those who contributed Big Y food cards-- Cora Arsenault, Gary Robinson, Jan Maguire, and Janet DeNapoli. One person asked to volunteer at IHN during the months before Wesley's next IHN week (10/23 to 10/29/16). If you would also like to do that, the Director would be most grateful, so please tell Betsy Pennino.

Youth Group Leading Feb. 27th Community Supper... Wesley's Youth Group is in charge of February's Community Supper. The menu will be chili with all the fixings, cornbread, salad, drinks, and dessert. Please plan to attend! *If you can contribute baked desserts (finger food), please tell Maria Gorsuch-Kennedy or Lisa Fagerstrom.*

Future Suppers... April, June and the months following are available for you or your group to volunteer to lead a supper.

Volunteering with Habitat for Humanity on April 23rd... We're looking for a team of 12 to 15 Wesley folks to work on Habitat's new Homestead Ave., Auburn build site. We've talked for several years about doing this mission again, and have signed up for Saturday, April 23, 8 am to 4 pm, the last Saturday of the public school vacation week. Working for a half-day is possible, if someone else can fill in for the other half-day. Please tell Betsy Pennino if you're 16 or older and would like to volunteer. Thank you.

MISSION COMMITTEE BUDGET SUMMARY 2015

As part of Wesley's effort to be transparent, the Mission Committee wants to share how much we donated to various mission projects last year. A further description of our giving is in Wesley's 2015 Annual Report.

Mission Committee funding comes from a Bessie Carty endowment, not the Wesley operating budget. In 2015, we received \$19,725 from the Bessie Carty Special Purpose Fund, and supported the following mission activities:

Abby's House	\$ 1,500
Elm Park Ministries (day camp)	\$ 1,000
Full Dimension Ministry (Tanzania)	\$ 1,200
Habitat for Humanity	\$ 1,000
Interfaith Hospitality Network	\$ 2,100
Stand Up for Kids	\$ 250
Maine Economic Mission	\$ 250
Hope Gateway Training for Staff, Leaders	\$ 1,000
Imagine No Malaria (INM)	\$ 1,325
INM event meal	\$ 200
Youth2015 trip	\$ 700
Elm Park School Food in Backpacks	\$ 100
Disaster Response Training	\$ 300
Food for Community Suppers	\$ 3,800
Wesley Mission Shares (operating budget)	<u>\$ 5,000</u>
Total Mission Committee donations	\$ 19,725

WOMEN OF WESLEY...

We are hosting a one-day mission study for women in the Central District and Conference-wide on

Saturday, March 5, 2016 ~ 9 am-3 pm

Theme: Created for Happiness: Understanding Your Life in God

The early Methodist tradition used the language of happiness often. Not only did John Wesley preach and teach about happiness but his brother Charles wrote hymns about happiness that the early Methodists sang. The happiness they sought was happiness in God. This study examines the understanding of happiness and how to live the life that God calls us to.

What is Happiness? It's a subject of conversation all around us. We say we want to "be happy," but what does that *mean* for each of us? Is it selfish to want to be happy? How can I be happy in God?

We welcome ARLENE MACKIE as our leader and facilitator to explore happiness as John Wesley taught. Arlene has been active in UMW for many years; she has served as President of the NEC UMW. She was a leader/facilitator for this study at Mission U 2015.

**9:00-9:30 Registration and light breakfast
Program—including Worship, Fellowship and Luncheon**

Questions? Contact: Barbara Ingrassia at 508-829-6359

Registration: \$5 per person. Checks payable to: Wesley UMW

You may drop your registration off at the church office or give it directly to Sandra Toffay, Barb Ingrassia, or Allison Hansen.

RSVP online to: UMW@wesleyworc.org (pay at the door)

Registration deadline: March 1 ~ Childcare is available.

Please include:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

Dietary needs _____ Childcare? Y/N No. of children _____ Ages _____

John in Ultra-High Context: John 18:28-19:16a

{notes from the Brewer Hall Study Group, January 31 - February 14, 2016}

Before Pilate

(vv. 27-32) Jesus is led from the house of the high priest Caiaphas (no mention of an interview with him) to the praetorium (the official Roman residence) early in the morning of Passover Eve. Jesus' pious Israelite captors don't enter to avoid becoming ritually unclean and thus unable to enjoy the Passover celebration. Stepping outside, Pilate inquires about the charges for which Jesus was brought before him, to which his captors respond that the issue is not about charges (i.e., guilt is assumed), but about punishment. Pilate's response (that the Judeans should condemn Jesus by their own law) brings their motive to the surface – they want Jesus put to death (11:50; 18:14), specifically, death by the humiliation of a Roman crucifixion.

(vv. 33-38a) Pilate summons Jesus into the “unclean” realm of Roman presence for the *cognitio* (judicial investigation). His opening question indicates that he has been informed of a charge (since v. 29), i.e., a claim to kingship of the Judeans. Jesus answers Pilate's question with a question of his own: Was Pilate tracking Jesus' career himself, or simply repeating the accusations of his captors? Pilate's counter-question (“Am I a Judean?”) indicates that it was Jesus' fellow Israelites who had spied him out as a problem and captured him as a criminal (v. 35). Pilate genuinely doesn't know why Jesus was brought to him, and so asks “What have you done?” Jesus' comment on Pilate's mention of kingship is that his kingship is not “of this world” (i.e., not of Israelite origin), otherwise, his followers would be fighting to keep him from being handed over to his Judean captors. Pilate's follow-up question (“So then you are a king?”) leads to Jesus' response (full of meaning for the Johannine group): kingship designations come from “you” (i.e., from Pilate repeating Judean claims), but Jesus was born into the world to bear truthful witness, and those who are “of the truth” understand what he means. Pilate closes the conversation with the rhetorical question, “What is truth?” [The logical followup question would have been ‘*Who is it that is of the truth?*’]

Pilate vs the Judeans

(vv. 38b-40) As Pilate leaves the praetorium, he announces his verdict to the Judeans outside: “I find no crime (guilt) in him”. Then, willing to release Jesus in compliance with a Judean custom of releasing a criminal at Passover, he puts forward the “innocent criminal” Jesus (the Galilean), as “King of the Judeans”. The insulted crowd's response is equally insulting to Pilate – asking for the release of Barabbas, a social bandit (thus, an enemy of Rome). Ironically, the crowd wishes to release the criminal *Bar-abbas* {*Aramaic*, lit. “son of the father”} and punish Jesus, the true Son of the Father.

(vv. 1-3) Pilate's order for the flogging is his warning to Jesus to keep out of trouble. In response to the crowd's insult to Pilate's honor (requesting the release of Barabbas), taken as an insult to the honor of Rome, the Roman soldiers mockingly offer the crowd this lowborn Galilean as their king, crowning him with thorns and dressing him in a purple robe, implying that the crowd couldn't tell a real Israelite king from a pretender.

(vv. 4-8) Those who see a coronation ritual here find the {theatrics} on both the Roman and Judean sides filled with typical Johannine double meaning. Nonetheless, Pilate twice more repeats his verdict ("I find no crime in him"; vv. 4, 6). In response, the Judeans level a new charge against Jesus – according to Torah, Jesus "has made himself the Son of God" (a challenge to God's honor, requiring the dishonorable death of the challenger). [Jesus' followers knew very well that he did not 'make himself' Son of God, but was acknowledged as such by the Spirit (1:32-34).] This new charge made Pilate "more afraid" – a shameful response, especially by a high-ranking Roman officer.

New "Trial" before Pilate

(vv. 9-12) Pilate accepts the new Judean "Son of God" charge and opens another "trial" (reexamination of Jesus) with the question, "Whence art thou?" Jesus' silence is an appropriate response for one challenged by an inferior (and thus a tacit claim of superiority), but Pilate takes his silence as an insult, and points to his authority either to release or to crucify him. Jesus parries this threat by referring to God (i.e., "from above") as the source of authority – indirectly responding to Pilate's question of his origin, and asserting that God is in charge of what now transpires. He also asserts that the one with "the greater sin" is "he who delivered" him to Pilate – Annas, Caiaphas, the Pharisees, and the temple military (i.e., Israel's political-religious establishment). Pilate tries to release Jesus, but the Judeans object, raising the original charge of a claim to kingship – thus, his release would cast doubt on Pilate's allegiance to Caesar.

(vv. 13-15) Pilate brings Jesus out and *ekáthisen* (either "sat down" or "sat [him] down"; the grammatical form of the Greek verb is not completely clear) on the "tribunal" (or "judgment seat"). For those reading this as a coronation scenario ("sat [him] down"), the scene marks the enthronement of Jesus with full Roman authority ("Here is your King!") – yet totally humiliated. When the crowd objects ("Take, take, crucify him!"), Pilate continues the insults ("Shall I crucify your King?"), and the chief priests confess, "We have no king but Caesar" (blasphemy by Israel's own standards).

(v. 16a) {Sentenced for the first charge}, Pilate delivers Jesus to "them" for crucifixion. From a Judean point of view, this is Jesus' total humiliation; but in John's antilanguage, this is Jesus' supreme exaltation.

Marshall, A. *The R.S.V. interlinear Greek – English New Testament. The Nestle Greek Text with a literal English Translation.* London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd., 1958.

Malina BJ, Rohrbaugh RL. *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. pp. 255-261.

DID YOU KNOW?

Every Wednesday during Lent a service of Taizé Prayer will be offered at 12:15 pm in the chapel. This service is based on the worship pattern of the Taizé community in France, an ecumenical lay community named after the village in Burgundy, France in which it is located. The community was founded during World War II by Roger Schutz, a Swiss Protestant offering refuge to Jews and others trying to escape from the Nazis. Its ministry of reconciliation began after the liberation of France when the house also began to welcome German prisoners-of-war. Today the community consists of over one hundred brothers of various Protestant as well as Catholic and Orthodox backgrounds from more than twenty-five countries. Taizé has become a place of pilgrimage for young people from all over the world who seek to share in its hospitality and its liturgy.

Taizé is committed to the reconciliation of the Catholic and Protestant traditions through an emphasis on renewal of the devotional life. The worship of Taizé is based on traditional elements of Christian worship and includes Psalms and other scripture readings, silence, prayer and chant-like songs. It is these simple songs that have become internationally known and accepted by many denominations. Taizé chants characteristically are easy to learn and simple to sing, and through repetition allow all members of the worshiping community to participate in the sung prayer. The concept of waiting for the Lord encompasses the essence of Taizé worship:

“Each time we participate in a Taizé chant, we are involving ourselves in a stationary time with God, waiting for God and waiting with God. When we emerge from such an experience, we find that while time appears to have stood still, held in check by mutual melody, we ourselves have made a little journey towards God, accompanied by the Holy Spirit.” (Gordon Giles, *O Come Emmanuel*. Paraclete Press, 2006)

The purpose of Taizé sung prayer is to provide a peaceful setting where we can connect to God and feel God’s unconditional love, while we worship in unhurried silence, singing our prayers. All are welcome to join us for this mid-day respite for prayer on Wednesdays during the weeks of Lent.

*Submitted by,
Deborah A. O’Driscoll*

2016 HERALD SCHEDULE

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

Article Deadline Date	Herald Mailing Date
Mon., Feb. 29	Weds., March 2
Mon., March 14	Weds., March 16

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

office@wesleyworc.org

2016 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.



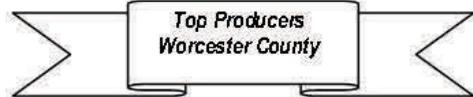
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WESLEY STAFF & LEADERSHIP TEAM

Pastor	Shandirai Mawokomatanda
Director of Music Ministries	Brett Maguire
Ghanaian Choir Master	Kwaku Dankwa
Music Assistant	Deborah O'Driscoll
Director of Children's Christian Education	Jean Grant
Director of Christian Formation & Discipleship	Lisa Fagerstrom
Toddler Care Leader	Lori Conlon
Building Superintendent	Phil Johnson
Business Administrator	Lorna Mattus-Merrill
Church Secretary	Debi Ritacco
Custodians	Carol Flionis, Gerard Piscitelli, Steve Boyns
Head Usher	David Dagle
Administrative Council	Ron Ramsay
Board of Trustees	Annelle Benson
Carty Cupboard Food Pantry	Nancy Spencer
Communion Steward	Earl Flagg
Education Work Area	Chris Flagg
Finance & Stewardship Co-Chairs	Michael Edmunds William Wong
Ghanaian Association	Emmanuel Okrah
Hospitality Team	Paul Arsenaunt Vivian Assie
Layleader	Deborah O'Driscoll
Medical Ministry	Ron Ramsay
Memorial Gifts	Carolyn Bellil
Mission Coordinator	Betsy Pennino
Staff-Parish Relations Co-Chairs	Mark Muncey Gifty Bentum-Asante
Youth Directors	Pastor Shandi & Lisa Fagerstrom
United Methodist Women Co-Chairs	Barbara Ingrassia Allison Hansen

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WESLEY HERALD

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