

The Gift of Disappearing

During this season of Lent at Wesley, our worship series theme has been based on the book *Gifts of the Dark Wood* by Eric Elnes. Both this book and our Lenten worship invite us to consider the “gifts” offered to us on our faith journey by times of struggle and challenge in our lives. In this article, I would like to invite you to consider some thoughts from one of the chapters in the book that didn’t get its own Sunday...a chapter entitled “The Gift of Disappearing.”

This quote by David James Duncan begins the chapter:

“Strategic Withdrawal: any act you can devise, any psycho-spiritual act at all, that embodies a willingness to wait for the world to disclose itself to you, rather than to disclose yourself your altruism, your creativity, skills, energy, ideas and (let’s face it) agenda, myopia, preconceptions, delusions, addictions, and inappropriate trajectories to the world.”

I confess that I found this quote a bit jarring or maybe even off-putting at first read. In much of our life and society, we are conditioned to “put our best foot forward” and to actively participate in life/meetings/creating/strategic planning. However, as I read on in the chapter, I begin to hear the echoes of the life and teaching of Jesus—the leader we follow who someone once suggested “was always running away from his followers!”

In reflecting on this quote and chapter, it seems to me that Jesus knew well the value of the balance between intentional engagement and strategic withdrawal. And he offered a living example of this balancing act to his disciples and followers. In his acts of “strategic withdrawal” and “intentional engagement” he was living his cautionary invitation to be of and in the world without being consumed by it.

Lent invites us to remember our invitation to strategic withdrawal. It is a season of reflection about our life and Christian faith journey in the midst of the world in which we live...a time to listen for the quiet rustling of God’s Spirit. With all of the messages and confusion and conflict that are swirling around us each day, perhaps this is a good year to embrace some on-going “strategic withdrawal” in our lives...not only in this season of Lent, but in the days, weeks, and months to come.

Lisa Fagerstrom, Director of Christian Formation and Discipleship

LIGHTINGS AND ALTAR FLOWERS...

The Tower lighting for March is given in loving memory of Dr. C. James Brenneman by his daughter Betsey.

The Rose window lighting for March is given in loving memory of Heik P. and Irene B. Garabedian, and Robert Demers by Shirley and family.

The altar flowers on Sunday, March 13th were given in loving memory of our mom, Lois Johnson, by her children Russ Johnson, Bob Johnson, and Ruth Ann White.

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER THIS WEEK...

- ✠ Diane Kane for continued recovery at home
- ✠ The family of Lois Johnson whose memorial service was on Saturday (3/12)
- ✠ Emily Smith's grandnephew, Hunter, age eighteen months, ill with blastoma
- ✠ John Hansen for recovering at home
- ✠ health and healing for all who are suffering
- ✠ Justina Lamptey and family who are going through stressful situations

UPCOMING EVENTS

PASSION/PALM SUNDAY: MARCH 20	8:30 AM AND 10:30 AM
MAUNDY THURSDAY: MARCH 24	7:00 PM WORSHIP AT WESLEY
GOOD FRIDAY: MARCH 25	7:00 PM WORSHIP EPWORTH UMC, 64 SALISBURY ST., WORCESTER
EASTER: MARCH 27	6:30 AM SUNRISE SERVICE AT INSTITUTE PARK COMMUNITY BREAKFAST FOLLOWING AT WESLEY 8:30 AM AND 10:30 AM WORSHIP AT WESLEY COMMUNITY BREAKFAST BETWEEN SERVICES

UPDATED WESLEY CHURCH DIRECTORY...

I will be printing a new directory for people to take on Sunday, April 3rd. If you do not have a picture in the directory, please drop it off in the office with your name on it or email me one to office@wesleyworc.org it **by Sunday, March 27th**. I will scan it and return the picture to you. *Debi*

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, Chap stick
- 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.

HELP UMW HELP OUR NEIGHBORS AT THE FLORENCE HOUSE... While we are bringing items in for the Worcester shelters to the purple bag in the church pantry, we can also bring new articles for the young mothers at Florence House who will be moving into their first apartments, as the United Methodist Women have done for several years. Please put the household supplies in the red basket in the church pantry on Sunday morning. *Thank you, Carolyn Bellil*

THANK YOU to all who helped make the Mission U on Saturday March 5 such a great day. We had 25 in attendance, including 2 women from Boston. Thank you to Arlene Mackie, our facilitator for the study *Created for Happiness: Understanding Your Life in God*.

We enjoyed a wonderful catered lunch prepared by staff of the Straight Up Café and Catering at 795 Main St. in Worcester.

(Straight Up Cafe is a neighborhood cafe and community center created to employ and empower at-risk youth and is a program of Straight Ahead Ministries, <http://www.straightup-worcester.com/>)

Special thanks to Polly Boyns, Allison Hansen, and Debi Ritacco.

~ Barb Ingrassia

A MESSAGE FROM SPRC

We have received a letter of resignation for Kwaku Dankwa, our Ghanaian Choir-master effective April 1st. SPRC will be meeting to hold a conversation and discern how God is moving us forward. If any members of the congregation have questions, they should contact the SPRC co-chairs. We will have a chance later on to give thanks for Kwaku's ministry and wish him well in his journey.

CARTY CUPBOARD

As we move into spring our needs for the food pantry change a bit.

The following is a list of what we will be needing in the coming months.

Jelly... in plastic please

Meals in a can... pasta, stew, baked beans

Condiments... ketchup, mayo, mustard, dressing, relish

Shampoo

Deodorant

Soap... in bar form please

To everyone who continues to donate to Carty Cupboard, I Thank You.

To everyone who has not donated before please consider doing so at this time.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Easter Egg Hunt Sarah Circle and Christian Education will be hosting the annual Easter Egg hunt at Wesley on Saturday March 26th, from 10 -11:30 a.m. Please bring 12 filled plastic eggs for each child that attends. We will watch a video about Easter, have crafts, participate in an Egg hunt, and enjoy snacks. Volunteers welcome! Contact Jean Grant grantgirl05@yahoo.com. Eggs can be filled with stickers, candy, trinkets/toys, etc. For the younger children, you can fill eggs with Goldfish, animal crackers, and Cheerios, and put stickers on those eggs so the older kids won't collect them. Please invite your relatives and friends.

Notes for Easter Sunday:

There will be no Sunday School on, however we will have special activity books for children.

There will be childcare for both worship services.

MISSION MATTERS

Leaders Needed for Future Community Suppers... *April 30, June 25, and last Saturdays in the months following, are available for you or your group to volunteer to lead a supper.* For the April supper, the menu must be decided on by March 24, for flyers to be given out at the Easter Community Breakfast. Please talk with Betsy Pennino about which month to reserve and any questions you have.

Community Breakfast on Easter Sunday, March 27th... Thanks to the Linda and Lou D'Acri family, Wesley people can again enjoy an Easter Sunday breakfast from 7:15 am (after the Sunrise service) to 12:15 pm. Scrambled eggs, bacon and sausage, French toast, pancakes, English muffins, corned beef hash, juice, & fruit will be served. Our Community Suppers guests have also been invited to share the breakfast, the fellowship, and our Easter services.

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 have signed up for Saturday, April 23, 8 am to 4 pm. Nine have volunteered so far. Working for a half-day is possible, and two additional workers have volunteered for half-days. Lunch provided by several people would be much appreciated! Cold water and coffee will be available all day. More info is posted on the new Mission Spotlight bulletin board. Please tell Betsy Pennino or Lisa Fagerstrom if you're 16 or older and would like to volunteer. Thank you.

Spring has Sprung!

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN'S BAKE & CRAFT SALE

PALM SUNDAY ~ MARCH 20, 2016

To support UMW Mission Projects, including Wesley Summer Camperships

Cookies - Breads - Pies - Cakes

Knives, Towels, Wesley Plates, Note Paper, Jewelry, etc.

Support the UMW in this Mission fundraiser and enjoy "home-made" baked goods for your Easter Celebration.

John in Ultra-High Context: John 19:38—20:10 {notes from the Brewer Hall Study Group, March 6—13, 2016}

Entombment

(v. 38-40) This is the first mention of Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus (“for fear of the Judeans”), yet of sufficient status to approach Pilate and gain consent for his request to take Jesus’ body. Joseph was joined by Nicodemus, the scribal Pharisee whose earlier discussion with Jesus was noted in 3:1-15. Now with Jesus exalted and glorified, these two disciples are fearless.

Nicodemus had brought *ōs lítras ekatón* {“about litras a hundred”; Gk litra = Roman libra, 328.9g; 100 litras = 72.51 lbs avdp} of an embalming mixture (myrrh and aloes) – enough for a royal funeral. The two of them then prepared Jesus’ body in Judean fashion (bound with the spices in linen sheets).

(vv. 41-42) Near the place of the crucifixion, there was a garden with a new tomb, i.e., one untouched by any corpse. The space inside the tomb was large enough for up to three (19:42; 20:6), with a small, low entryway (20:5), sealed with a large rolling stone (20:1). The Passover Sabbath would soon begin.

Israelites regarded death as a lengthy process. In Judean elite circles, between the last breath and sundown, the body would be laid out on a shelf in a tomb carved into limestone bedrock outside Jerusalem. Mourning rites would commence and continue as the body underwent decomposition. One’s evil deeds were thought to be embedded in the flesh and to dissolve along with it. After a year, the mourning ritual concluded and the bones of the deceased were often collected and placed in an ossuary. At this point, even the bones of an executed criminal were supposed to be returned to the family after being held in the custody of the Sanhedrin during the period of atoning purification.

In John’s account, Jesus dies condemned by the Judean leaders and crowds (although at the hands of the Romans). The ranking Judean, Joseph of Arimathea, takes his body into custody, and with the help of Nicodemus, lays it in a separate tomb to begin the cultural period of decay and purification.

The Empty Tomb

(vv. 1-2) In John’s account, Mary Magdalene is the first to find the tomb empty. Her prior mention was at the cross with Jesus’ mother and mother’s sister (19:25), and the disciple *ὃν ἐγάπα* [“whom he (Jesus) loved”] (19:26). But John provides no

information on her before that (who she might have been, and what might have been her reasons for being at the cross). Nevertheless, she had witnessed Jesus being “lifted up”, and now early on the first day of the week (prior to sunrise) she has come to the tomb “and seen the stone having been taken out of the tomb”.

She runs to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple *on ephílei o 'Iēsoûs* (“whom loved – Jesus”) that “*they* took the Lord out of the tomb, and *we* do not know where they put him”. Her language reflects typical out-group and in-group boundary markings.

(vv. 3-10) Although Peter and the other disciple both ran to the tomb, the other disciple ran more quickly, arrived first and stooped to see the sheets lying inside. But he deferred to Simon Peter to enter first, see the sheets and the head kerchief lying wrapped up and apart from the sheets. Although Peter has seen, it is the other disciple who “saw and believed” (that God did something with Jesus), although neither knew how to interpret the meaning of “the scripture, that it behoves him from [the] dead to rise again” (Hos 6:2). The disciples then return home – someplace in or near Jerusalem (Mary Magdalene has ready access to them).

Culturally, the empty tomb signifies that the post-death atoning purification process had been interrupted by God, who overturned the judgment and wrongful death sentence of Israel’s chief priests and the Judean populace, and that Jesus need not rot to prepare for resurrection. In John’s view, God would have taken Jesus directly from his last breath to resurrection because there had been no guilt in his flesh. The claim that Jesus is raised by God is a claim of divine vindication for his words and deeds. Jesus’ life has been that of the **Word** made flesh in Israel, and God preserves intact the fleshly record of the **Word**.

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. 275-277; 280.

Wikipedia. *Ancient Roman units of measurement.* 26 February 2016.

DID YOU KNOW?

This past Sunday the time for reflection after the sermon included the opportunity to trace the pattern of a finger labyrinth as a way to reflect on the paths of our lives. In addition some people walked the large canvas labyrinth after services. At first glance the pattern of a labyrinth might appear to be complicated or confusing; however, no matter how complex the patterns of its path, a labyrinth has only one entrance and exit with a single path that leads to a center. While the path through a labyrinth often meanders with multiple changes of direction on the way to the center, labyrinths do not have any dead-ends. Because they are not puzzles, labyrinths help to quiet and focus the mind as the path is walked (or traced).

The labyrinth is not unique to Christianity but existed in many cultures and many religions and predated Christianity by at least 1000 years. The relatively simple form of the finger labyrinth used during worship is derived from the classical family of labyrinth types, based on a pattern first documented on a clay tablet from Pylos, Greece (c. 1200 BCE) and also found on Cretan Coins of 400 to 500 BCE

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. They were also found as turf labyrinths in England. The pattern for these medieval labyrinths, based on concepts of sacred geometry, is usually divided into four quadrants. Such is the pattern of our canvas labyrinth, a modified version of the labyrinth found in the cathedral at Chartres.

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; pilgrims sometimes “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.

Eventually the labyrinth came to be viewed as a very powerful symbol of spiritual journey, but after the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century and the rationalism of the Enlightenment of later centuries, the traditional use of the labyrinth in Christian worship, prayer and meditation were lost. Beginning in the late 20th C these traditions were rediscovered and now offer us a new yet ancient means to explore our spirituality and deepen our life of prayer.

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., March 28	Weds., March 30
Tues., April 11	Thurs., April 13

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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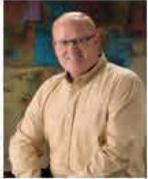
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READ THE HERALD TODAY!***

WESLEY HERALD
MARCH 16, 2016

Wesley United Methodist Church
114 Main Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01608

Church Phone: 508-799-4191
Fax: 508-799-3725
E-Mail: office@wesleyworc.org
Web page: www.wesleyworc.org

